



AN OLD DUTCH TILE

Showing a man playing the game of "Kolf," brought to America over a hundred years ago by a Scotsman who settled in New Hampshire

Kolf in Dutch Tiles

By the REV. EDWARD G. W. MEURY, D. D.

We find many representations of the extinct Dutch game on old tiles. This particular tile has been in the United States for over a hundred years, brought over by an old Scot who settled in New Hampshire and who, it is interesting to see, knew of the Dutch game, possibly but not probably, the source which suggested his own native game of golf. James VI of Scotland, then James I of England in 1618 gave a monopoly in Scotland for the making of golf balls which had been imported in considerable quantities from Holland: probably the Scots got from them a lot of these old tiles as well as the balls.

The figure on this tile, from the way he is bracing himself, seems to be playing on the ice as the game was generally played originally, there is no relation to the stance in striking a golf ball nor does he hold the club in a position for swinging a club as is done in the game of golf.

The large size of the club-head and also of the ball will be at once noticed; the club-head, almost as large as the player's foot, is

shaped roughly like those used in golf; the ball is almost as large as the man's head: neither the club nor the ball is in any way adapted to the Scots' game. No evidence coming from tiles gives any clue that Kolf in Holland may even have had any likeness to golf in Scotland. In Scotland no records have ever been brought to light which would show that their National game came from Holland. The bringing over of the tiles was a consequence to the Scots' interest in golf by reason of certain similarities in Kolf: Scots trading in Holland would naturally notice and admire these tiles and wish to have them to embellish their own homes—more so, as not being a particularly artistic people, they had nothing of the kind which they had themselves produced. This very lack of artistic expression has prevented any records in etching or painting coming down from the early days of the game in Scotland as has been the case in Holland where Kolf is depicted in a number of old prints and pictures.

One of the oldest jocular references to the Scots' thriftiness occurs in the records of the Blackheath Golf Club (itself the oldest golf club in England) in the following entry:

29th June, 1833, Capt. Sutherland, Chair.

The Snuff Mull, the gift of Mr. Longlands being out of order was repaired by Mr. Murray of Cornhill, gratis, and he expressed his hope that the Club would always give him little Scotch jobs upon the same terms.

The Royal Blackheath was formed originally of a membership predominantly Scotch and undoubtedly it so remained in 1833. Thus, the Scots, then as now, were capable of both making and appreciating a joke on themselves, an evidence of a real sense of humor, not always to be observed in some other nationalities.