

SPORT ON THE MOSQUITO COAST.

By Stevens Vail.

AFTER a long and tiresome journey across Honduras, from Tegucigalpa to Trujillo, I arrived in the latter place only to find that New Orleans had declared a four months' quarantine against Honduras an account of yellow fever, and that I had to choose between a four months' stay in Trujillo or sail down the coast to Greytown, Nicaragua, where I could take a steamer for New York.

I chose the latter alternative and after some trouble secured a Carib dory and a crew of six natives who agreed for sixty soles to land me at Greytown.

The prospect of that long trip in a little open sailboat was not an inviting one, but then it was only a question of six or seven days at the most. The second day out a strong gale struck us, before which we flew with great rapidity. The gale increased in violence until matters took a very serious aspect.

"We must make a harbor or go down," said the Carib captain. "See, there is an entrance to a lagoon; it must be Carratasca," as a rift appeared in the dark shoreline. "I'll try for it."

The dory hissed through the water and approached nearer and nearer the angry waves over the bar at the entrance of the lagoon. Careful steering took us almost across, but bearing rapidly down astern of us came an enormous wave with trembling crest. Could we escape it before it broke? No! Bang! Smash! It broke and, in an instant, we were struggling in the combers.

A spar struck me and I lost consciousness. When I came to I found myself lying on a sandy beach, surrounded by a crowd of Indians the like of whom I had not seen during my entire sojourn in Central America.

They were of a dusky complexion, tall, well-built, and possessing all the characteristics of the Africans. They were the descendants of a cargo of slaves once liberated on the Mosquito Coast. Their costumes were simple; a breech-clout for the men, and a short skirt for the women. What they lacked in dress they attempted to make up by rude patterns in red and green, traced on their faces.

I was tenderly cared for by them, and

when my strength returned I surveyed my position. Here I was among the Waikas, on the most uncivilized and unfrequented portion of the Mosquito Coast, the dory a complete wreck, and no means of communication with the outside world.

As the days passed I ceased caviling at my lot, for I found my new friends kind and their life strangely interesting. White men were scarce in that part of the world, so I was made much of; a natla was built for me, and I was kept well supplied with all the good things the Tropics afforded.

The hunting was superb; peccaries (small wild hogs), tapirs, deer, and even tigers (the red ones peculiar to Central and South America) abounded. My love for this pastime gave me one of the most unpleasant adventures of my life, which proved almost fatal.

I had been tramping through the forest all day on the hunt for peccaries, but had not seen signs of any until late in the afternoon, when the dog I had with me started a drove. I heard them crashing through the thick brush, and stood in the trail waiting for them to appear in the open. On they came, grunting and squealing, across the narrow path. As they did so I let them have the contents of both barrels of my shotgun. One fell, and another staggered to his knees; my dog laid hold of him by the snout and had him down in a trice. The sequel more than astonished me, for, the rest of the drove, instead of continuing on their way, heard the cries of their companion and turned fiercely upon the dog. In an instant the poor beast was literally torn to pieces by their cruel tusks. This done, they made at me with the same intention. Not waiting to receive them I swung myself up into the branches of a neighboring tree, and ignominiously prepared for a long siege, for I knew that once roused, the peccary seldom gives up until mischief has been done.

Round and round the tree the ran, their jaws clamping together and their little eyes blinking with impotent rage. At intervals they would make a rush at the tree and attempt to root it up bodily; the only result, however, was to



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"WHAT A CHANCE THIS WAS!" (p. 248)

increase their rage. How I longed for my gun or revolver! But there they both lay in the trail, where I had dropped them in my upward flight.

Toward sundown the peccaries tired of their siege, and with contemptuous grunts trotted slowly into the depths of the forest.

I breathed a sigh of relief, and descending to the ground stretched my cramped limbs. Picking up my revolver I strapped it on, and as I did so heard a slight rustle of the brush. Determined to take no chances and with the memory of the peccaries still fresh in my mind, I hastily ascended my friendly tree and awaited developments.

These were not long in coming, for presently the brush parted and the head of a tiger was thrust forth. He stealthily peered about and, catching sight of the dead peccary, his hunger overcame his prudence and he stepped into the trail. He was a magnificent specimen of the red species, and seemed in my eyes an equal to the huge Bengal tigers. He crept across the path to the peccary and leisurely began his meal.

What a chance this was! To be sure I had only my .44 revolver, but the range was close and I determined to risk it. Taking aim at his breast, I fired.

With a roar that almost deafened me, the brute leaped in the air and, falling to the ground, rolled over and over, madly biting and clawing at his wound. Once more I fired, and this time ended (as I thought) his struggles.

I jumped to the ground overjoyed at my easy victory, and walking over to the animal, rashly stirred his head with my foot. I paid dearly for my temerity, for as I touched him he raised his head, and, quick as a flash, seized my knee in his massive jaws; one crunch and he fell back, dead for a certainty this time.

Paralyzed with pain I sank to the earth, and, for the second time during my Central American sojourn, fainted. When I came to, the red moon was shining through the tangled network of the forest vines, and a deathly silence prevailed, only broken now and then by the faint roaring of distant baboons, as they made their way through the forest.

I vainly tried to rise; the excruciating agony of my wound seemed to paralyze every muscle of my body. What a night that was! My throat so parched that I could not speak, and the mos-

quitoes—oh, the mosquitoes! Myriads swarmed about me, until it seemed as though every inhalation drew thousands into my lungs.

At last day broke, and with it came a fresh breeze from the sea, which swept my tormentors far inland. But a little while longer, I thought, and the natives will find me, for I knew a search party would be sent.

Was I growing delirious, or was that great patch of small green leaves really moving slowly down the trail upon me?

Yes, it did move, and toward me; slowly, slowly, following every formation of the ground, it came, like a large green blanket drawn along. It was the advance guard of the warrior ants, and each leaf was carried by an ant!

I fully understood the significance of this sight, for I had heard of these terrible little insects, and of their marching in large armies through the forests, killing every living thing that fell in their path. I knew my chances were small indeed in my helpless condition, for once engaged in an attack the ants never relinquish the fight until the unfortunate creature is dead; thousands of ants may be killed, but their places are quickly filled by others.

The advance guard halted; they had discovered me. I made one desperate effort to rise, but it was impossible. Fascinated, I watched their preparations for the onslaught.

Messengers hurried to the rear, and in a few moments the main army came in sight. They marched evenly in a column about six feet broad; the ground behind was black with them as far as I could see.

Suddenly I felt a nip, then another, and in an instant every pore of my body seemed to be pierced with minute red-hot needles. The torture was awful. In vain I struggled; hundreds I killed, but thousands remained to take their places. With bulldog tenacity they clung to me, and sank their pincers deeper and deeper.

The agony found for me my voice, and I shrieked aloud. Thank heaven! an answering cry was heard, and half a dozen Waikas came running up the trail. They took in the situation at a glance, and, bravely running in amidst the ants, carried me quickly to the river, where a pit-pan was in waiting.

Gently the Waikas carried me to the

village, where my smarting body was soothed by a healing salve. A schooner put in the next day for fresh water, and the Yankee skipper soon had my wounded limb in shape. To my great joy, the schooner was bound for New York, and I was made a welcome passenger.

It was not without some regrets that I bade my Waika friends "Aye sabé," for they had given me many pleasant hours. But as for any more hunting! Well, not at present, thank you; at least, not until I can walk without limping, and even then it must be in a place where warrior ants are unknown!

THE ADVENT AND STATUS OF GOLF.

By Albion.



WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP
TROPHY.

THERE must be sterling merit and many special attractions in a game that can march out of the lonely fastnesses of the Scottish highlands, and, from the storm-swept shores of the Firth of Forth, lay a world under contribution; and there are—for golf has all the attributes of an outdoor pastime of the highest order. It compels its followers to tie themselves out

of the city into the free and health-giving country, for its habitat is on the open heath, or among the sand dunes and ozone-laden margins of the bracing ocean; and it has attractive qualities enough to keep them there as willing votaries, nay, to make them very slaves, for has not "once a golfer always a golfer," passed into a proverb?

But a decade ago golf was the special appanage of those who dwelt by "the banks and braes of bonny Doon;" to the rest of the world it was *aviare*; and though within the Scotch dominion its history runs back into that mythical and fabled past wherein the Celt loves to lose himself, to all others it was a sealed book. Within these few years Past it has stridden, with Brobdingnagian steps, round the world.

East, West, North and South the click of the golfer's club and the swish of the air-cleaving ball may be heard. Under the Southern Cross, amidst the hill camps of the Himalayas, on the sands of Egypt, on Quebec's storied Plains of

Abraham, by the Golden Gate of California, and by the waters of that Midway Plaisance of the world, the Riviera, golf's votaries are an ever-increasing multitude.

The progress of the pastime in the United States has naturally more than a passing interest to me, by the reason that not only was OUTING the pioneer in advocating its introduction, but because in the first article ever published in the States, in the fall of 1890, I foresaw and advocated the particular direction in which its future would be most assured—*i. e.*, as a pastime for women.

There can now be no two opinions that the one essential in its march which has helped is that its ranks have been reinforced by the ladies, by whom it can be played not only with ease and pleasure, but right skillfully; and this is a condition of much influence and importance, when the locale and nature of the game as an outdoor social pastime are considered. It is a happy medium in this respect, between the tediousness of croquet and the hurly-burly of lawn tennis. It befits all ages, too; the strippling is not too young, and no years are too many for its indulgence; its most passionate pilgrims are those who have grown gray in their devotion.

Golf has one characteristic which distinguishes it from all other outdoor games, in that it is a game of *competition only* and not of antagonism. Success depends upon developed skill and not upon *avoirdupois*. Each player's object is to reach the goal himself, and he makes no effort to balk or delay his opponent. It is a game of talent, in fact, and not an antagonistic struggle.

Again, the period over which it can be played gives it an unique position among outdoor games, for there is