

CHAPTER V

VIM, VINEGAR AND VITRIOL

SUPPOSE we proceed to try yet another little variety. By this time we may assume that a deep inspiration before each shot is taken for granted. The action should already have become part of the unconscious self so far as to be a sort of automatic process that we go through every time we address the ball. And perhaps the unconscious self will also be kind enough to take charge of the two other points to both of which we have been attending or trying to attend at one and the same time, namely, the use of the wrists in the up-swing and the prolonged follow-through at the finish; we have been keeping the limelight on these two; now we will put them back into the middle distance of the mental view and bring up another pair of fresh points into the foreground. As in the former case it will be convenient if the two fresh points come, not just exactly together in the stroke, but one later than the other. The first point I will take is the twist of the body: this goes on right through the up-swing while the wrists (and arms) are taking the club up. Of course you will carefully remind yourself to inspire

as you address the ball, but be careful also not to think too much about it: concentrate your mind resolutely, and focus it on the body twist; neither should you think too much about the wrist-work; let your wrists, as it were, take the club up of themselves (slowly) while the active part of your brain is busy seeing to it that your left hip turns clear through a right-angle till it comes opposite the ball. The temptation to be content with a twist of something less than a right-angle is most besetting; it needs persistent effort to keep the body steadily turning on the axis of its backbone until the left hip and shoulder actually get round to the ball. This is partly because such an almost acrobatic twisting of the bodily frame is a movement quite unusual, not to say unnatural, and partly because when you mean to strike, your will is wound up hard for action and gets impatient to be done with the necessary slowness of the body-twist, what the wound-up will craves for is to loose ^{it} instanter in the swift strong blow. Keep a tight rein on the will, then; check the impulse to a premature delivery of the blow, ever the most fatal of errors; go on twisting the hip till you know it has come round opposite the ball; incidentally this will give time for the wrists to carry the club well up and to flex themselves, with the left bent in under properly, at the top of the swing; never mind even if there should be a very perceptible moment's pause at the top. True the plus men seem to swing like lightning, with no pause anywhere; but then, my

friend, you and I are not plus n'en, very far from it; their counsels of perfection are not for us; we may permit ourselves to pause a moment at the top of the swing, or do anything else that may save us from hurrying into the error of plunging into the down-swing prematurely.

Look at your daisy, then, and swing at it, keeping the body-twist in the lime-light of the mental view, pause momentarily at the top, and then smite that daisy, as I once heard a Far West cowboy say, with vim, vinegar and vitriol. Slaughter the daisy thus a few times till you feel sure of yourself, and then have a go at the teed ball. After twisting the body so much round you will probably find yourself less likely than usual to hit the ball with the exact middle of the club-face, but if and when you do succeed in doing so, the ball will surely fly further than it ever was wont to do for you in the past.

Here then, is the first of the two fresh points we are trying to keep an eye on, the right-angled twist of the body. The second of them shall be a point coming later in the swing, namely the position of the feet and especially of the left foot at the finish. In your last few shots the odds are that if you have happened to notice your position at the finish you will have observed that your feet have moved away from the original stance. This may be an old trouble with you, and you may have long known how you are given to swing yourself off your stance; but you are certainly more likely to find that you have done it when you got in

all that extra body work in those last shots. Now go over your recollections again of how a fine golfer shapes at the finish, recalling the details of his attitude either from what you have yourself observed or from pictures. When we looked at his finish before, the point to which we directed our attention was the way he got his hands away ; turn your eye, now not to his hands but to his feet. Is not his left foot set firmly on the ground, with the heel well down and the weight inclining to lean on the outside of the foot ? Indeed so strongly is this particular point marked in some of the best photographs that they almost recall the idea of a skater doing the outside edge and striking out on the left foot. No-doubt you may occasionally see a fine driver swing with such abandon that the exuberance of his finish carries him right off his feet, but even he only exceeds in this manner at a certain risk, and you may be very sure that his left foot is never raised before the ball has left the face of the club, whatever he does with it after.

For an experiment, go to the opposite extreme, and see if you can compel yourself to do a shot with the maximum of immobility. Address your daisy, and say to yourself, " Flatfooted ! Heels and toes both down ! " and take a full swing so. You will find it very hard or even impossible either to get the right-angled body-twist without raising the left heel or to follow well through and get the club away till it comes round down the back without having raised the right ; but never mind that ;

this is only an experiment, and you had better neglect all other matters for the present so long as you keep both feet firm and flat on the ground the whole time. After a few preliminary trials at the daisy, just to assure yourself that it really is possible to strike without raising either foot at all, tee up a ball and strike it in the same manner. If you have happened to strike it fair you will be quite surprised to see how well it travels in spite of the rather cramped swing, and you will perhaps note that your shoulders at the finish came into a tolerably correct attitude. This will help you to realize that it is unnecessary to swing yourself off your feet, and that a full free swing that leaves you with the left foot firmly planted at the finish is likely to give the best possible results. So after a few of these flat-rooted swings, you may allow first one and then both heels to rise in turn and see if you can contrive to let yourself go in a freer swing while firmly determined on keeping your stance. If you have been in the habit of falling off it this will not be an easy task; but you have got to do it, and remember that the more vigour you put into the shot the harder you will find it to remain firm on your feet at the finish. Play a short mashie approach, and it is easy enough to keep the feet firm, but it is quite another thing when you put every ounce of force you have into a full drive. For if you are really to make it go, weak, half-hearted hitting is no good, and the half-hearted blow itself is surely a symptom of acedia creeping on. Don't surrender to it, then. To

get distance you must put in the last ounce and you have got to hit that ball as the Western cowboy put it, with vim, vinegar and vitriol.