

Storm Signals in Tennis

By HERBERT REED
(Right Wing)

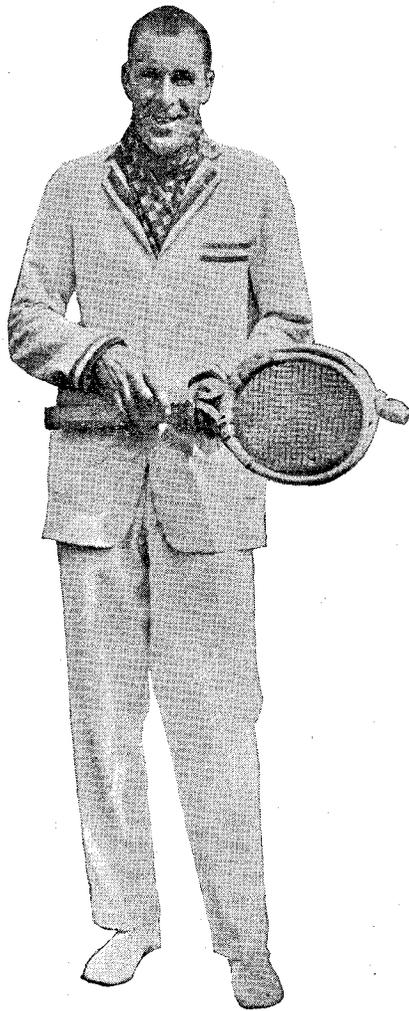
WILLIAM T. TILDEN in the course of his remarkable athletic career has rebuilt and dramatized tennis all over the world. He has been architect and actor in a game that has experienced one of the most remarkable developments in the history of sport. It seems a pity that just at the time when the mass of the tennis public stood ready to add long-delayed personal popularity to his greatness the crash should have come. For, no matter what decision of expediency is made before these lines appear, whether for or against, and pending a rehearing of the whole matter in the near future, it was indeed a crash. The world of tennis owes Bill Tilden a debt that it is doing its best to repay—and with his own generous help—by the development of what some day will be almost a horde of young players who will put the technique of the game on a plane higher than it has known in all its long history. This great triumph cannot be taken from him.

Tennis is a game of forthright personalities. No other kind will get very far on the courts. And arrayed against Tilden in the decision that removed him from the Davis Cup team are personalities as dominant as his own. They felt that infraction of the player-writer rule was a vital blow to the standing of their beloved sport. But they should have known that Big Bill could no more forbear to write about it on the spot than he could forbear to talk about it, no matter what the prior agreement. Too bad they could not have barred all writing about the game by Davis Cup players for the period of the matches and thrashed the whole thing out later, as it will have to be thrashed out, along with other infractions that have been glossed over.

I sometimes feel that the player-writer rule has taken precedence over such matters as gift rackets and exorbitant expense accounts—with an occasional gift automobile—because of the propaganda power it might give to certain personalities in their uncontrolled moods. There have been times when it has worked out that way. It must be remembered that in these days of newspaper syndicates a disgruntled champion can reach literally millions of readers,

while the governing body in his sport must rely on "statements," which have no money value in the editorial office, and so can never hope to catch up with the offending material. At first blush, permission to write seems simple enough and innocent too, but modern civilization has complicated the matter. I have felt, too, that part of the trouble with the player-writer rule, the Ethiopian in the cord-wood, has been the hostility of the parties gathered in conference. In the vernacular, both have made concessions, but both have gone away from the council table "sore."

In a word, the capitalization of ath-



William T. Tilden

letic ability in selling bonds, insurance, or even the plumbing fixtures that add to Jean Borotra's income, for instance, does not carry with it the power of publicity. And that power of publicity is perhaps more dangerous than ever just now, since in all sports the present temper of a large section of the public (the vastly expanded sports public that is looking for a "show") seems to be: "Ah, who cares? Let him make all the money he wants. He's champion, ain't he?" I shall return to the syndicated article later.

For the moment let us to the personalities of a few men set over against Tilden, President Collom of the U. S. L. T. A., and Joe Wear, in charge of the American Davis Cup team, and incidentally townsmen of Tilden. Holcombe Ward is a man who has stood four square against even the very slightest taint of professionalism, even any mere suspicion of a drift that way, ever since I first heard of him. He is hardly a compromiser, and he has the advantage of knowing that the present *laissez-faire* in all sports is a passing phase. There are literally hosts of tennis followers who will say: "If Holcombe Ward says a thing is so, it is so. I am sorry, but I am content." Something of a reputation to have built up in the course of an active life on and off the courts! And there is Julian S. Myrick, of whom it may be said with justice that modern tennis from the administrative point of view owes him a debt that it never can repay. It may be, as Tilden and Richards have often said, that he has sometimes considered himself the czar of the tennis world. No doubt he has. At all events, he and Tilden have waged open warfare for years.

What Myrick did in the earlier days was to give the game new life by taking it away from Newport, where for so many years it was a mere appanage of society. That was an accomplishment against which at the time the betting was heavy. Later came the West Side Tennis Club, which is today to tennis what Meadow Brook is to polo. How much influence he has had in the late unpleasantness I do not know, as he is out of office, but I suspect that he has given counsel, as he always will on any amateur sport. He has the friendship



Tilden in action

and respect of men in other sports who are fighting to keep their games out of the hands of the promoters. It was inevitable that such a character as Myrick and such a character as Tilden would come to grips. And it was inevitable that sooner or later the storm would break around Tilden.

Dr. Sumner Hardy, father of modern tennis on the West coast, and the man responsible for the bringing out of that remarkable string of players from California, made the charges against Tilden, and in doing so he was consistent, for he has objected to the whole Davis Cup procedure this year from the very beginning. And I honestly believe that it hurt him to do it. His brother, Samuel Hardy, by the way, is one of Tilden's greatest admirers.

Mention of Dr. Hardy brings one back for the moment to my characterization of Tilden as a tennis "architect." For the first young player whom Hardy nursed along on the public courts of Golden Gate Park was Maurice McLaughlin, the "California Comet," who took the East by storm. Tilden, when he began his great campaign, realized at once that "Maury" had brought something new into the game—remorseless

speed. But Tilden would not toss away as much of the back court game as "Red Mac" had done. He linked the two together in the course of his years of constantly improving play until, combining the two with what amounted to a brand-new generalship, he had at command as nearly perfect a game as any one could visualize. I said in a previous article that I considered Richards the greatest player in the world today, and I repeat that statement, for he had finally conquered Tilden, who frankly admitted that his years were against him; but Tilden taught Richards his own game, as he has too many other young players to mention.

Now for the syndicates. Away back in the long ago, Walter C. Dohm of Princeton, and W. C. Downs of Harvard, later members of the New York Athletic Club, and both delightful personalities, wrote of middle-distance running for a newspaper. Syndicates were not then in existence, and I remember no rule at the time against an athlete's writing his head off. He had to do just that to make any money. At best he made possibly \$10 a column, and wrote three or four columns a week. No one thought anything about it. Then came

the syndicates. They had done wonderful work in building up reputations and comfortable, in some cases opulent, livings for writers who otherwise might have been unheard of. But when they tackled sport, about which most editors know very little, they demanded first, last, and all the time, a NAME. For buying and selling the name was essential to start with, and it did not matter much what appeared under that name. In fact, the syndicate preferred to have the stuff written in the office. To the everlasting credit of Tilden and Richards, their copy was always readable, and they took pains to improve it as time went on. If they had never held a title, they undoubtedly would have developed into first-class tennis reporters—and tennis is fortunate in the excellence of its newspaper handling. But there never would have been ten thousand, fifteen thousand, or more, a year in it. As a matter of fact, I doubt if Richards ever made any such figure at his best.

However, the remuneration rose high enough so that it was possible for a ranking tennis amateur to make more money out of tennis by being an amateur than by turning professional. This is the sort of thing to which George Wightman, the same that resigned from the Olympic Committee because of Charley Paddock, so seriously objects. And, admittedly, it is a problem. It begins to look, indeed, as if the plodding, conscientious professional without any personal advertising were out of luck altogether.

Fundamentally, I have been opposed to restricting any man in the expression of opinion in writing on any sport in which he was engaged, and for money—if any one wanted to buy it. This always provided that the athlete wrote his own stuff. But it will be seen from the foregoing that there are pretty strong arguments against it.

I only hope that after Tilden's return, when the matter is taken up *in extenso*, as it will be, that the other abuses will be brought out into the sunlight, where they belong. And if the house-cleaning goes clear down to the cellar, the tennis ranks might well be decimated. Even so, I suspect the game will live, even though gate receipts might suffer for a time. I wonder if some of our readers remember the time when L. H. Waidner, of Chicago, what time the Middle West was insurrecto, arose on the convention floor and had the cheerful effrontery to demand that players in amateur tournaments be fined for tardiness or failure to appear.

Miniatures from the Life

By **IBBY HALL**

The Pattern-Cutter

IN the early spring of this year a certain pattern-cutter in New York lost his job.

He was not a young man, and was inclined to be rather sensitive over this point of age. Perhaps he felt that years were a disadvantage in seeking work. Perhaps with increasing age he had found jobs more difficult to hold. Or it may be that life had aged him prematurely. For, though the man looked over seventy and old, he insisted to those who felt they had a right to know that he was no more than fifty-six. He had a certain pride about it.

In spite of his years, he had not learned very much about life except for the fact that everywhere it was stronger than himself. He had learned, too, that he must hold a job in order to go on living. So that when he lost his job he knew very well that he was expected to find another. From the cheap lodging-house which was his home, he set out daily to do what was expected of him.

But for once Life, or God—or, what had come to mean for him the Ruling Power—did not seem interested in his efforts. At the end of two months he was still without a job, and his mind was slowly filling with a great doubt. He doubted that he would ever get another job—he doubted that he could hold a job any more if he should get one—he doubted that any Ruling Power was aware of his existence. It was only a step to the final doubt of that one lesson he had learned. . . . There might be other ways of keeping alive than the way of work.

It was about this time when the old man noticed, one afternoon in his aimless tramping of city pavements, the hospitable open doors of a Catholic church.

The air inside the building was cool and dark, after the heat of noisy streets. The old man stood hesitating in one of the quiet aisles. No one troubled him. The scattered worshipers in the church were intent upon their own concern with God. The pattern-cutter slipped furtively into a pew, grateful for this chance to rest his painful feet. He began to look about, cautiously, curiously, at the worshipers—at the candles—at the stat-

ues—the walls. He began to consider what he should do.

A few hours later he found himself trembling, standing before a magistrate. He had been caught pilfering from the poor-box of the church. What was to be done with him now?

The magistrate did very little to that cowed and abject figure. This was a first offense. The man was old and out of work, and the temptation had been great. He was put on parole.

Outside the city court, breathing the air of freedom once more, the old man was filled with relief. That had been a narrow escape. From what—he was not quite sure. But certainly he had doubted that Ruling Power, and had been brought back to himself by a quick touch on the shoulder. He must remember once more what he had learned. He must find a job.

But when one is old and has begun to doubt life becomes a terror and a quicksand. Another month passed, and the pattern-cutter was still out of work. Moreover, he had added now a fresh doubt to those others. He doubted the law. Perhaps it was only necessary to be more careful and one might escape the law altogether. His mind began to dwell on the argument of the poor-box. Did he not belong to the poor? Was that not his money by rights?

Two weeks more without a job, and his hunger coupled with his doubts had become a defiance. He was through with superstitions. He would act now for himself, but this time more carefully.

In the northern part of the city one summer's afternoon a devout congregation worshiped before a Catholic altar. And the old pattern-cutter was among them. When the services were over, the old man stayed on alone. He sat waiting with the silence for twilight, when corridors and vestibules would be filled with flickering and unsubstantial shadows, hardly distinguishable from his own wavering figure.

In that subtle moment of dusk, when candle-light begins to live and marble shrines glow with warmth and color, the old man crept closer to the shrine of the

Sacred Heart. With the deepening grayness outside, the religious light of the church rose like a tide to clutch and drown his resolution. He looked fearfully over his shoulder, but he was alone with stillness—a stillness that beat on his ear in an unknown language.

He was within reach now of the poor-box. Now he was so close upon it that he could feel his own breath return to him. One second—one second only lay between his fear and the money in that box. He had only to lift one hand to the cover, while he plunged the other inside. Beads of sweat broke out upon his forehead. Only one second, and he would be out of this dreadful stillness and on the safe and familiar street again.

The pattern-cutter braced himself and raised his two hands. They closed simultaneously upon the lifted cover and the cold coins within. And in that grip they became paralyzed, unable to move.

For, with the suddenness of that second, the stillness of the church was broken. A blinding flash of some mysterious lightning flung the shadows from the church and rounded the edifice with daylight. In the swift and unexpected brilliance there existed only one old man, struck into terrified stone. Then somewhere in the distance a bell began to ring.

The pattern-cutter returned to life. Dropping the cover of the poor box, and thrusting his money-clenched hand into his pocket, he staggered down the now darkened church and stumbled through the vestibule towards the steps.

He was met there on the steps by three figures—one in the black robe of a priest, the other two wearing the badges of detectives. Once more a white-faced trembling figure was carried off to justice—but this time his plea of not guilty would count for little. This time the money was in his pocket, and behind him, in the silence of the church, a flash light camera held the record of his act.

The next day the newspapers heralded the invention of one of the city's policemen—a contrivance that had succeeded in taking the picture of the thief, ringing a bell of warning in the rectory, and notifying by the boom of the explosion the police station next door.

The Outloo