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The Passing of Muff

By Paul W. Gallico

J. Halsey Muff was the pest of the Braebirnie Country Club. But he was firmly entrenched as a life member, until one day he went around the golf course with a flapper guest and got several surprises.

EVERY golf club in the country has its pest, some chap who has slipped in during the slack season when most of the membership committee were away or asleep, and who is thoroughly disliked by every member of the club. Sooner or later, of course, he realizes that he is not wanted and vanishes from the roster. A club that has that happen is running in luck. Our luck was distinctly at low ebb.

Braebirnie, where I had the good fortune to be engaged as the professional when it was founded, is one of the finest little courses in the country, tucked away up in the heart of Westchester County, almost on the Connecticut border line. The club was formed by residents of that part of the country, a fine crowd of men, square, democratic, generous. In fact, Braebirnie was conspicuously lacking in snobbishness and clannishness. It was the kind of country club you dream about—with the exception of J. Halsey Muff.

Picture Mr. Muff, a smallish, middle-aged chap, with a narrow face, a small, tight mouth framed by a stringy, scraggy mustache, and a pair of small, mean eyes. He had two subjects upon which he was mad—women on the course, and Sunday guests. He was bad enough just playing over the links; discourteous, arbitrary, inconsiderate; but when one of those two things entered the question he became simply an exceedingly nasty little man.

Braebirnie was a modern and broad-minded organization, and one of the things it recognized was woman's place in the sporting world. Seventy-three was par for the course, and any woman who paid full membership dues and who had turned in a card of ninety or better was permitted full membership privileges, which, of course, meant playing on Saturday and Sunday.

We also had a good guest ruling, that a member might bring a visitor to play over the course on Saturday but not on Sunday. This rule was just as

flexible as it should have been. Distinguished guests were gladly allowed to play on Sunday, and often enough the chairman would permit unknown guests, such as newspapermen, to play over the course on Sunday provided it was not overcrowded. And invariably, whenever it happened, it threw J. Halsey Muff into a fury.

Muff's behavior while playing behind two of the fair sex was simply atrocious. He drove into them. He kept up a constant and irritating cry of "Fore!" when he should have been waiting his turn to shoot. Upon several occasions he followed so closely that he put his approach ball on the green with theirs and then stamped up and down on the edge of the green while they were putting. On another, when Mary Deering, two times runner-up for the national championship, was playing over the course as a guest with me, he crashed the third tee from his home just ahead of us and played the remaining fifteen holes. He lost his ball purposely at least four times; he hogged the tees with practice swings, and he stayed on the greens and took practice putts after he had holed out.

By this time you are doubtless wondering why a committee didn't wait upon Mr. Muff and request his resignation. That's easy. J. Halsey was a charter member of Braebirnie. Each charter member had subscribed a good, round sum when the club was founded, and was inscribed on the roster as a life member. He paid only nominal dues beside his caddy fees. There were two ways of getting life members of Braebirnie out of the club—shooting them or waiting for them to resign.

J. Halsey Muff knew very well that his resignation on the desk of the membership committee would be more welcome than a million-dollar subscription. The desirability of his complete absence from the course had been hinted broadly time and time again. He was completely deaf to these hints. He paid his fees and bills regularly. He

was pretty well ostracized, but because he was a wealthy man the power of his money attracted a few who would play with him.

Strange to say, Muff was a crack golfer. He could play the game. He went over the course in anywhere from par to an eighty-five, depending upon his temper. He certainly was good enough for national competition, yet he never evinced the slightest interest in tournaments, not even the club contests. He was the thoroughly selfish type of man to whom it gave pleasure to stay out of club competitions, exuding the knowledge that he could beat the winner if he wanted to.

Once R. J. Beale, the club president and about the only man that Muff was a little afraid of, asked him on a Sunday to go around with a young lady who was visiting him. Beale, laid up with a sore foot, was unable to play. Everyone else seemed to be dated up. With more than bad grace Muff agreed. The girl quit at the seventh tee with tears of rage in her eyes. Muff paid absolutely no attention to her. He played when she was away, putted when she was not yet on the green, and when he had holed out, picked up his ball, marched on to the next tee and drove. It sounds incredible, but that is the story that was finally wormed out of the girl.

To coax him into a match with any of the star women players who occasionally honored our club with a visit was out of the question. He knew them all by name and sight and took no chances of being humiliated by one of them. We hoped that if Muff suffered a defeat at the hands of a woman it might so puncture his conceit that he would not show himself again. But it didn't look as though it would ever happen.

Then came the climax of Muff's nastiness and bad acting. It was a particularly crowded Sunday morning. The air was crisp with a hint of frost, and about two dozen of us had our balls up waiting our turn and had retired to the locker room to keep warm. The door to the locker room opened suddenly, and naturally most of us looked up to see whose turn would be announced. It was not the caddy master, however, but Hampton Pierce, one of the best-liked men in the club. With him was a slight, slim, dark-haired chap whom I recognized immediately as Dicky Harris, the national amateur champion.

This delicate-featured boy had the kind of face that women go mad over. He was only nineteen and a sophomore at Yale. He had beaten some of the

best golfers in the country. Even as I rushed over to greet him Pierce spoke up, with his hand on Dicky's shoulder:

"Boys, I want you to meet one of the greatest golfers of them all—Dicky Harris, amateur champion!"

Everybody broke into applause and crowded around Dicky, who blushed to his hair and looked to me for protection. But Pierce was honestly delighted and proud of his celebrity, and explained:

"Dicky and a whole gang from Yale are down at the house at a house party Millicent's giving, and I just had to bring him over and show him off." He turned to me suddenly. "Say, McCarren, couldn't we fix it so that Dicky could sock a couple of pills? He's never been over our course. Where's Jimmy Farnham? He ought to be able to give the old guest rule another yank."

Farnham was chairman of the guest committee. "He's coming over in a minute, I think, Mr. Pierce," I said. "It will certainly be splendid to have Dicky try our course."

Farnham came in at that moment and was immediately drawn to the group about Harris.

Pierce hailed him jovially. "Say, Jim, if you can stretch that guest rule a little more we'll all have a chance to see what Dicky Harris can do on our course. I've lured him over and he can't get away now. Daughter's house party. Dick's visiting us. Will it be all right?"

"Will it be all right?" echoed Farnham, shaking hands with Dick. "Well, I guess it will. Got your clubs?"

"He has, but he doesn't know it," laughed Pierce. "I snuk 'em along in the car."

"I guess we can get in right now," said Farnham. "Whosever turn it is won't object. Mac, will you play around with Harris?"

"If he'll spot me a stroke every second hole I will," I replied. "However, one more licking or so from Dicky won't matter much."

Dick laughed and the entire group moved toward the door. At that moment the caddy master opened it and called in, "You're up, Mr. Muff." Without a word Muff picked up his clubs and started out.

Now, as a matter of fact, it wouldn't have hurt at all if Harris had to wait three or four turns to play. But unfortunately Pierce was so full of his important guest that he spoke up:

"I say, Muff, Dicky Harris is going to play over

the course. D'ya know Dicky? Mr. Harris, Mr. Muff. Don't mind putting off your game, do you? We're all going to follow round. See some real golf."

With no more than a nod to Harris, Muff turned to Pierce. "I think your demand is an outrage. You know the rules. This is Sunday." He shouldered his bag, strode through the door, and slammed it behind him.

There was a dead silence for a moment or two. Dicky Harris' sensitive features were flaming red. He spoke first—stiffly:

"He's quite right. Sunday rules shouldn't be broken."

Then the torrent of protests was unloosed.

"Why, that's shameful!"

"Don't pay any attention to that crab."

"He's the club grouch."

"You go ahead and play!"

Harris shook his head. "That's very kind," he said a little helplessly, "but I wouldn't want to interfere. Maybe there are a lot of people who are counting on playing today—that is—"

"Oh, come on, Dicky," pleaded Pierce. "I feel simply terrible about this. He's just a pest who likes to make trouble. Why—why, you don't know how I'll feel if you don't go ahead and play—"

"I hope you'll accept my apology on behalf of the club for that man's actions," put in Farnham. "He has a reputation for discourtesy, and no one pays any attention to him. Of course you'll play."

Dicky again shook his head and looked miserable. He was naturally shy, and Muff's boorish action had upset him.

"I—I—really, I'd rather not. You see, I couldn't have, anyhow. I've had trouble with my wrist. I couldn't."

We all knew there was nothing the matter with Dicky's wrist, but there was nothing to be done.

"Well, of course, if it's your wrist," said Pierce lamely.

"I think I ought to go back to the bunch," ventured Dicky.

"Well, maybe you'd better," agreed Pierce. "I sort of sneaked you off. Ha, ha!"

No one laughed. Pierce and Dicky left in silence. When they had gone the rest of the men stood around and swore helplessly at Muff. It was a thoroughly unpleasant incident.

There was just one hopeful feature connected with it. It gave rise in my head to a series of mental

pictures: Dicky flushed and miserable; Muff's short, discourteous nod to him; Dicky, the last time I had seen him at Yale; Dicky, the glorious day he won the amateur championship. All combined to give me an idea, a scatter-brained one, a wild one, an impossible one, but a thousand-to-one chance that it might end in getting rid of J. Halsey Muff.

"See here, gentlemen," I broke out, "I've an idea." They turned to me. I told them.

It was a glorious Sunday morning exactly one month later. The air was clear and crisp. A steady stream of carefree golfers had driven off from the first tee, a beautiful flat hole, demanding a long, straight drive, because the fairway was narrow, and a nice iron approach onto a slightly elevated green. It was the kind of hole which, if you played it well, gave you a world of confidence for the rest of the trip.

Around the first tee were clustered a mob of onlookers as there is at every first tee. It might be said that this one was a little larger than was customary, at Braeburnie. A little apart from the watchers and waiters stood J. Halsey Muff. His ball was about three from the end and he was practicing swings close enough to the tee to be a nuisance to those driving off. The next party drove off and the next, Muff building himself a tee as the last man drove, much to the driver's annoyance. No one was playing with Muff. As he stood on the tee and took perfect practice swings the door of the clubhouse opened suddenly, and Beale, the club president, walking with the aid of a cane, limped down the gravel path that led to the tee.

At his side walked an extraordinarily pretty little girl of about sixteen. She wore her hair in two neat braids down her back, and tied with green ribbons. It was glossy black hair that matched her eyelashes and contrasted with the healthy color of her cheeks. She wore a short, white pleated skirt and a white sweater, and made a charming picture. Beale was carrying a bag of clubs. They reached the tee just as Muff had placed his ball on his little mound.

Beale stepped onto the tee. "I say, this is lucky, Muff. You've got to help us out. Niece on for a visit. Crazy about golf. Oh, excuse me, Marcia, this is Mr. Muff. Muff, I want you to meet my niece, Marcia Beale."

Muff glared and nodded his head.

"I'm awfully glad to know you," smiled the girl, showing two rows of even white teeth. Her voice

had that low, sweet, throaty note that so charms in youth. Beale went on.

"That old foot of mine again," he said, and glanced deprecatingly at his cane. "Can't walk a block. Spoil Marcia's day if she doesn't get a game. Thought maybe you'd take her around with you for me. She won't keep you back much."

Muff's jaw dropped helplessly. "Do you mean to say you're asking me to play around with that child?"

The girl laughed softly without a trace of anger. "I'm not a child anymore. I can hit 'em, can't I, Uncle Bob?"

She said this so naively and charmingly that a sympathetic murmur went up from the crowd around the tee. There must have been about seventy-five present.

Beale addressed Muff again. "Surely, now, you won't turn us down. She cannot play around alone, and this is her only chance. Er—you know the rule about single players doubling on Sunday when requested."

Muff saw that he was trapped and gave one more wriggle.

"You know I never play with women, Beale."

The girl laughed again, "But I'm a child, Mr. Muff. Please let me."

"Not afraid, are you, Muff?" suggested Beale.

Some seven very distinct bursts of laughter rose from somewhere in the crowd. Muff stepped up and addressed the ball.

"She can follow on around if she wants to," he said curtly. He swung and drove. The ball whizzed out straight and fairly high, with that arching rush that means it is going to carry. Without another glance at Marcia, he strode off the tee after his ball.

The girl teed up, took one swing, glanced at J. Halsey Muff's back, and called "Fore" timidly. Muff walked straight on down the fairway. Marcia swung down. There was a brisk click. The ball shot off just about six feet off the ground, going like a bullet. On a bit of snap judgment, I should say it passed within seven feet of J. Halsey Muff's head. Maybe it was a little less. At any rate, it hissed at him like a snake, and he almost fell flat on the ground, ducking.

"Good grief, child!" he howled. "Do you want to kill someone?"

Marcia's eyes opened wide. "Oh, dear!" she said. "I almost hit you, didn't I? But I called 'Fore.'"

Someone in the crowd snickered. Muff turned around savagely and strode after his ball. When he reached it he discovered that Marcia's was about four feet behind his. He looked curiously for a moment at the girl who was striding along down the fairway, swinging her driver gaily. Behind her trooped the crowd, now swelled to about a hundred. They had left the first tee to a man and had followed on to see what would happen. Then Muff selected his iron and, without waiting for Marcia, laid his shot on the green, but far enough from the pin to make two or three putts probable. Marcia laid her iron shot into a trap on the edge of the green. She had hit the ball only twice, but the gallery knew that here was no beginner at the game. So did Muff. He marched onto the green frowning.

Marcia was again away, but Muff, after studying a moment, putted. It was a fine one. The ball rolled at least forty feet and plopped into the cup. Unpopular as Muff was, there was a little ripple of applause from the dyed-in-the-wool golfers. He smiled smugly, picked up his ball and walked to the next tee. It was just as well that he did. Had he stayed, he might have seen something to alarm him. Marcia disappeared into the trap. The ball suddenly flew out and dropped dead, two feet from the pin.

"That's my best shot," Marcia confided as she holed out. "Uncle Bob says so. Too bad it didn't go in. I would have halved."

By the time she reached the second tee Muff had driven and was marching down the fairway. Marcia built up her tee and took her stance with great care.

"Isn't Mr. Muff careless?" she said. "Fore!" and hit the ball.

It was another low, spanking drive down the fairway. Spanking describes it exactly, for that is what it did to J. Halsey Muff. Call it chance, call it aim, call it the luck that sits in the little white ball, it spanked Mr. Muff and rebounded to the edge of the fairway. We were too far away to hear that gentleman's remarks, but the dance he was performing in the middle of the fairway was exotic and entertaining, to say the least. There was a good deal of laughter from the gallery, but Marcia's young lips were drawn in a tight line.

"He's always in the way, isn't he?" she said and strode after her ball. Muff had outdriven her again by a good deal, but nevertheless was addressing the

ball with a spoon. The ever-swelling gallery came to a halt behind Marcia. They noted that there was an angry flush in her cheeks. They also noted that she swung viciously at the ball with her brassie, and this time came dangerously near hitting Muff in a more vital spot than the time before. That gentleman grew white as a sheet.

"Are you trying to murder me?" he howled.

Marcia looked at him seriously. "I'm afraid there's going to be an accident if you don't stay behind," she said. "I was away, you know." She leaned on her club and looked reproachfully at Muff.

Muff played, but was so nervous he dubbed his shot, dubbed the next, and was trapped on the fourth. When Marcia holed out in five he picked up his ball and marched to the third tee, built up his mound and prepared to drive. Just as he carried his club back over his shoulder for the downstroke, there was a gasp of horror from the gallery. Marcia deliberately walked around and stood in front of him. Muff, his hands shaking, dropped his driver.

"For God's sake, what did you do that for? I might have killed you!"

Marcia turned her large eyes on him. "Oh, that's all right. I might have killed you twice back there on the fairway. I guess perhaps you forgot it was my honor."

She picked up his ball and handed it to him and placed her own on the tee. Muff made a motion as if to walk off, and found that the gallery was lined some six deep around the tee. He knew that if he let this infant drive him off the course he could never show up there again. He also knew that there was only one way of saving his face, and that was to beat her.

They played indifferent golf on the next hole and halved with a six apiece. And then Marcia seemed to go to pieces. She lost the next six holes. In fact, she was just a little girl playing only fair golf. Muff had regained some of his courage and was playing well. Only he wasn't doing any stepping off the tees after driving or playing while Marcia was away. He had the soul of a bully, and the calm way the girl had indicated that she might have killed him, had made its impression. He set down her playing on the first three holes as lucky.

Thus at the turn Muff was six up and feeling pretty confident. He lost the tenth, however, a short water pitch, when he fell short into the lake. This gave Marcia the honor on the eleventh. J. Halsey

Muff bent down and prepared himself a tee as the girl was about to drive. The child calmly walked over to him.

"I wish you wouldn't do that," she said. "Now I've got to get set all over again."

"Getting set" meant taking two or three practice swings, the first of which completely demolished Muff's carefully constructed tee. J. Halsey chewed on his mustache and said nothing, but it got beneath his skin, because his drive was 'way off and Marcia won the hole. They halved the next, but Marcia won the thirteenth on a magnificent putt that rolled all of thirty feet.

Muff began to fidget. He was only three up with five to go. Of course it was a safe margin, and the wretched affair would doubtless be over before the eighteenth, he hoped. But the ever-increasing size of the gallery and Marcia's improved play began to worry him. There were now over seven hundred following this strange match. And in the crowd Muff recognized practically every member of the club. Word of this pretty girl and her miraculous playing had spread over the links. Those ahead waited for the match. Those behind left off playing and caught up. Muff pulled his driver desperately out of the bag and strode to the tee.

"My honor," chirped Marcia.

Muff swore under his breath. Both played the hole in one over par. It was Muff's bad golf that lost him the next hole. He drove off on the fifteenth, a straight drive to a green that was nastily trapped. He played it cautiously and stopped short of the traps. Marcia hit the ball with all the strength of her wiry young body and smashed it into a deep trap bordering the green. Muff dubbed his approach into a deep pitfall on the opposite side, and took three to get out. Then Marcia disappeared into her trap. The ball popped out, ran three feet past the cup, and stopped. Marcia smiled sweetly at Muff and sank a birdie three.

"That's my best shot," she announced happily. "I promised you I wouldn't keep you back, didn't I, Mr. Muff? I'm two down now, I think. If I beat you, you can't say I hindered you, can you?"

At the word "beat" Muff winced and mumbled something about being off form. The sixteenth was a short pitch from a hill to an island green entirely surrounded by traps. Marcia made it in par by dropping onto the green and taking two putts. J. Halsey Muff popped from trap to trap and took a six. When he appeared on the seventeenth tee he

was thoroughly nervous. Marcia teed up and addressed the ball. Muff paced up and down on the edge of the tee. Marcia eyed him deliberately for a moment and then laid down her club. One of her thick braids had come slightly undone. She sat down on the greensward and calmly plaited the errant tress from top to bottom. I thought that J. Halsey Muff would explode.

"W-w-will you please d-drive off or let me?" he spluttered.

"I'm so sorry," said Marcia contritely and drove. It was an uphill hole all the way. Marcia played it neatly and safely. Muff was so upset he hooked his first out of bounds and topped his second for a fifty-yard trickler. It took him five to get onto the green. He was so nervous that I was surprised that he could play at all. Marcia's easy shooting had put her on the green in four. Muff, with both his hands shaking, managed to run down his putts in three more. Marcia won the hole with a cool six and was even up.

Solemnly and without a word, the jaunty pigtailed figure climbed on up the hill to the eighteenth tee. The wilted Muff followed. He seemed to have gone to pieces completely. He mumbled, twitched, chewed at the untidy strands of his mustache, and glared fearfully at the gallery. Instead of going to the last hole with the girl beaten or at least one down, the match was all square. J. Halsey Muff knew that if the girl beat him he would never hear the end of it, and he knew that unless he calmed down she would beat him.

The eighteenth hole requires a bit of explanation. The drive is from the top of a long, gentle hill downward. It is an elbow hole, and the first shot which should be played with the driver is aimed practically at the front door of the clubhouse which lies at the bottom of the hill. If it carries you have a nice iron approach onto the green on the left. But the drive must carry straight as a die, for practically the entire left side of the fairway is out of bounds. It is lined with tall trees and there is a wire boundary fence.

At the bottom of the hill, on the left, are three farm buildings which lie just outside the course. The eighteenth green lies in a notch formed on one side by these houses, the refreshment tent on one end and the tennis courts on the other side. It is a hole that puts a premium on good nerves and straight shooting. People who have been having a tough time of it over the course rarely land on the

eighteenth green in a blaze of glory.

Therefore it looked to me very much as if our good friend Muff were through for the day unless he managed to steady down. And it was Mama's honor.

The girl waited until the last of the gallery had quieted down and then teed up her ball and addressed it. From her stance I could see that she was going to hit the ball out of bounds. I ventured to speak up.

"It's an elbow hole, Miss Beale," I said. "Those trees on the left are practically out of bounds. You can see those chimneys through the branches down there. The houses are well out of bounds and the green is beyond them. One generally shoots for the door of the—"

And here it was that J. Halsey Muff almost brushed me from the tee. I thought that his eyes looked half mad. "Will you kindly permit the young lady to play her own game?" he shouted. "She's been getting along all right so far without your assistance."

I am afraid I half drew back my right arm to let fly when Marcia stepped between us.

"Please," she said in her vibrating, throaty voice. "Please! It's been such a jolly match so far. Thank you so much, Mr. McCarren, but Mr. Muff is right. I should play my own game."

Marcia returned to her ball and addressed it in exactly the same manner. Muff's face sported a wicked smile. And then for the second time Marcia paused.

"I've a superstition," she said. "I want a fresh ball for the last hole. I think I have one with my initials on it."

She took a ball from her bag, freed it of its crisp waxed-paper wrapping, stuck it on her tee, and without another practice swing hit it with all the might of her lithe young body. For a second the ball flashed high over the trees to the left and headed out of bounds.

"It's out of bounds!" howled Muff. "Out of bounds! Will you drive another?"

Marcia shook her head so that the pigtailed swung.

"Do you concede the hole?" he gulped, too eagerly.

Marcia shook her head again. "It may not be," she said. "That's a lucky ball. Play!"

It was a different Muff who teed up his ball. The match was in his bag. He knew it. Gone were his

nervous tremors, his twitchings, his chewings on his mustache. He was as cool as a cucumber. He sighted for the door of the clubhouse and smashed his drive right down the center of the fairway with an honest hook on the end of it. It actually carried the ball a little around the bend in the fairway. We all trooped down, including Marcia.

Muff had a perfect approach to the green. He played it without a mistake and dropped his ball dead, five feet from the pin. He turned around with triumph spread all over his face, looking for Marcia. But Marcia had disappeared.

"That's the trouble with women," announced J. Halsey Muff loudly. "When they're beaten they can't stand the gaff." He bent over and sighted his putt. The spectators closed around the edge of the green.

In the dead silence before the putt the sound of Marcia's hoarse voice made everyone jump.

"Just a minute, Mr. Muff," it called from somewhere on the other side of the green. "I'm away!"

The crowd gave and parted so that there was a lane on the edge of the green opposite Muff. Only the top of Marcia's black hair was visible. She was in a trap on the edge of the green.

Muff looked up from his ball.

"Wha-what!" he stammered. "Why, you drove out of bounds!"

Marcia's head appeared above the trap for a moment. "Not at all," she said coolly. "I cleared the houses. Fore!"

The "fore" was shouted in a clear, ringing voice with none of the throaty quality evident. J. Halsey Muff, with a memory of what had gone before, scuttled off the green with a haste that was comic.

There was a faint click and the ball rose out of the trap, bounced twice quite audibly on the green, rolled to the edge of the cup, and dropped in for a two.

In the pause before the hurricane of applause broke, Marcia appeared out of the trap and walked calmly toward the cup. "That's my best shot," she said. "It was fun, wasn't it?"

And then the cheers rang out. Members of the gallery rushed to Marcia. She was surrounded, mobbed. Beale, who had hobbled over from the clubhouse to witness the last hole, was hugging her and pounding her on the back with what seemed to be unusual violence. And suddenly, high above the hubbub, rose the voice of J. Halsey Muff.

"Wait! Wait! Wait a minute!"

Shrill and insistent, it beat above all other sounds. Gradually things quieted down and attention focused on Muff. He held a golf ball in his hand.

"Wait!" he said again. "That wasn't your ball. Yours went out of bounds. You played someone else's ball. I can prove it. I can prove it!"

Marcia turned her large eyes reprovingly on Muff. "But really, I assure you, Mr. Muff, it was mine. I knew my drive would carry over the houses."

"It didn't! You didn't!" repeated Muff wildly. "I'll prove it!"

Marcia favored the irate little man with her most pathetic look.

"Surely, you don't mean that I lied, Mr. Muff," she said.

Several of us crowded around him a bit belligerently.

"See here, now, Muff, that's going too far."

"You'd better apologize to the young lady, Muff."

"No, no!" Muff fairly spluttered. "I'll prove it right now. You all heard Miss Beale say she was using a new ball with her initials on the last tee, didn't you?"

There was a dead silence. Everyone waited.

"Well," continued Muff triumphantly, "here's the ball with which Miss Beale just holed out. It has initials on it, but they're not hers. The initials on this ball are 'R. H.' How about that?"

No one said a word. Muff's case was complete. It was up to Marcia.

"That ball?" she said, taking it from Muff and fingering it for a moment. "That ball? Why, yes. That's mine. It's the one I played from the eighteenth a few minutes ago. 'R. H.' stands for Richard Harris. Wait a second, I'll show you."

Whereupon she calmly reached up and, taking her two pigtailed in a firm grasp, yanked them off with the rest of her hair, revealing the short, close-cropped hair and unmistakable features of Dicky Harris, national amateur champion.

The gasp that rose from the crowd could have been heard a block.

"It was a good match, wasn't it?" Harris was saying to Muff, whose eyes looked as though they were about to fall out of his head. "But those darned skirts did get in the way. Silly rig, this; had to do it. Stupid election bet with Mr. Beale. Never

felt like such a fool in my life. Awfully decent of you to take me around. Sorry I almost popped you once or twice. Good game. Hope you're satisfied, Mr. Beale. Excuse me!"

And he fled to the locker rooms; a weird figure in white skirts and sweater and manly head. It was then that the tempest of laughing swept the green. Dignified members rolled on the ground, jumped up and down, punched each other in the ribs, hugged each other, pounded each other's backs, and called out ecstatically for Mr. Muff.

But Mr. Muff was no more. No one had seen him make his exit. When he recovered in some measure he had disappeared. His house, touching on the links, was closed shortly after. No one ever

saw J. Halsey Muff in the vicinity of Braebirnie again.

Of course I take some credit for having remembered that Dicky had made a magnificent girl in the last Yale show. Dicky as a soft, husky-voiced flapper ingénue had been one of the pictures that flashed through my mind that unhappy morning in the locker room. But it was Dicky who had come down from Yale three Saturday mornings and practiced over the course, especially the last hole.

Muff's name has been removed from the list of charter members, and in its place that of "Richard Harris, Honorary Charter and Life Member of Braebirnie."

