A SCOTTISH TRIUMPH

The American Open Golf Championship.

By "Follow Through."

THOUGH the British attack on the American championship has failed, there is some satisfaction in knowing that the winner is a British born golfer who, up to five years ago, had never set foot in the United States. T. D. Armour, the new champion, is an Edinburgh golfer, who as an amateur learned and played all his golf in and around the Scottish capital, and while he has recently become a naturalised American subject his great triumph can properly be claimed as belonging solely to Scotland. Armour is one of the vast army of British golfers who in the post-war era have migrated to the States in search of fame and fortune. Some have achieved both. Having achieved fame it is almost a natural sequence of events that fortune will follow; fortune that in the case of Hagen, for example, is estimated at £10,000 a year in earnings.

Hagen, of course, is an exceptional person in many ways. He is the prince of golfers, and it is not to be supposed that, because Armour has suddenly become a world's champion, his earnings in the immediate future will amount to anything like the sum that Hagen pockets out of golf. America is a land of extremes;- you are either idolised or ignored. Take the case of Gene Sarazen, the diminutive Italian caddie boy. Five years ago he was unknown, a straggler in the vast army of golfers. In a night he leaped into notoriety, winning the American championship at Glencoe by a stroke from Mr. Bobby Jones. And in the process of doing it Sarazen, the boy who had picked up his golf whilst earning a precarious living as a caddie in and around New York, accomplished a marvellous last round of 68.

Flushed with victory, Sarazen challenged Hagen to a 72-holes match, on which Hagen, confident of victory, staked for once in a way a good deal of his own money. Sarazen won, and in the space of one week he was offered and accepted a post as professional which brought him in anything between £3,000 and £5,000 a year. Such is the value of fame as estimated in "God's own country." No wonder the mouth of the humble British professional positively waters on learning of such wealth in golf, and, like Dick Whittington, he is anxious to be off in search of it.

While the winning of the American championship will give Armour enormous satisfaction, because it means a future that is now more or less assured, I am inclined to think that deep down in his heart he sets more store upon another triumph which came earlier in his career, when an amateur playing for the mere love of the game. I refer to his victory in the French amateur championship at La Boulie, in 1920, when he defeated Mr. Tolley in the final by 3 and 2. Mr. Tolley had just won the British championship at Muirfield, defeating Mr. Bob Gardner, the American, at the 37th hole after a most thrilling and exciting encounter, and the Oxonian had gone to France with the object of wearing a double crown. Armour, who had seen his lifelong friend, Bobby Cruickshank, now a famous "American" professional, beaten in the semi-final by Mr. Tolley, was thirsting for revenge. Armour got it in full measure. Mr. Tolley and Armour were so desperately keen on victory that there were occasions when their golf underwent strange relapses. At one hole, for instance, each drove two balls—or was it three?—out of bounds into an orchard.

"By your irons shall ye be known" is a golfing aphorism adequately exemplified in the case of Armour. He is one of the greatest iron players in the world of golf, a department of the game in which he has always specialised, from the early days when Armour used to get up at dawn and play a round before breakfast on the Braid Hills public course at Edinburgh, where the fee is the modest one of twopence for eighteen holes. There is about Armour's iron shots a crispness, a snap, like the shutting of a clasp-knife, a characteristic that is only to be found in the few acknowledged masters of the game. Armour's treatment of the iron shot is different from that, for example, of Mr. Bobby Jones. In the case of the former player it is a distinct and a decisive blow, while in the case of the latter it is a "swinging-hit," with considerable follow-through of the club as with the drive. Armour's method is regarded as the more orthodox, the more polished way, but it would scarcely be true to say that his results are better than those obtained by Mr. Jones with a somewhat lazier, sleepier swing.

It has been an extraordinary championship in many respects; extraordinary because of the fading away of the great players such as Mr. Bobby Jones, Hagen, Sarazen, Cruickshank, Farrell, Diegel and the rest, including the entire British team of nine men. The championship has also been remarkable because of the introduction of a new and a novel method of treating the sand in bunkers. Instead of being finely raked, which is the common practice, the sand is furrowed by a machine, a contrivance that leaves a series of ridges into which the ball comes to rest. It is a narrow channel through which the player has to smash his way without ever being certain of what is going to happen to the shot. Bunkers are bad enough at the best of times. but at Oakmont they are the devil's own traps, becoming even more fiendish when the rain solidifies the furrows. It is an American practice that would not survive in this country for a single day.

The story of the British failure in the championship is the same as in the international match at Worcester, and may be summed up in the one word—putting. Generally speaking, the British players are as good as the Americans from the tee, and in the shots through the green, but in the holing-out process we are children by comparison. While we are feeble and uncertain in our attempts to get the ball into the hole the Americans putt boldly and courageously, giving the impression that they mean every putt, no matter what the length, to go down. Putting has been aptly described as "a game within a game," something totally different from the rest. The Americans separate the two, and having reached a certain standard of efficiency in one they proceed to perfect the other.

And it is done, not by inspiration, as some foolish people imagine, but by consolidating a style and then working at it until it becomes more or less automatic. It all becomes a question of that thoroughness which some call fanaticism, but only when somebody else practises it against them. The American professional, or the first-class amateur, does not change his style from day to day, tinkering with one and then another method until arriving at a state of complete mental confusion. If there is a lesson to be learned from the sorrows of Worcester and Oakmont it is that, if Britain is to regain her prestige in the world of golf, her players will have to learn to putt. Hagen and Mr. Bobby Jones have not climbed to the Olympian heights because they drive better, or farther, than other people, but because they are not frightened out of their skins when the putter is placed in their hands.

A GOLFING TOUR BY AIR: CAPTAIN ASTON IN PLAY AT SUNNINGDALE WHILE HIS AEROPLANE WAITS TO TAKE HIM ON TO HOYLAKE.

To demonstrate the possibilities of using a light aeroplane for quick transit, Captain W. Gordon Aston and Captain C. D. Barnard recently made a tour of 850 miles and played on four different courses in the space of two days. They flew from Stag Lane to Sunningdale, thence to Hoylake and on to St. Andrews. The next day they came south to Brancaster, having played on each course. The match ended in a win for Captain Aston by 2 and 1.

DIRECTING THE FLYING GOLFER TO SUNNINGDALE: CAPT. W. GORDON ASTON DIRECTING CAPT. BARNARD TO THE LANDING PLACE.