

The Churching of Bankson

BY SAMUEL SCOVILLE, Jr.

MR. PAGE-WHYTE, the new English rector of St. Stephen's in the Fields, is popular in his parish. Bankson, never-
theless, ever since one day on the Radnor Links, considers him unrepentable.
Bankson is a Golfer, and the capital letter expresses Bankson's impartial estimate of his ability as such. Last year his game was threatened by a severe at-

"Is it customary over here to make any—or small wagger on the result of a match?" the rector queried, as he dabbled in the sand-box at the first tee.

Bankson, a confirmed golf gambler, brightened perceptibly.

"Why, yes," he said heartily. "We generally play a ball a hole, or sometimes a box of balls on the match."

"Would the last alternative be accept-

At the third hole they were delayed by Major Newman, who was playing with Freddie Kent. The major was the terror of the links, a gaffer of the old school who exacted the most rigorous observance of technicalities. A sound or movement when he was about to make a stroke was in his eyes a compound of sacrilege, blasphemy, and lese-majesty. Freddie was a gentle creature, who always played a ladylike game in silk stockings and well-shaped legs.

The major, as Bankson and the rector approached, was badly ditched, and his ball showed like a ludding water-lily in the mud by the brookside. With a rumble of explosives, he selected a snipe-lick and tried for the green. Freddie was standing apparently safely in his lee, but in some miraculous way the major managed to deposit about a pint of black mud full in Freddie's half-open, sweetly serious mouth.

"Blup! Blup! P-poo-oo-oo-oo!" observed Freddie earnestly.

"Confound you, sir, don't you know you can't talk when a man is making a stroke?" howled the major, infuriated at the sight of his abandoned ball wallowing still deeper in the mire.

Thereupon he proceeded to produce from an extensive military vocabulary a selection of objurcations which made even the hardened caddies draw back in wonder and awe. Freddie Kent wiped the mud out of his mouth apologetically, while Bankson would no more have attempted to interfere with the major's flow of language than he would have presumed to proffer a red bandanna to an angry bull.

Not so with the rector. The latter's face grew even graver, if that were possible, at every fresh verbal vagary, and finally he stepped solemnly forward.

"One minute, sir," he remarked impressively to the purpling major. "I am a minister of the gospel, and for the sake of your soul I must protest against such language. Moreover, it seriously interferes with my game. As a well-known expert on the links yourself, I am quite sure you will do nothing which interferes with the score of a fellow golfer."

The major had turned furiously on the rector at the beginning of his address, but the tacit peroration—the major's usual score being about one hundred and twenty, had a mollifying effect.

"I'll take care of my soul personally," he grunted, "but I'll say nothing more if it interferes with your game. Hey, boy!" he shouted to the caddie in the far background, "shut your mouth to-golfer and pick up the ball!"

The quieted major and the abused Freddie passed on. Bankson holed out in sweet silence and again won by a stroke.

The rector secured a half snow and then, but at the end of the first pine Bankson had him five down. As they started for the tenth tee, the clergyman, who seemed to be getting his hand in, cleared his throat in a rather embarrassed manner.

"Is it ever permissible to change the terms of a wager?" he inquired.

Bankson gave him a curious glance.

"It's not customary," he answered coldly, "but if you wish to reduce the

my three weeks' orgy of fasting. She thought I had paid dearly for my folly." I don't think it necessary to say anything more, except that I feel sorry for the victim, and that I am glad to know this happened two years ago, so that I am not to blame for the results.

The reader will observe that I discuss this fasting question from a materialistic viewpoint. I am telling what it does to the body; but besides this, of course, fasting is a religious exercise. I heard the other day from a man who was taking a forty-day fast as a means of increasing his "spiritual power." I am not saying that for you to smite at; he has excellent authority for the procedure. The point with me is that I find life so full of interest just now that I don't have much time to think about my "soul." I get so much pleasure out of a handful of raisins, or a cold bath, or a game of tennis that I fear it is interfering with my spiritual development. I have, however, a very dear friend who goes in for the things of the soul, and she tells me that when you are fasting the higher faculties are in a sensitive condition, and that you can do many interesting things with your subliminal self. For instance, she had always considered herself a glutton, and so during an eight-day fast, just before going to sleep and just after awakening, she would lie in a sort of trance and impress upon her mind the rites of restraint in eating. The result, she declared, has been that she has never since been had an impulse to over-eat.

There are many such curious things about which you may read in the books of the Yogis and the theosophists, who were fasting in previous incarnations when you and I were swinging about in the tree-tops by our tails. But I ought to report upon one fasting experiment which resulted disastrously for me. In "Starving for Health's Sake" I told how I had been able to write the greater part of a play while fasting. Shortly afterwards I plunged into the writing of a new novel, and as usual I got so much interested in it that I wasn't hungry. I said that I would fast and save the eating time and the digesting time as well. So I would sit and work for sixteen hours or more a day, sometimes for six hours at a stretch without moving. After two or three days of this I would be hungry, and would eat something; but, being too much excited to digest it, I would say, "Hang eating, anyhow!" and go on for another period of work. I kept that up for some six weeks, and I turned out an appalling lot of manuscript; but I found that I had taken off twenty-five pounds of flesh, and had got to such a point that I could not digest a little warm milk. I cite this in order that the reader may understand just why I take a gross and material view of fasting. My advice is to lie round in the sun and read story-books and take care of your body, and leave the soul exercises and the nervous efforts until the fast is over. But all the same I know that there will be great poetry written some day when our poets have got on to the fasting trick, and when our poets care enough about their work to be willing to feed it with their own flesh.

The great thing about the fast is that it sets you a new standard of health. You have been accustomed to worrying along somehow; but now you discuss your own possibilities, and thereafter you are not content until you have found some way to keep that virginal state of stomach which one possesses for a month or two after a successful fast. It must mean, of course, many changes in your life if you really wish to keep it. It means the giving up of tobacco and alcohol, and a too sedentary life, and steam-heated rooms, and, above all else, it means giving up self-indulgent eating.



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tack of autocitis. Day after day, he twisted a steering-wheel, turning impossible corners, passed stony-faced park guards funereally and other citizens instantaneously, while his conversation reeked with ignition and horsepower.

The result was to be expected. No man can serve two masters, and his golf record climbed steadily toward the century of dishonor.

Finally, however, he saw the error of his ways, and again the golf-links knew him as of old. For long he complained bitterly that there were six inches gone from his swing, and that the form of a day that was dead would never come back to him. Moreover, his palate had been so violated by Presbyterians, Bronx cocktails, gin rickies, and other religious and rural beverages, that it was months before he could enjoy the Scotch high-ball that must accompany strictly high-grade golf.

Gradually, however, his hand and palate recovered their lost cunning, and at the time of the event herein chronicled, Bankson quite fancied his game, and was firmly convinced that he should be playing No. 2 instead of No. 5 on the team—an opinion not shared by the captain.

It was at this puffed-up period that he first made the acquaintance of Mr. Page-Whyte on a Monday afternoon at the golf-house. Bankson's expected opponent had telephoned at the last minute that he must perform practice law that afternoon; and Bankson, much disgusted at such an exhibition of low taste, had come out on the off chance of finding a disengaged player.

Near his locker was dressing a youngish man wearing a clerical stock and a face of impenetrable gravity.

"Looked like a composite photograph of Vice-President Fairbanks, Judge Parker, and Mayor Gaynor on the morning of Judgment Day," was the way Bankson described this expression afterwards.

The stranger, with a marked English intonation, inquired whether Bankson had any antagonists. Observing the other's clerical tie and very new clubs, Bankson reluctantly admitted that he had not, and a match was arranged after mutual introductions. The divine drew the honour.

able to you?" inquired his opponent with much formality.

"Entirely so," acquiesced Bankson.

The rector drove a straight but rather short ball, was bunkered on his second, and took three puts, going out in six, while Bankson made a bogie of four.

On the second hole, Bankson got off a screaming drive, but dubbed an approach, and took a six. The rector, however, went down a stroke worse.

As they approached the third tee, the rector paused in his stately stride.

"Mr. Bankson," he remarked, "if by any interposition of divine Providence I should be the winner of this match, I would prefer, instead of a box of balls, your attendance at divine services, say



"Just as I hit the ball, up from behind the bunker jumped a big, lumbering Newfoundland pup."

every other Sabbath during the rest of the year."

"Why, certainly, doctor," responded Bankson, who was two up and felt that he had his opponent's measure.

"I have no objection."

"You misunderstand me, Mr. Bankson," returned the rector, rather sharply. "I had intended to suggest a trifling increase of the consideration."

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