

PERRY DUKE MAXWELL

By Charles Evans

It has been said that golf is the sport of kings. Be that as it may, moving through a period of several hundred years from its ancient home in Scotland, it has arrived at this point of time to include more individual players than any sport among men. If Perry Duke Maxwell had done nothing more than to achieve recognition and acceptance as one among three of the most skilled and renowned golf architects of the United States, it would place him among the largest benefactors of his day. Thousands and tens of thousands of Americans have enjoyed and still enjoy the charm and zest which come from playing upon the golf courses shaped and beautified by his genius.

Beginning with the Dornick Hills golf construction between 1906 and 1911, Mr. Maxwell immediately won recognition as a golf architect. He designed the two famous golf courses of Oklahoma City, Twin Hills and the Oklahoma City Golf and Country Club. He was invited into the states of Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Kentucky, Kansas and Nebraska to fashion some of the remarkable golf courses of those states.

Golf courses, like people and horses, have their thoroughbreds. Mention the National at Augusta, Georgia, and you immediately think of Bobby Jones, the most renowned golfer in the world, and at this hour, the National is a place of retreat for Dwight D. Eisenhower, President of the United States. Speak of the Melrose Course in or near Philadelphia, and Caucon Hill, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and the sports world in Los Angeles, New York, London, or Tokyo, will know that these mean golf, restful play among the most beautiful surroundings to be found in the world. On all of these courses, Perry D. Maxwell was invited to lend his genius in shaping certain greens and fairways.

In such surroundings and work as this he came in contact with the finest minds of America in the spheres of business and learning. Through his friendship with university men, he was invited to build the Country Club University course of Michigan University; likewise, he designed and developed courses at Ohio and Iowa universities. He always took great pride in looking upon the Southern Hills course at Tulsa which won him renown in his marvelous career as golf architect.

It should be said at this point that in the first days of his Ardmore living, 1904, he linked himself with the banking interests of the city, becoming Vice President of the Ardmore National Bank.

This bank had for its President, Honorable Lee Cruce, afterward the second governor of the state of Oklahoma. In this banking world, Maxwell won the esteem, honor, and confidence of all that met him. But in his reading, travel, and creative thinking, he learned to know that not only for all his mental health and happiness, he must turn to Nature, to the God of the Great Outdoors. Loving life as revealed in sports he had learned to enjoy tennis and golf. In both of these sports he won, as a player, more than a local reputation. Tennis being somewhat severe, he turned more and more to the golf world. His ability to love and understand the natural world, the roll of the land, the character of ravines, the trees, shrubs and grass even to the high points of their scientific growth, grew and deepened until he became an authority on the origin, selection and adaptation of grasses. Possessing a highly artistic temperament it naturally followed that his use of these for decorative and moulding values soon made him a skillful architect in developing intriguing greens and elusive fairways. His first work upon the Dornick Hills golf course of Ardmore attracted immediate attention over the state and subsequently the United States. Thus began great demands for his skill and power as a golf architect.

Last summer, when I read with deepest pride and satisfaction how a splendid citizen, a real philanthropist, was bringing to Ardmore, my old home town, the great golfers of the world, I rejoiced above measure. But the finest satisfaction of all was the knowledge that the man who was largely responsible for the Dornick Hills golf club upon which noted magicians of the golf world played, was, that my first high school graduate, Perry Maxwell, had made all this possible more than any other man. No wonder that Mr. Waco Turner, who made this golf tournament national, paid Perry Maxwell the highest tribute.

His latest work was when Oklahoma City sent for him in 1950-51 to build for it the Municipal course along the sweeping shores of Lake Hefner. The last time I talked with him he met me in the Skirvin Hotel and said with a zest and joy which a child might display with a new and pretty toy, "Dr. Evans, let me take you out to my new course along the edges of Lake Hefner." I went with him and while his work was not finished at that time, he described what was to be done in such accurate yet fascinating terms that even a dull imagination could picture a beautiful and wonderful sports field. No wonder then that *The Daily Oklahoman* this year presented a statement of some eminent golf architects, that "the greens and fairways created by Perry Maxwell on Oklahoma City's Municipal Golf Course were the finest they had seen in all their experiences."

I shall not leave his influence on the entire realm of this noble sport before I recount the meeting with Scotland's and the world's greatest golf architect, Mr. McKenzie, to whom Maxwell introduced me in the Biltmore Hotel in Oklahoma City many years ago. Max-

well praised McKenzie, for his world renown in golf. The Scot, with true brogue, turned to me and said, "Mr. Maxwell speaks of my ability to make a good fairway or develop a worthy green, but I wish to tell you that in laying out a golf course and to give it everything that the science and art of golf demand, Mr. Maxwell is not second to anyone I know." I believe the grand old man of golf knew and meant what he said.

LINEAGE

Perry Duke Maxwell was born in Princeton, Kentucky, June 13, 1879, and died in Tulsa, Oklahoma, November 15, 1952. He was the son of Dr. James A. Maxwell and Caroline Harris Maxwell. The Maxwell's came from Scotland, and his grandmother, Isabella Adamson, was a descendant of the famous Dishington family of Anstruther, Scotland.

He traced through his mother direct descendancy from Captain Thomas Harris who came to the Virginia Colony in 1611 and settled in Henrico County, Virginia. Captain Harris received grants of land in 1635 and 1638 and was a member of the House of Burgesses in 1623 and 1639 and was elected again in 1646. Perry D. Maxwell was of the ninth generation from Captain Harris.

EDUCATION AND MARRIAGE

Maxwell entered school life as a child in Marion, Kentucky, schools. He completed his high school with honors in 1896 in Marion schools. As Superintendent of Schools of Marion at that time, I taught several classes. He immediately caught my attention by his all around powers. He was good in all courses, and very precocious in several. All mathematics, he devoured with relish and mastery. He loved English, especially the poets and his powers of speech were impressive. I recall after entering Kentucky University he came home to Marion and while there he told how his college had selected him to compete with Old Center, Vanderbilt, Georgetown, and Transylvania in the famous Declamatory Contest. He said that he had chosen for the contest a scene from "Quo Vadis." He wondered if he could give this a proper reading. I said to him, "Of course you can." He won the contest.

His hopes for a complete University career were blighted in his first year at Lexington by poor health. His family persuaded him to take the next year of University life at Stetson University, Florida. Though he gathered honors at Stetson, his health did not improve so he spent the next two years in travel. Maxwell never entered school again. However his love of learning, a profound interest in the arts, and a scholarly reverence for classic literature and the company of America's leading thinkers and scholars moved him throughout life. Education has a thousand definitions, but none are very good. One thing is known: diplomas, degrees, years spent

in centers of learning do not define education. If this were not true, what would we call the Washingtons, the Andrew Jacksons, and the Lincolns? Maxwell met the measurements required of truly educated men as well as anyone I have known. Dean Julian C. Monnet, of the University of Oklahoma, once said to me, "I have just had a long visit with Perry Maxwell. Do you know that the more I am associated with him, the more thoroughly I am convinced that he is one of the most learned men I have met."

In school, as a boy, he found his life-mate, Miss Ray Woods, a brilliant and marvelous spirit. They were married in June 1902. The Woods family came to Livingston County, Kentucky, from Virginia in Revolutionary days, settling on a plantation a few miles from the village of Salem. Henry Woods, the grandfather of Ray Woods, married a Miss Patterson, a Virginia belle, and they dispensed such hospitality in their cultured southern style, the home became a center of refined society throughout Western Kentucky. Henry Woods and wife had four sons, Press, Henry, John, and Clifton, and two daughters, Sally and Ada. Press was the father of Mrs. Perry D. Maxwell. The mother of Mrs. Maxwell was Miss Dora Crumbaugh, whose father came from Hagerstown, Maryland to Western Kentucky about 1808. The mother of Ray Woods Maxwell was one of the clearest thinkers and most highly educated women this writer has known. Through more than forty years I visited her home which became, because of her intellect, beneficence, and religious devotion a center of goodness and light in every village and city in which she lived. To Perry Maxwell and Ray Woods Maxwell were born four children, Elizabeth Maxwell Killion, Mary-Belle Maxwell Deskins, Dora Maxwell Harrison, and Press Maxwell.

RELIGION

Maxwell took his religion as he took his blood or breath. With a Scottish Presbyterian ancestry without a break stretching down through more than 200 years, it was as natural for him to practice all those simple moral principles set forth by John Knox as it is for a bird to fly or a star to shine.

Through the more than 65 years I watched his life, I never saw him perform a deed, or speak a word that was not as clean and pure as sunlight. He kindly but firmly refused to engage in, or listen to conversation seasoned with risqué stories or vulgarity.

In Ardmore he settled down as father, husband, and citizen, and was soon honored by positions of leadership in the Presbyterian Church and all moral and religious movements of the Community.

So, it was no wonder then in the Ardmore years he entered into every phase of church development and finally bringing about him many noble men and women of his faith, he drew a vision of a church building worthy of the splendid citizens of Ardmore. As his body rested there the other day I looked up and saw groined arches

and sustaining beams, a small but beautiful presentation of the noblest of church architecture, and I said, "From foundation to the chimes above, this is one of the expressions of love for good he helped to give in the largest way to Ardmore."

Out of this church, the chimes he had placed there tolling, they took his body to the Dornick Hills and there where Ray has slept for 30 years, they placed him by her side, under the great oaks.

CHARACTER

While it can be seen that this man was born well with clean Scottish blood in his veins, and was nurtured from his birth in an environment of wealth and high ideals, still it must be said that his life was greater than his heritage.

There was no cessation or period of vacant rest in this man's life. He early learned how to know that the best definition of rest is divine activity. He filled every day full to the brim. After a ceaseless round of labor which took him out into the fields and hills at the first dawn of light, he seldom stopped until the shadows falling eastward told him that the day was done. Then began some of his most wholesome and creative hours. If at home and near his library, he read, read incessantly, and there he talked with earth's greatest men and women. Maxwell was one of the best and most discerning readers that I have ever known in all my life. Whether it be a play of Shakespeare, or the modern philosophy of Will Durant, whether it was a Tennyson or a Robert Frost, Maxwell often sat by my side and read and I came to know these thinkers of the world better because he often interpreted them far better than I could. His library was never large, perhaps, in number of books, but it was as large as all time in his choice of world wide and diversified authorship. He became such a man of learning that when he visited the great universities, the noted libraries of the world, or found himself in certain centers of learning as at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, Ann Arbor, all these welcomed him and made him a friend. Often he would return from a trip to the East, bringing a fine volume of the modern classics with the author's name written upon the fly-leaf, and then he would tell me of the hours of conversation held and the views this scholar had given him along with the book.

So ran the full stream of life for this fine soul. He built a home on top of the high rolling ridge not far distant from where he shaped, with Ray helping him, the beautiful Dornick Hills. But fate dealt him an all but killing blow in 1919 when it took from his side his adored wife. She had understood him when others thought him a visionary. She had given him faith, complete faith in all his endeavors. Her spirituality equalling, if not superior, to his, gave him always an atmosphere of refinement and culture which his nature demanded. I heard from an old Oklahoma City neighbor of

his severe sorrow and loss. I immediately took a train for Ardmore and I met him at the gate of his home. He said to me, "I knew you would be coming. I have told the minister that he could speak of the church life of my wife but that I wanted you to tell of her loved ones, and of our home life. I am going to place her form out yonder on the Dornick Hills golf course which we shaped in love together, high up on the long ridge bordered by oaks, she will rest and I shall build an archway there, perhaps a nameless one, but it will tell of my silent and everlasting devotion." So, on that June day, I stepped to the side of the grave and with a number of those who loved her, stood beneath a wonderful blue sky and great green oaks, and with God's open spaces reaching far out to the top of the Arbuckles, I told the story of the life of two fine souls I had seen mate and pass from my school room out into the world. I have experienced many occasions in a long life where I was called upon to interpret the deeds of men and women. Never have I known an exultation surpassing that, wherein I felt that every word I said was used in defining two lives as good as any I had known.

It took years to cure the distress of a life alone. Work, constant work, travel, were poor substitutes for the strength and joy she had brought him. Out of the rich experiences of the early friendship the Maxwells had met some very cultured companions. In this group, one rare friend had married and had moved on to widowhood. In the last fine years of his life, Perry Maxwell learned to lean upon this good heart for peace and faith. A quiet call of seasoned and noble love brought them together as man and wife. Perry said to one of his closest friends in Ardmore in one of the last visits he made to that city, "Say, my friend, has not God been good to me? Through His Grace, I have been permitted to live with two of the noblest women man could be given to know."

So the story runs of his wonderful life. Let no man or woman who may read this think for one moment that anything said here smacks of overemphasis. I end this brief offer of my love to Perry D. Maxwell as I began it. He, in truth, was one of the greatest men Ardmore has ever known. The entire home, school, church and cultural life of Ardmore, out to the very edges and on through the state and nation have been enriched by the work of this man.

Ruskin says, "the finest of all fine arts, is the art of right living." If this be true, and it is, this man was one of the cleanest, noblest artists I have studied. High aims, walking only with those of clean thoughts and worthy living, sought by men of low and high estate alike, it must be said of Perry Duke Maxwell, he met every test Tennyson sets forth in his *Knights of the Round Table*, where he says:

"His glory was redressing human wrong;
He spoke no slander, no, nor listened to it;
He loved one only and he claved to her."