

BOWLING ON THE GREEN.

Ancient Scottish Game in the Park

SAN FRANCISCO is so cosmopolitan that there is no one of us—not even the census taker—that knows just how cosmopolitan she is.

Wonderful is the love of country—the passion that passeth understanding; and wonderful is the loving care with which folk of other nations, self-exiled and usually to their betterment, set up some miniature of their fatherland in this their new home.

Just how many of these miniatures there are here you may know by knowing how many nationalities make San Francisco cosmopolitan.

There are among them the Scots, for example, and the Scots, as all the world knows, have in their hearts a love of country as fierce as it seems unreasonable, for to us of this "satter fairer land" Scotland seems but a grudging stepmotherly parent little calculated to excite eternal devotion and everlasting homesickness.

Yet no true Scot ever gets so far away from home, or stays away so long that he gets the smell of the heather out of his nostrils, or the burr from off his tongue. To him the bleak Scottish moors are always the most beautiful of landscapes, the marrow-congealing Scottish mists the finest of weathers, the gritty, guttural Scottish conversational exchange the most beautiful of spoken words.

Every true Scot, whether or no he has taken out naturalization papers, prays in his heart with Stevenson:

Be it granted to behold you again in dying,
Hills of home! and to hear again the call;
Hear about the graves of the martyrs the
green crying.

And bear no more at all,
Shines the California sun ever so
brightly, blows the wind of the Pacific
ever so softly, it does but serve to stir the
heimevén, and he sighs to himself:

Blows the wind today, and the sap and the
rain are flying,
Blows the wind on the moor today and now
My heart remembers how!

So it is no wonder then that there is right here in San Francisco, somewhere between the ferry building and the ocean beach, a complete and perfect bit of Scottish life reproduced for the enjoyment and solace of "the hairy sons of Scotia."

By investigating a map of Golden Gate Park or asking the first Scotchman you meet, you can find out exactly what and where it is.

Falling in that, you can go out on a street car to Golden Gate Park, go in by the Haight-street entrance, skirt the children's playground, passing the corral where stubborn donkeys and slow transit guests bump up infantile nickels, turn to your left, dive through a clump of scrub oak and come upon it yourself.

And when you do it will move you to an extended "Ah-h-h!" of rapt admiration and pleasure and surprise, for this bit of Scotland in Golden Gate Park is one of the prettiest bits in that domain of beauty.

It is the bowling green of the S. F. B. C., which stands for San Francisco Scottish Bowling Club, and it is the one place in all the city where the Scot may go and make believe he is "at home." Here, on a little parallelogram of living green, shut on all its sides by a close, thick hedge that here and there has a flame of gorse in it, he lays aside his coat and his homesickness, takes out his cutty pipe and his beautifully polished bowls, both from "home," claps his Scotch cap on his head, which is often white and seldom bald, casts his grizzled Scottish whiskers to the breeze, and plays the ancient Scottish game that his forebears have played through many generations and hundreds of years—and he plays it strictly and faithfully according to the Scottish rules. You may be sure that no impertinent American innovations creep in here either under, over or through the hedge.

There is nothing American in the little hedge-trimmed inclosure set apart for the ancient game—nothing whatever except the little fluttering sliver stars and stripes that are used in graceful compliment to mark the "rinks," and the curious on-lookers who drift over from the adjacent driveway and lean on the fence at a gap in the hedge to make laughing sharp-eyed American comments and ask leading American questions of the "Scotchies" inside.

That they are "Scotchies" is patent to all the world that has ears to hear with, for the Scotch brogue is rolled back and forth as swiftly and as vigorously as the Scotch bowls, and listening for ten minutes is as good—as bowlering—as reading a chapter of J. M. Barrie. It is a pretty game, if a somewhat sedate and measured one, is this ancient game of bowling on the green.

The "green" itself adds much to its prettiness and charm, for it is the

smoothest of smooth-shaven lawns, stemming as level as a billiard table, although the expert bowlers will discover in it variations of the fraction of an inch. It measures, according to the strict Scottish rules—or rather as they put it with Scotch rigor, the "laws of the game," 125 feet across, making it possible to send the bowls a distance of 120 feet; and its width is about 150 feet, marked off into divisions of nineteen feet, which is the official width of a "rink." The rink is the bowling space for each set of players, "the alley," as it would be called in ninepins.

The precision of arrangement doesn't end with the level, mathematically prescribed green.

All around the green runs a narrow little ditch which has its place in the laws of the game.

Rising from the ditch, which is kept soft and sandy for the better preservation of the polished bowls, is the bank which is prescribed to be "not less than eighteen inches high and with an angle from the green of not more than 125 degrees." And the bank is covered with close clipped grass a.s.o.

This, then, is the setting for the game. The dividing lines between the rinks are marked with flags—in Golden Gate Park with our own beautiful Stars and Stripes.



THEY ARE ALL OVER TO—
W. WATSON, J. M. LEVING,
A. FOREMAN, G. PATTERSON,
A. H. MACDONALD, J. M. DUNCAN

JUDGE SHAW OF THE SUPERIOR COURT MAKING A THROW—
PRESIDENT TICKNER WAITING HIS TURN

from his religious duties on the green, gets his eight points.

Supervisor Jeremiah Deasy, who bowls with enthusiasm, gets an allowance of seven points, and Mr. McLaren, the park superintendent, who is scheduled to play against him in the tournament, plays a shade more skillful game and is given only five points as a starter.

Principal MacDonald of the Lincoln Evening School, who is in the seventy-year-old-and-upward group of bowlers—when a Scotchman gets too old to bowl upon the green is a secret never discovered—is still too busy a man to practice at the game on Wednesdays and Saturdays both. The privilege of playing on Wednesdays is one that only the lucky ones who have retired can enjoy regularly. As a result Mr. MacDonald gets thirteen points in the handicap to begin his score with.

Dr. J. W. Hamilton ranks next to the

facing a gap in the hedge, is the tiny clubhouse of the S. F. B. C., a 10x12 mansion with a little window, and walls lined with racks for holding the precious sets of bowls. Each member has a rack with a bar across, a staple, a padlock and a key, and the value of the bowls make these precautions well worth while. The rubber shoes and Scotch caps are stuck into the racks any old way, but the shining bowls are put in carefully and securely padlocked. Most of them are imported and cost from \$15 to \$25 a set landed here. The imported ones are given the preference, for the American made ones are seldom so true as the Scotch, and as seldom of well seasoned wood.

Each man has his special fancy in bowls that his hand has grown used to, and would be as grieved at the loss of them as the employer who has spent his years in enjoying his meerschaum would be by the destruction of his loving labor.

Perhaps the finest set of bowls, and at any rate the most prized by their owner, locked away in the little clubhouse, are the set that Principal MacDonald plays with. They are beauties, with a polish as shining as a mirror, black with age, of wood so fine grained and well seasoned that not the faintest sign of a crack is visible, and on the little silver plate set in each is this inscription:

"Presented by John W. Macintosh to Glasgow to Coupar Angus Bowling Club. Won by Rev. F. R. MacDonald, 1894."

They came as a legacy from his brother to Principal MacDonald.

The membership list of the S. F. B. C. reads like a lesson in Scottish nomenclature:

Henry L. Tickner is president, John Reid vice president, R. Dundas Colquhoun secretary and treasurer, and the members are: Thomas G. Aitken, Charles Adams, James Addison, William Balhaves, Joseph Black, Paul Barbere, John Bane, Henry Adams Brown, Rev. A. C. Bane, R. Dundas Colquhoun, D. Edward Collins, George L. Center, Alexander Craig, J. W. Cochran, Robert Dalziel, James H. Duncan, John M. Duncan, P. Livingston Dunn, John T. Dare, Jeremiah Deasy, William Henry de Bell, William R. Eaton, J. A. Earsman, James W. Elder, Rev. George G. Eldredge, Andrew Foreman, John M. Forsyth, Rev. W. J. Fisher, Joseph Gray, James Gorie, Rev. W. K. Guthrie, James Gray, James Giechrist, Dr. George Gunn, V. W. Gaskill, E. E. George, Alex. S. Gardner, Joseph Goss, Major Gerard, James Hutchison, Alexander Hay, Dr. J. W. Hamilton, James S. Hutchinson, George D. Hazen, W. B. Hamilton, J. B. Hodge, Dr. J. Henderson, Samuel Irving, Y. C. Lawson, Mr. l'Hommedieu, Rev. Richmond Logan, A. E. Lovett, J. C. Moffat, A. B. Maguire, E. C. Mearns, Tom Millar, E. C. Medau, James McNab, John D. McGilvray, Andrew McNair, John McLaren, A. MacVicar, General McGregor, Thomas McNaught, John McLachlan, Richard McBean, P. A. McRae, A. H. MacDonald, James McKinlay, Patrick Noble, David O'Brien, A. R. Patterson,



ON A SUNNY SATURDAY AFTERNOON—THE LINE-UP OF JUST ONE SIDE

Each player has a set of four bowls of fine hardwood, carefully turned, as exquisitely polished as the surface of a boudoir table, and with either a silver or ivory disk set in each bearing the name or initials of the owner, or an inscription if they are prize bowls.

The bowls are apparently spherical, but in fact not. They are cunningly turned so as to exceed the spherical on one side and not to quite reach it on the other, so little out of the true sphere in each case that only sharp eyes can discover the difference. This departure from the sphere is for the purpose of giving them a "bias," so that they will roll with a curve when thrown, for there is method in the idiosyncrasy of form, a sort of characteristic Scotch canniness in construction.

In addition to the bowls there is a "jack ball" that looks like a china nest egg lying on the green. It is the aim of each player to send his bowls as near the jack ball as possible.

This, indeed, is the game. The jack ball is thrown upon the rink, and must be, according to the "laws," at least two yards from the ditch. Then the players, two on each side, try to send their bowls as near the jack ball as possible. This is where the canniness of having a bias to your bowls comes in.

Scotch folk have a way of saying, when telling a bit of news that is not the exact tale, "Weel, if I didna knock it down I saggered it." And in the same way they play their ancient game so that if the bowl cannot be sent direct to the jack it can curve its way around to it. So, you see, there is somewhat of Scotch human nature in their game.

But the bias a bowl may have is not a matter of choice entirely with the player. The Scottish Bowling Association takes

care to regulate that so that no player may take an undue advantage of another. There may be a little leeway in the bias, but beyond that leeway there must be no more and no less, and if a player is caught infringing this "law" in a tournament he must conform to the standard or forfeit the game.

There's a deal of skill and finicky care and many fine points involved in bowling on the green.

First of all the green itself is looked to with jealous eye, and woe to the player who plows it up with his heels or toes or dents it or tears it with his bowls. Just what shall happen to him is not set down in the laws, but it is no doubt some dire punishment fitting to the crime.

First of all, at all times and seasons, the player must stand on a rubber mat when making his throws, in order to protect the precious green from his vigor. The "laws" provide that he "shall stand with at least one foot on the mat," and the mat serves as well—or perhaps pri-

merly, to mark the place to play from. Secondly, if it is at all "soft" a strip of canvas must be stretched upon the rink at least so far as where the bowl strikes the turf when it leaves the player's hand.

And thirdly, if any visitor to the green be so absent-minded as to punctuate it with her French heels, she forthwith suffers ostracism, a mental ostracism at least by the members of the S. F. B. C.—and justly!

Bowling on the green is not a game of large allowances and loose ends. Precision is punctiliously insisted upon and whether one player's bowl is a half inch nearer or farther from the jack ball than another's is no mere trifle to be left to guesswork. It means careful, exact measuring and the giving of the point to whom the point is due, and one of the most frequent features of the game that most interests the spectators who hang on the fence is this deciding of knotty points with the tape measure.

Another thing punctiliously observed and considered is the form of each player, who play on the park green, and the measure of every one has been taken—not as a matter of club gossip in a general way, but with a closeness expressed in figures. That is, each player's "handicap" as compared with any other player is accurately known, and his game is kept within it.

For example, J. C. Moffat holds the club championship and in the handicap singles of the annual tournament that will begin on the first of April and run until the middle of August, Mr. Moffat is the only player who plays at "scratch," who doesn't start off with some allowance of points.

Judge Shaw of the Superior Court, who makes for the park green whenever he can escape from his court-room, is reckoned a good player and is allowed only five points in the same contest. Rev. A. C. Bane, who finds relaxation



DECIDING A KNOTTY POINT—MR. TRIVING AND SUPT. MACDONALD MEASURING MEMBER DUNCAN, FOREMAN AND SUPERVISOR DEASY WAITING



J. C. MOFFAT, WHO HOLDS THE CHAMPIONSHIP MAKING A THROW

champion, Mr. Moffat, and gets the meager allowance of two points only, and H. L. Tickner, who is popular enough to be the club president, plays a game that gives him six points to the good when he goes in for tournament honors.

And thus it runs up and down the line—each member's skill is estimated to a fraction, and there are no "dark horses" to upset expectations. At one of the corners of the green,