

OUR CHANCES

In Which the Well-Known Golfer and Writer Discusses the British Amateur Team

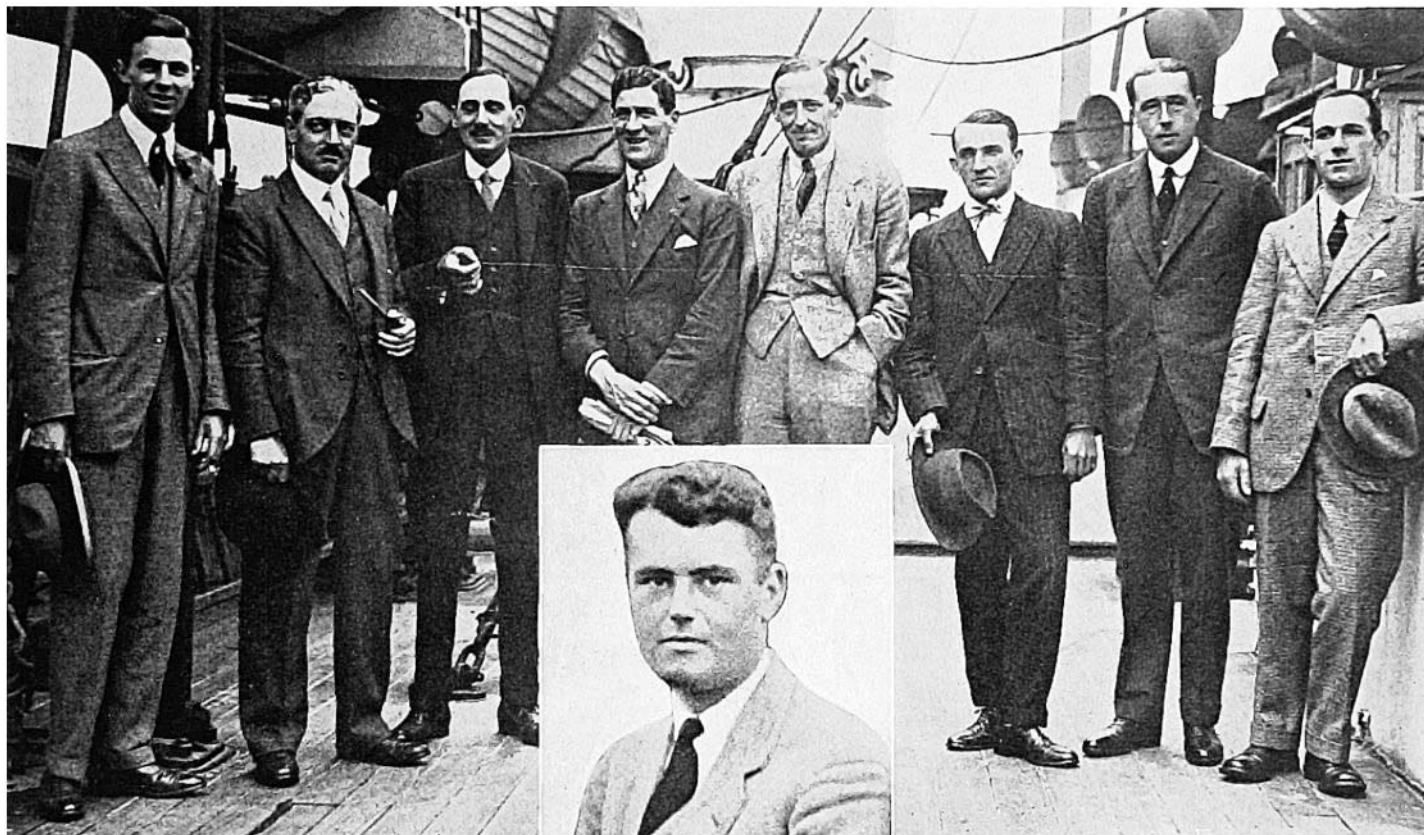
By BERNARD DARWIN

I AM sitting down to write this short account of the British team on the very day of our landing, after eight days in which we have thought more about the game of shuffle board than that of golf and before we have played on a single American course. By the time this is published the Walker Cup match will be over, but whatever is the result, there is the Amateur Championship at Brookline to be considered. It is, I hope and believe, a fine team. I do not say it is fine enough to win, because I know what it is up against, but I think it will make a good showing and I further think that the National Golf Links, which with its seaside breeze is like some of our own home courses, should suit the players well. If they do not play well there, then they will not play well anywhere and I will offer on their behalf no *alibi*.

The side is not absolutely the best possible that could have been chosen

full justice in America, a thing that would give him terrific pleasure.

The other three Scots are John Caven, W. W. B. Torrance and Willis Mackenzie. Caven sprang suddenly into public fame this spring at Prestwick, when he fought out a final against Holderness, which will be historic, for not only was the excitement very great and the crowd a record one, but the golf, especially the putting, was up to a very high level. Caven moreover reached that final through the most sterling finishing powers. Three times he won on the last green and once, against Mackenzie, on the twenty-second and each time he showed a power of iron, stolid fighting and of holing the critical putt when it was wanted. He is a good sound driver with a fine leisureliness about his swing—a rather noticeable pause at the top—and if not a colossus in length is as long as any reasonable man can desire. In the iron play his best stroke is any form of pitch-



Photograph by Underwood & Underwood.

THE BRITISH AMATEUR TEAM WHICH WILL PLAY AGAINST UNITED STATES IN THE WALKER CUP MATCH AT SOUTHAMPTON (Left to right) Roger H. Wethered, Robert Harris (Captain), Bernard Darwin, W. B. Torrance, W. W. Mackenzie, Colin Aylmer, C. V. L. Hooman and John Craven. (Insert) Cyril J. S. Tolley

because we have not got Ernest Holderness, our Amateur Champion. He alas! is a busy civil servant and could not get away. Otherwise we have got the men we chose I write as one of that body that is bound to be abused—the selection committee—and though opinions must always differ, the choice has been very generally approved.

The team consists of eight. Angus Hambro was to have come as captain and first reserve but private affairs prevented him and now I, who travel with the side in the capacity of camp-follower, become the reserve in case of emergencies which will not, I hope, arise. The team has chosen as its captain Robert Harris, and they could not have done better, for he is a fine golfer and an experienced one whom everybody likes. Of the eight—four Scots and four Englishmen—I will begin with the Scots, because Harris is one of them. He is, I think, forty years old and till this year has never shown his best form since the war, but now he has come right back. He is a beautiful golfer with plenty of power and to my mind, has a particularly graceful swing, of which the peculiarity is that his arms seem very, very close to his body and yet that is no apparent loss of freedom and certainly none of power. He is a good iron player—nay, a very good iron player. Indeed, he is so well equipped at all points that good as is his record (he has been in the final of ten championships and won innumerable scoring competitions). I still do not think he has done quite as well as he ought. Let us hope he will do himself

and run shot, which he plays in preference to the pitch when he can, and be is a stout-hearted holer out with his cleek.

Mackenzie and Torrance are true members of this Edinburgh school which is at present very strong. Both are lithe and graceful players with plenty of length. Torrance has been well known for some years and Mackenzie not so well known, in the South at any rate, till he played so well at Prestwick. Since then he has been doing some fine scores in competitions, notably one 69, which was very extraordinary.

The four Englishmen are Roger Wethered, Cyril Tolley, Colin Aylmer and C. V. L. Hooman. The first two, of course, are well known in America, though they completely failed to do themselves justice in your championship at the Engineer's course two years since. However, Tolley won our amateur championship in 1920 and Wethered, when he tied with Jock Hutchison for our open championship at St. Andrews last year, did something that I personally never expected to see an amateur do again. Both are very long and, mercifully for other and humble folk, occasionally rather crooked. In fact, however, it is doubtful whether the strength of either lies so very much in his driving. Tolley is a very fine putter—the kind of man that you would select, if you were allowed, to hole out a crucial short putt for you, because you would be sure that he would hit the ball firmly and boldly and, if it did not go in, it would at any rate rattle against the back of the tin. Oddly enough, (Continued on page 48)

OUR CHANCES

(Continued from page 13)

he had a terrible off day in putting at Prestwick and so disappeared in the first round, but day in and day out, he is just about as good and as bold and natural a putter as I know. Wethered's chief strength is rather in his iron play. He has what few amateurs have, the power of pitching right up to the hole with plenty of bite on the ball. No man can make the ball stop quicker or grip the turf more firmly and he plays all these stopping shots, when he can, with old fashioned niblick with a tiny head, on the face of which there seems hardly room for the ball.

Aylmer has been in the final and semi-final of our amateur championship and is a beautiful golfer. He is not more than five feet seven inches high and quite light and small, but he has the divine gift of timing—no one is going seriously to outdrive him and he is a sound iron player and in his day an inspired putter. Most of his golf he has to play on a course that is more suitable for women than champions, that at Ranelagh close to London, which is a country club first and a golf club only by the way. The other day he went round it in fifty-six strokes, which is one of the most ridiculously and indecently good scores I ever heard of. I have a great deal of faith in him and should be disappointed if he does not do well.

Hooman is one of those lucky people who can hit any kind of ball well at any kind of game. He played cricket and rackets for Oxford as well as golf and was a really outstanding cricketer till he gave up the game and took to working hard, a good many years ago now. The strongest part of his golf is his wooden club play, for he is both long and straight and though he is a notable disciple of the "Shut Face" yet he is seldom or never afflicted with the hook which sometimes punishes these unorthodox persons. I have seen him miss short putts now and again but who does not miss them sometimes? When he is at his best there is no more dangerous or more brilliant player.

So now I have said something of all the eight and if they live up to the nice things I have said about them—and they are not too flattering, I honestly believe—why then I think we should make a match of it at Brookline.

I should add just one proviso—so long as we are not prostrated by the wonderful kindness of our American hosts.
