

"That is certainly a very sporting position on your part," returned Banks-on, delighted to find that the parson was no wackler; "but as I have you five down, it seems to me that it wouldn't be fair to add to your troubles."
 "I feel," returned the other, "that it would be altogether delightful to welcome a man of your force and charm at St. Stephen's every Sunday. Suppose we double the stakes? Say two boxes of balls on the eighteen holes, if I lose the match, and you attend church every Sunday for a year if I should win?"
 "Well, it doesn't seem fair," said Banks-on, who would always rather win a

look intelligent, after the manner of caddies.
 The youth grinned appreciatively, but, seeing that the rector was serious, shuffled over to the green. Then followed a shout which showed that even a caddie sometimes unbends. There in the hole lay the missing ball, between the number-shaft and the side. It must have literally trickled in, not to have bounded back when it touched the iron. The rector had taken a three-hundred-and-sixty-yard hole in a two!
 "That's going some!" said Banks-on shakily.
 "Well," responded the rector seriously,

sympathized Tommy. "A sure would get mine."
 "Not at all," responded Banks-on. "Your Uncle Dudley simply played the game of his life; yet the best I could do was to halve the neat hole in par. The man simply played like a well-oiled machine. When we came to the sixteenth," continued Banks-on broodingly, "he got desperate at the sight of my wonderful game, and lost all sense of decency. It was bad enough before, his using his professional influence in helping out his own shot; but when it came to quering mine, that was certainly the limit!"
 "What'd he do?" inquired Tommy breathlessly.
 "On the sixteenth hole I lay in a bunker just off the green," narrated Banks-on. "I took my unashie and made a nice, lean, low carry over the bunker that would have landed me dead to the hole. Just as I hit the ball, up from behind the bunker jumped a big, lumbering Newfoundland pup. That ball hit him square, and dropped back into the bunker."
 "You don't think that dog was sent from heaven as an answer to prayer, do you?" queried Tommy incredulously.
 "I have my suspicions," answered Banks-on firmly. "At any rate, I told it to go to an entirely different place, and gave it a fine lefting stroke with my masher; but the damage was done, and the parson took that hole. I entered a protest, but he said that I couldn't have moved the dog, anyway, as he was something growing on the links."

momentarily into certain cooling Celtician depths near at hand.
 "Well, that's certainly an unusual anecdote, not to call it something shorter," commented Tommy. "I'd like to meet that parson of yours. Are you sure you haven't touched up some of the details?"
 "If you'll look in at St. Stephen's during the next fifty-two Sundays," responded Banks-on sadly, "you'll find one detail that's been touched, and that is Mr. Easy Mark Banks-on in the family pew. Those were terrible odds I gave him! What are two boxes of balls against fifty-two Sunday mornings! There's one comfort, though," and Banks-on's face brightened perceptibly.
 "And that is?" inquired Tommy.
 "He caught every other man on the team in precisely the same way," chuckled his friend. "The fox made each one of us, as we were caught, promise to say nothing to the others. He plays No. 1 now, and the whole team attends church in a body; but I don't know yet whether he's a player or a prayer," ended Banks-on.
 "I should call him a ringer myself!" said Tommy severely.



"The ball started all right; then it suddenly met a prayer in mid air."

golf-ball than make ten dollars; "but I'm perfectly willing, of course."
 "We'll consider that the arrangement, then," said the rector sedately, "beginning with next Sunday—if I win."
 "If you win," acquiesced Banks-on.

"I'm playing with a laudable purpose—to wit, your spiritual welfare. It may be that some higher power approves my motive."

III.

"It was from that minute that I began to suspect him," said Banks-on, telling the story, afterwards, to Tommy Dool at the Racket Club. "He'd stand and look at the ball every time it would get in a bad lie, and I could see his lips move. Then he'd take one of his shiny new clubs, and simply tear off the distance. A two-hundred-yard carry with any old club was nothing to him, and every one as straight as a side-line. Do you know what he was doing to me, Tommy?"
 "What?" said Tommy, much interested.

"He was prayin'," said Banks-on impressively, "simply prayin' his ball into every hole. He got two twos in succession in that nine. No man could do that without prayin', or droppin' a spare ball through a hole in his pocket, or something crooked like that."

"Go on!" said Tommy. "I don't believe he was prayin' at all. You can often see my lips move, and hear 'em, too, when I get a bad lie, but no one ever yet accused me of prayin'. Besides, there's nothing in the rules about it," he went on judiciously. "You can't ground your club in a bunker, or make a shot off a putting green, or move anything growing, and you oughtn't to press, but there's nothing against prayin' anywhere on the links. Of course," continued Tommy, "if he's disturbin' his opponent, that's a matter of etiquette."

"Well, he disturbed me, all right," said Banks-on bitterly. "He certainly was the king bumble-bee when it came to slinging me! I haven't stopped smarting yet. The same thing happened at the Quarry. You know you drive across a brook and over an old quarry, and there you find a green perched on a mound, and if you're lucky you get a four. He used that infernal cleft of his again from the tee, and the ball lit clear up on the side of the hill, and I thought it never would stop. It went over the top ledge toward the hole."
 "I drove a gentlemanly and refined ball well up, and pitched my second straight over for the hole-flag. When I got to it, there was my ball dead stymied by the parson's, which lay a foot from the hole. I jumped him with my niblick and went down in three, one under bogie—the finest played hole I ever made. But he had won in another two."

Banks-on paused for breath.
 "Say, that must have got your nerve,"

"Do you know, several times during the match," said Banks-on, "I suspected that the dominie was something of a wag! His face twitched a good bit after he got through talking to Major Newman, and it poked up a lot while I was talking to that dog."
 "Tommy"—and Banks-on's voice here became impressive—"it may have been an accident about those twos, and the dog also may have just been a coincidence; but the last hole showed that there was something supernatural in that match. I had kept my nerve perfectly, in spite of everything, and I was reminding myself of Travis at his best. The seventeenth I took at one under bogie—probably he didn't get his prayer started in time. That left me all square at the home hole. Now, Tommy," continued Banks-on, "that hole is the drink-hole, and it's my favourite on the whole course."

"Naturally," observed Tommy rudely. "I've studied it carefully," went on Banks-on, scorning the insinuation, "and I guess I've won a barrel of drinks in my time on that hole. The tee just suits me. I always get off a slathering drive, and I've learned just the angle to pitch my second so that it will roll off the hill to the green. Directly behind the tee is a brook, which guards the sixteenth green; and under a ground rule, if you drive it from a tee, you can pick up for the loss of a stroke. It was my hexous!"
 Once more Banks-on's voice had a mysterious timbre to it. "I drove as well as I ever did in my life. The ball started all right; then it suddenly met a prayer in mid air, curved sharp, struck a tree thirty feet off the line to my left, bounced clear back of the tee, and rolled into the brook behind me. I picked out for the loss of a stroke; and there I was, having played two, and lying fifty feet behind the tee from where I started."

"Of course, there was nothing to it after that. The parson won in a walk," finished Banks-on brokenly, disappearing

"Among other regulations it would be very convenient to prevent the excess of drinking; with that scurvy customer among the lads, and parent of the former vice, the taking of tobacco where it is not absolutely necessary in point of health."—Swift, "On the Advancement of Religion."

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