

EASIER GO

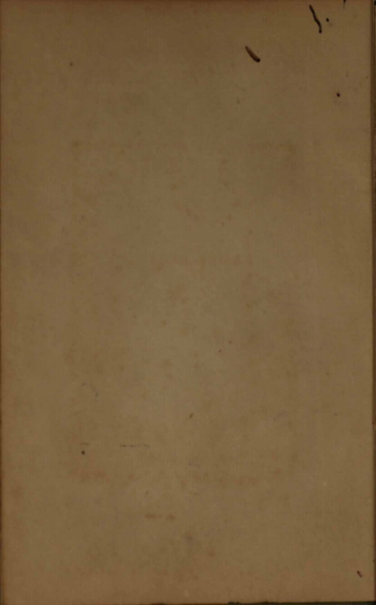
JACK WHITE

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EASIER GOLF



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BY
JACK WHITE

WITH 51 ILLUSTRATIONS

SECOND EDITION

METHUEN & CO. LTD.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.
LONDON

First Published . . . *June 19th 1924*
Second Edition . . . *November 1924*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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FOREWORD

IN the long years that have glided away since Golf took a trip from the frozen Dutch canals and landed—a welcome immigrant—upon the shores of Bonnie Scotland, there have been, no doubt, a good many geniuses at work with club and ball. But the greatest genius the greatest of pastimes has ever produced was the man who first said, "Golf is a funny game!"

I sometimes think it ought to be recognized as the Royal, Ancient—and Funny Game.

Not only is it doubly funny, in the senses that millions of people derive an immense amount of fun out of it whilst it persists in remaining at once the most undependable and provocative form of amusement known to human kind, but lots of the people who play it are—funny. Some of those who earn their living at it are funny. Many of the books and the articles that are written about it—this one included, I'll dare suppose—are funny, to say the least of it. But after a long experience I would be bold to assert that the Teaching of the Game is the funniest part of all.

I don't mean to say that when I am privileged to take a tyro out upon the course to impart to him the rudiments, or when an established player comes to me for the correction of some little thing that has gone wrong, I am under the danger of bursting my sides with laughing. Far from it; more often I am

inclined to be sad at the contemplation of how much a man's happiness may depend upon a mere ball being well hit with a lump of wood on the end of a stick. No—the funniness of the thing has no reference to a joke. It is the same sort of "funniness" as is quoted by the man who gets to the booking-office just in time to catch the last train and then says, "It's a funny thing, but I've left all my money at home." Or the other chap who says, "It's a *very* funny thing, but Goldstein gave me the tip to buy such-and-such a stock, and I lost over a thousand on it." The more serious it becomes the more funny it is.

And that is Golf all over.

Now, talking about fun, there are just one or two words I would like to say about an aspect of the game that, I think, is not much considered. One man's meat is proverbially another man's poison, and so it comes about that one fellow's play is another fellow's work. When I have seen a keen and enthusiastic amateur topple down from the pinnacle of his best game into the valley of the shadow of real bad golf, so that his eyes were ready to fill with the tears of mortification; when, on the other hand, I have seen players with the match in their hands chuck it away with a "Thank goodness, it's only half-a-crown, and I'll get it back next time"; and again, when I have seen those whom Providence has denied the physical faculties which are required for playing golf slaving away at improving their strokes, and at the month's end never so much as getting a shot off their score—I have often thought to myself: Pity the poor professional, whose bread and butter depends on it all!

But, perhaps, a man may make more fuss over the price of a ball than he would over a whole income and

livelihood. It was ever the trifles that mattered the most and the pin-pricks that stung the keenest.

Likely as not we who live by the game play it the better because every stroke of it is of such overwhelming importance. *It is so easy to play one good round now and then, but so mortal hard never to do a bad one.* (The best motto that anyone can have, who aspires to do well at golf, is to forget all about the good shots and think with all his might and main about the bad ones.)

If there is any difference between the golf of the amateur and the golf of the professional, I believe it must be this, that when the one gets back to the club-house, whatever may have happened to him at other holes, he can lay the balm of gratification to his soul on the strength of the "four" he got at the Long Twelfth, and the raking brassie—out of a bad lie—that put him hole high and won him the match on the seventeenth. What matter, in face of these triumphs—these red-letters, these memorable performances—if at the third and the seventh he picked up long short of the green with five strokes to his account. I won't say he'll be boasting about them to his friends, but the successful achievements, in themselves, will be pleasant to think upon.

Now, the professional—that is to say, if he is to be any kind of professional golfer at all—will take a different line of thought altogether. Will he be pleased with himself to do thuswise at a par-five hole? Half-topped drive only just on the fairway, skied and sliced brassie, indecisive approach, that got to the green somehow—but goodness knows how it did!—and a long, grievous, uncomely putt that just struggled in? Not in the least. He will clear his mind—if he is wise—of any fallacies without further delay. "That

drive," he will say, "I meant to lift, and I hit it off the horn. The brassie was intended to be a low crack with a wee bit of draw, and I cut it to glory. I lifted my head on the half-iron, and I never felt like holing the putt. *What, in the name of Heaven, am I doing?*"

And so, after the round, instead of feeling as—I won't say even most, but some—amateurs do, the glow of satisfaction that comes from difficulties miraculously overcome, the professional goes back to his shed with wrinkled brow. And the old gentleman who comes in to buy a rubber tee wonders why this paragon of steady golf, this wonderful man of temperament, is viciously shaving a knot in the floor board with the sole of an iron.

Or, to put it another way: one kind of golfer says to himself, "Now, if I can keep a tight hold of myself and not do anything foolish I believe I can get round in 80." The other soliloquizes, "However badly I play I *must* get round in 80." There is a world of difference in the ways in which one can address oneself to the task.

In my opinion the finest thing the ordinary golfer can do is, firstly, to realize this, that holes done in a wonderful way are no sort of use to him unless a considerable number come in one round. A three at a four hole is more than wiped out by a seven at a five hole. Secondly, to determine that, whatever may happen, he will definitely establish a firm and reliable "middle" to his game. Invidiousness is the last thing in the world I would choose to be guilty of; but I know this, that if I had to pick a sure-winning team of golfers—be the stake what it was—I would invariably choose the certainty of steadiness in preference to the possibility of brilliance. The man who plays, may be, an indifferent shot, a hurried,

thoughtless shot, but never, never, never produces a series of wild and woolly wallops, never is guilty of a genuinely *bad* shot—that man will be something “up” when he leaves the last green.

If it was a genius who observed that golf was a funny game, it was a perfect fool who described it as a “Succession of Recoveries.” The last thing any golfer ever wants to study is the art of recovery. Prevention is a thousand times better than cure, and a stroke along the fairway is worth two in the bush. The ideal to aim at is the condition in which no recoveries are ever needed. The man whose habit it is to go straight down the middle, hole after hole, will now and then find himself in the deep rough, with a nice little niblick problem to solve. Yet I will warrant that he will do better out of it than an opponent whose wanton swiping has given him eighteen practice shots “out of the long” in every round. Anyone who has played the game for a reasonable length of time, or has seen it played, must have been thrilled to watch some of the “tigers” getting out of difficulties—hitting wonderful iron shots out of long grass, lifting clean cracks out of a yawning bunker on to the green, crashing the ball out of stiff heather, and the like. I admit it's a fine spectacle, this dogged determination and brilliance in the face of crushing adversity. But ask those men whether, when they stood on the tee, were they pleased to see their ball go wide? Were they wanting to go into the wilder part of the landscape?

Never on your life. Their aim was the aim of any sound golfer. Down the middle—down the very centre of the middle. Anywhere on the fairway is better than anywhere in the heavy stuff.

Therefore I say that the golfer who aspires to

become a better player should concentrate upon getting there, not by the means of half-trodden by-paths but along the open highway. Let him establish for himself a reliable "middle" to his game, not necessarily brilliant, but something that he can be sure of at the worst of times. Do every hole in one over par—and you'll take a deal of beating.

I am not recommending this method merely because it leads, as it does, to the winning of matches. I am recommending it because it leads to the greatest pleasure in the game—and upon that point I feel I can speak. Golf has ever been a delight to me, and often I have caught myself wondering whether I was not getting more fun out of it than a professional ought to.

But, still, there it is. No amateur marches to the first tee with a greater anticipation, a greater feeling of "This was worth waiting for," a finer contemplation of the field upon which great things may presently be done, than I do. And, as the Americans say, I can tell the world there is no pleasure in golf to compare with that which comes from the shot that goes where it was meant to go.

"My stars! that would have been a bonnie biff if it hadn't had just that wee bit too much draw," and "Guid sakes! that had been a wonderful carrying ball if it hadn't just fallen away with the wind to the right": these are expressions designed for making the most of a bad job. Better every time hit an easy shot, and hit it true, than make a Herculean effort and get it on Achilles' heel.

Of course there are times when we want to lash out, and let the ball realize once and for all that we are not only its master, but a hard-hitting, brutal master into the bargain. The golfer who has never

on any occasion unstrapped all his muscles, thrown discretion and security to the winds, and taken a well-considered swipe that should put into thirty penny-weight of india-rubber all the energy acquired from an expensive lunch—that is a man who is no golfer at all. Never to have plumbed the depths is never to have risen to the heights. And there is nothing so good for measuring self-control as an occasional blissful, knowingly gratuitous, and wilful demonstration of no-control-at-all.

The only thing is that if just for that once everything works well and the ball is clean hit, sweet off the club, far and straight; the man who made that exceptional shot has henceforth an awfully bad furrow to hoe. It would be better for him, as a golfer, if all these terrific (though excusable) swipes ended miserably in the nearest hazard. In those circumstances he would learn to pull out of his bag, in the tightest corner of a match, a shot that approximated to being a certainty instead of banking on a chance at a thousand-to-one against.

I have mentioned that golf, for all that it is my business, has always been a delight to me, and I can well remember how in my boyhood I was ever unable to resist its fascination. It was originally intended that I should enter the building trade, and for this purpose I was taken under the wing of an uncle who was prospering in that line, the mantle of whose connexion and goodwill might ultimately have fallen upon my humble shoulders. To building, then, I applied myself with the best grace within the command of a youth of sixteen, though I took to it with no enthusiasm. Unfortunately—that is to say, unfortunately for the building trade—there came a day when my duties took me to the scaffolding of a house in

course of construction not far from the links of North Berwick. From my eminence I looked up from the contemplation of uninspiring and uninteresting bricks and mortar to the wide expanse of attractive fairways, variegated and splashed with the sand of hazards. The sight was altogether too much for me. The awful fate of the idle apprentice receded into the background, my duty towards my neighbour might never have been in the catechism for all I cared about it, uncle or no uncle—family entanglements were disregarded—I dropped the tools of my trade, swung down the ladder, and was OFF!

And that was a descent that I have never had occasion to regret.

There was an old lady who lived not far off from our house who was scandalized by my behaviour. To see a young, strapping lad wasting his time on the golf course, and merely tackling problems of his own seeking, was more than she could stand. "The lad's daft," she used to say, "aye knocking about wi' a ba'."

I mind how when I had begun to get my feet on the bottom rungs of the ladder—not a builder's ladder, thank goodness!—and had come home with a prize of ten pounds in my pocket (and this was big money in those days), the noise of this great deed reached the old dame and softened her resentment against my waywardness. "Aweel," she admitted, a bit reluctantly perhaps, "young Jock's no so daft, after a'."

The thing that gave me real golf fever was that I was always acting as caddie to good players, like Mr. J. E. Laidlay, Bob Ferguson, and Ben Sayers. They expected a caddie to take a keen interest in their matches, and in this respect I don't think I failed them. I used to feel just like a jockey riding

in a very important race. A wrong word of advice might have meant all sorts of things. But I was a keen student of the game, and I was never "stood down," and got more and more confidence, so that after a while my "boss" would discuss with me what club to take, and accept my advice as to how the shot should be played.

This, of course, was in the days of the old "gutta" ball. The old course at North Berwick was a great training ground, especially for iron play.

I may be wrong, but I shall always maintain that the real *craft* is learned when one is a caddie—providing one is keen and has set oneself a future in the game. I could sit for nights talking of my caddie days.

Mr. Laidlay was a great golfer when I had the honour of being his caddie. He used to take me to other courses, such as Carnoustie, St. Andrews, Prestwick, and Hoylake. So that I saw the great Mr. John Ball when at his very best. And that is how I became a professional golfer.

I was introduced first of all as a caddie by my uncles Ben Sayers and Davie Grant. Then when I felt I had got the A B C of the game at command I went to Tom Dunn to learn the club-making. It would open the eyes of some of the young professional "bloods" if they knew what we had to do as apprentices in those days. All the same, it felt fine and manly to wear the white apron and to go out for a bit practice shot during the dinner hour.

But I'm afraid young Jock was a bit fou, nevertheless, and now, if I had my time over again, I might have done differently. I don't mean that I would have embraced any other career than golf—that was always out of the question—but I might have played the game with an eye more on the possible profits

than on the pleasures of it. I was always apt to be too much of an amateur—in this sense, that I was rarely content to go straight from the tee to the hole. So you see that I have been preaching something I myself didn't always practise.

Right enough, I knew that I could go straight if I liked, but there were times—and are still—when I couldn't resist the temptation to prove to myself that I had real control over the ball. From the tee I would try to get to the spot I had picked out on the fairway, not by the direct route, but with the aid of a slice or pull that should take full advantage of the wind and the slope of the ground. In short, I took a delight—just as such a tremendous lot of players do to-day and always will do—in accepting risks, in making the game more difficult for myself, as if it were not difficult enough already. But think of the thrill when the ball, accurately controlled, steers itself along its gratuitously dangerous course and comes at last safely to a harbour that it never could have reached by the ordinary methods of navigation.

This sort of golfing jugglery is a pure delight—when it comes off—but I don't recommend it. For one thing, the player is very apt to lift his head in order to admire the results—and that is the worst of bad habits to get into. For another, the risk is unjustifiably great. Take the risks when there is no getting out of them, by all means, but it is folly to take risks for risk's sake. That is why I say, get rid of the notion that good golf can ever be a game of constantly recurring recoveries. In the recovery you are always out for neck or nothing—and too often the latter is your portion, for you get it in the former.

Take the case of the man who is off the line and finds himself in a deep, frowning, sand bunker, with

the green just over the brow and sloping away from him. He gets down to the job with the face of his niblick well laid back and the knowledge that the odds are right against him. The shot *can* be done—any shot is possible in golf—but what are the risks. The ball, caught only one-eighth of an inch too clean, flies nimbly over everything into goodness knows what beyond, or, taken an eighth of an inch too heavy, lazily flops back into the hazard again. And the hole as like as not is lost in either case. If not, then the player could content himself with scrambling out anyhow.

A glow of satisfaction will approve a successful recovery, but what about one's feeling when it is a hopeless failure? Does not one rightly say to oneself, "Lord, what a fool I was to get in *there* of all places. If *only* I had been on the fairway I could have got to the green even if I had only half-hit the ball. I could have villainously topped it, or hit the ground three inches behind it, and still I should have been there or thereabouts. But look where I am *now*?"

Therefore, I say, as many a better man has said before me, "Keep straight at all costs." Be long and straight if you can be. The combination is within the reach of but few; but if you can't be straight, length isn't worth consideration.

For this reason contentment is a great virtue in golf. To be for ever striving to play perfect golf when you are playing good golf is natural enough, but inclined to lead to disaster. Contentment forms a big item in the temperamental make-up of the great player.

To come back to the matter in hand, the avowed object of this volume is to improve the game of those

who are good enough to read it. What I ought to do in it is to give tuition, or, if you like, just a series of hints, so that the result would be much the same as if I were brought into personal contact with the reader. That, however, is a task which I would never dream of undertaking, because it would be merely a waste of time. The physical and mental character of the player is far too big a factor to allow any code of rules to be drawn up showing how a measure of skill in the game is to be achieved. If I were to give a detailed description—provided I could do so, which is very doubtful—of how I myself play every shot, even then it would not be very helpful, because what applies to Jack White does not necessarily apply to George Black. I will have to deal with my particular method of play in order to give descriptive and pictorial examples of what I regard as right and wrong, but, so far as this book is concerned, it is really intended to be devoted to a method of teaching rather than to a method of playing shots.

I think I may, without immodesty, claim to have been not altogether unsuccessful in my attempts to teach the game. Whatever success I have had is due to the fact that I have realized that golf can be played in an immense variety of ways. For that reason I have never tried to graft my own style upon a pupil. My aim has always been to let him retain his natural style, as dictated by the demands of his muscles, and to help him to eliminate from it as many as possible of the sources of weakness and error. It is no good endeavouring to make five foot six with a weight of fourteen stone hit the ball in the same way as an eleven stone man of six feet three.

On the other hand, there are certain rules that even the most extreme cases must equally conform to, for

to disobey these rules is inevitably to play bad golf. As I hope to show, these rules are relatively few in number and not at all difficult to bear in mind. If they are carefully adhered to—well, I will not promise that they will make anyone a champion, or even bring him home the winner of a monthly medal, but they will help anyone to obtain a "middle to his game," and I believe he will find that that is a very useful commodity to possess.

If, therefore, this little book should make any golfer so much as one stroke in a round better than he was before it will not have failed in its intention, and my trouble in preparing it will have been amply repaid. Good golfers are born and not made, but poor performances can be brought up to the moderate standard by means of tuition. Clearly my book cannot do as much in that direction as I could myself, but I have written it in the hope that it can do *something*.

EASIER GOLF

CHAPTER I

BALANCE

WHATEVER faults this book possesses—and any competent critic will no doubt find that their number is legion—I am determined that it shall not have the weakness of recommending an unlimited number of things as absolutely and fundamentally essential to the playing of a decent shot.

I remember a gentleman coming to me some years ago and saying that he had just finished reading a certain book about golf. "The writer," said he (or words to the same effect), "has conclusively proved that what with stance, knee, shoulder, elbow, head, eye, wrist, fingers, weight, and so forth, there are about six-and-thirty factors, any one of which being ill-adjusted will completely ruin the stroke. As I am very well aware that I shall never be able to remember half of these things, the only conclusion I can come to is that golf is no game for *me*. Until I read this book I didn't know that most of these troubles so much as existed at all."

My sympathies are divided equally between this gentleman and the writer of what was unquestionably a very sound and comprehensive treatise. After all, when one comes to analyse the making of a stroke, the many various movements, all depending very closely upon one another, do undoubtedly represent a highly complicated system, and to a certain extent it is true to say that each and every one constitutes an essential.

On the other hand, there should be no difficulty in seeing that some things are distinctly more important than others, and that, in some cases, many movements can quite justly be regarded as being parts of one single principal method of movement. As most of us know, there are plenty of golfers to-day who win their matches quite consistently, who have good sideboards of cups to show off, and who play down to very low handicaps indeed, and yet who break, and always have broken, certain rules of procedure that many authorities have held to be cardinal points in the game. If these rules can be broken with impunity one has no right to hold them up as the be-all and end-all of a successful stroke. Providing the player gets the ball regularly where he wants it to go, I don't see that anyone has any call to find fault with his methods; for, after all is said and done, it is the results which count, and he who gets his ball into the tin in the fewest strokes wins the hole, irrespective of shut face or open face, irrespective of square stance and open stance, and all the rest of it.

But there is this to be borne in mind, and it is comforting to remember when you see, as you occasionally do, a player make a wild, ugly swipe at the ball, swing himself off his feet, finish with the club down by his left foot, and still hit a screamer down the middle of the fairway—and that is that *good style is a very valuable asset. You can always back a man with good style at any game, be it golf, or cricket, or tennis, or even croquet, to last longer and to play more consistently well than a bad stylist.* The latter may get his results all right, but he only does so by a series of corrections, and there is always the liability for some or all of these corrections failing or being overdone. They are apt to be jerky and to cause a departure from that

easy, fluent, well-controlled motion that constitutes the orthodox method of playing almost any game in which a ball figures.

Because there is an absence of jerk about their actions, the great players of ball games always seem to be taking everything so easily, and getting their wonderful results with little visible effort.

To take a case in point which will perhaps illustrate better than a general description could do the idea I am aiming at, we will say that a golfer suffers from the very common habit of slicing, and we will suppose that this is due, as it nearly always is, to coming across the ball, that is, with a swing that starts outside the proposed line of flight and finishes inside. Somehow or other—perhaps it is a friendly and sympathetic opponent who has recounted his old maladies and described the means whereby they were got rid of—he learns that to hold tight with the right hand is one of the approved ways of getting a pull, and is therefore to be regarded as necessarily the cure for a slice. He applies it, and it works like a charm. But for how long?

It cannot be a reliable method to attempt to correct one fault with another. The only proper thing to do is to try and *eliminate* the original fault.

In this imaginary case what will inevitably happen is this: the correction will be overdone, and the ball will be smothered into the ground, or the most violent hook will be developed, and the last state of the player will be worse than the first. He will try to get back to his original slice, which at all events *sometimes* landed him on the fairway; and, alas! he will find that in the meanwhile some poison has got into his system, and he cannot even return to what he was before.

In this original coming across the ball the player had started a bad style; in trying to correct it he has

acquired a worse style still. Had his swing been correct to start with, he would have found that whether he grasped the grip of the club tight or loose he would still get the ball away in something like the direction he was seeking, whereas with this method of correcting one fault with another he has come to the point at which the triumphant success or the hopeless failure of the shot depend upon the most delicate of adjustments, that is, the pressure of the fingers on the handle.

For good, sound, steady golf these delicate adjustments have to be got rid of, and the best way in which they can be eliminated is by starting right, that is to say, with a good style. This will ever provide a reliable backbone, and, granted this, there will be a sure foundation upon which can be built a game of great control, finesse, and cleverness.

I hear some of the toilers say, "Yes, that is all right; but how can you start properly when you've been playing golf for years and find yourself getting steadily worse instead of better?"

The answer is simplicity itself. Make a fresh start. Go back to the very beginning and learn all over again what you have evidently forgotten. Never consider the idea of correcting the bad habits which you know you possess—form new and better habits.

In doing so take note of this most outstanding fact—*the key to all good shots is Balance.*

Very wisely and truly the old golfing adage commended the principle of "Slow back and keep your eye on the ball." Many a player who concerns himself with advanced shots is apt to forget this invaluable advice; but what, after all, is the real point of this golden legend? "Slow back" is desirable, *because it contributes to good balance, and for no other reason whatever.*

"Keep your eye on the ball" is a good rule *because*

it contributes to balance. It is important from another point of view, but it is most important of all because of its beneficial effect upon *balance.*

"Follow through" is another article of good advice. Why? Because it has an immediate relation to *balance.*

"Foot work"—amongst the most urgent of things demanding attention from the golfer who wants to play consistently well—what is it, but the foundation of *balance?*

"Pivoting"—so easy to show by force of example, but so difficult to describe in words—is nothing but a means to an end, and that end is *balance.*

If a balance is essential to the credit of a financier, it is doubly essential to a creditable golfer.

I will briefly expand some of the points I have just touched upon. If I am repetitive, if I am constantly bringing in King Charles's head like the famous character in Dickens, if I become merely boresome by constantly harping on this string of balance, I hope to be forgiven, for in my opinion this is the most important point of all. If I had no other object in writing this book than to drive home to the amateur golfer the absolute impossibility of playing the game of golf without a proper attention to balance I should still regard it as a duty that had to be performed. In my opinion nothing like enough stress has been laid upon the immense influence of balance.

Now to return to these items—they will have to be added to later on—and to find a reasonable explanation for them.

I. SLOW BACK

When a fieldsman has a cricket ball driven straight and hard at him, he secures a catch, not by simply

putting his hand out to stop the ball as though his hand were a barrier, but by taking his hand back *with the ball*. The ball is travelling fast, and it cannot be brought to a standstill instantly. Any fielder who ever supposed it could, invariably got a nasty jar. On the other hand, it can be brought to a standstill if a reasonable time is allowed for the operation.

Let us apply this reasoning to a golfer in the act of making a back swing with his club.

To take it back quickly requires the expenditure of a great deal of force, and all this force is stored in the club head. "Momentum" the scientists call it, I believe.

When the club head gets towards the top of the swing it is travelling so fast—that is to say, it has so much momentum in it—that it takes a deal of stopping, and to stop it also requires the expenditure of force on the part of the player.

Now the player wants to use all his energy in the forward propulsion of the ball. How can he do so if at the top of the swing—that most critical moment—he is called upon to use a large part of his strength in stopping the club head from going too far? Is it not obvious that to have to concern oneself with stopping the momentum of the club on the up swing, just as one ought to be concerning oneself with starting the club on the down swing, must be inherently wrong.

Therefore the less the force that one exerts on the back swing the better, and this force is at its minimum when the speed of the back swing is as slow as possible. Since, in that case, the club head is not greatly accelerated it does not have to be greatly retarded.

One of the greatest drivers of a golf ball that ever lived—Douglas Rolland—used to talk to the ball as he deliberately "addressed" it, and the easy slowness with which he took the club back during his little

homily was one of the finest object-lessons I have ever seen.

"Noo, yer wee white divvle," he used to say, "Ah'm goin' to send ye on an awfu' lang journey—Ah'm goin' to gie ye juist an awfu' crack. Mind ye—. Ah'm—no—goin'—to—be—in—a—hurry—to—H I T—ye. *Tak' that!*"

This was a beautiful example of suiting the action to the word. "Ah'm—no—goin'—to—be—in—a—hurry—to." That was the back swing—slow, methodical, the essence of ease. "HIT YE" was the real business.

Douglas Rolland hit the ball far and straight and sure, because—whether he knew it or not—when he was playing them "wi' the lang handle" he was the picture of perfect balance.

An engineering gentleman with whom I sometimes have a round says, "'Slow back.' Of course that's right. The back swing is all negative work. It is acceleration that expends Power. If you want to have power in hand for the down swing, which is positive work, you can't afford to waste it on acceleration to start with, and deceleration to finish with, which is negative acceleration."

But, in spite of that, he sometimes plays quite a decent game of golf! His sentiments are fearsomely expressed, but his heart's in the right place.

There is another reason, too, why "slow back" is such a valuable thing to keep in mind, and I am quite certain that the mathematicians will support me in what I am going to say.

Sir Isaac Newton, unfortunately for him, never played golf to speak of. He was at Cambridge before the "Gog-Magog" links were laid out, and though he died at Kensington the Holland Park School of Golf

had not then been thought of. But he laid down a principle that all golfers would do well to keep in their mind, namely, that "any action is accompanied by an equal and opposite reaction." In other words, I take it, when you fire a gun you feel the kick of it. And the faster the bullet travels the worse you feel the kick.

Apply this principle to golf, and you find that if you swing a club quickly backwards there is a strong tendency for you to swing—quite involuntarily—your body forward. On the contrary, when you have to stop a quickly moving club at the top of the swing you will be forced to move your body backwards. And if the speed of the club is high, these movements will be correspondingly great. It is physically impossible for you to prevent them from being great.

How can you control your balance if you are moving about like that? You want your power to go into the club head, not into moving your body.

Therefore on the back swing you *must, must, must* keep your body as still as possible, and you can only do this by taking the club back so slowly that your *balance* is not disturbed.

Of course you can readjust all these movements, just as Cinquevalli could readjust little errors made in the balancing of a billiard cue and a cannon ball. *But you don't want to be bothering about readjustments* when your whole object in life—for the moment—is to hit a golf ball well and truly off the middle of the club face, and well and truly down the middle of the course.

"Slow back," then, is one of the ingredients of *balance*.

II. KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL

If there is anything to be added to this, it is "Keep *both* eyes on the ball." The judgment of distance

cannot be carried out by one eye alone; and it is necessary to have that judgment of distance unless the club head is to bang into the ground, or, alternatively, to miss the globe altogether. But I am of the opinion that this judgment of distance can be made to come almost automatically with practice. And I further believe that in actual play it is practice which counts in this direction more than anything else. If it were not, then how would it be possible for players to produce good golf—consistently—who are physically incapable of keeping their eyes on the ball for the direction of the swing? I call to mind one golfer, well known at Deal, and justly respected for his many fine performances, who cannot keep his eye on the ball because a lamentable affliction has almost prevented his head moving independently of his shoulders. When he is at the top of his swing this player clearly does *not* see the ball at all; but the great point is, that *he keeps his head still*, and so preserves his balance.

To keep one's eye on the ball is really the surest and the easiest way of ensuring that one's head keeps still.

I have never had an opportunity of weighing a human head. Some, I imagine, are very heavy indeed, to judge by their thickness. But supposing we took the weight at 7 lbs.: that at any rate is nearly seventy times as heavy as a golf ball. If all your energy is to be concentrated in shifting a thing that weighs 1'62 ounces, you cannot afford to be wasting it in moving something that weighs 112 ounces. That, on the bases of economy, speaks for itself.

And on the basis of balance it speaks even louder, for it is the head that so largely controls balance. If balance is to be good and sustained *the head must be kept still*, and to secure that object there is nothing

anything like so effective as to keep, firmly, deliberately, and consistently, one's eye upon the ball.

There have been players who have kept their eye on the club head as it went back—and still produced good golf. There have been players who hit good shots when, to judge from their heads, you would think they were watching aeroplanes or admiring the landscape in general. But, if you will take my advice the last thing to do is to attempt to join the gallery of freaks. I mind a doctor who once said to me, "There are some people who could digest a beefsteak without chewing it. But ordinary people don't—and you certainly can't!"

During a very exciting match at Portmarnock, Lord X. and a once famous professional were playing together. It fell to the nobleman's lot to have to play a critical and rather difficult pitch over a sand bunker. But he was too anxious about the stroke. Up came his head and the ball disappeared with a hopeless flop. A groan went up from the gallery—for it was a "blood-match." His lordship turned to his caddie, one Rafferty, and said, "That was a funny thing!" "Funny is ut? Funny nothing. Ye just missed ut before ye hit ut." I believe this remark of Rafferty's to be one of the wisest things ever said on a golf course.

The funny thing about the cardinal necessity of keeping one's eye on the ball is that it is only half true. And this is where, as I am convinced, it is fully proved that the whole import and meaning of the injunction is wrapped up in *balance*. You must look at the ball as you swing the club back and as you swing the club forward again, but after the crack of the impact you must *not* look at the ball. *You must look at the spot where the ball has been.*

Watch the greatest master of approach-shots that

ever lived—John Henry Taylor—and see if he looks at the ball *after* he has hit it. He doesn't look up until the ball has pitched on the green, and even then I fancy he only glances at it because he has been wondering whether he will have a two-foot or a three-foot putt to hole! J. H. keeps his head down—none does it more regularly and few so pronouncedly—because for the carrying out of the shot *Balance* is absolutely necessary, and because, in the interest of *Balance*, the head *must* be kept still.

There are more potentially good shots spoilt by looking up too soon—and thereby destroying the *Balance*—than by any other cause.

Of course it is difficult, when you think you have delivered a good shot, to refrain from admiring it, and it is even harder still sometimes to smother the anxiety that naturally comes from the knowledge that you haven't hit the shot quite so nicely as you intended. But, nevertheless, the job has got to be done.

It is not a bad idea to bear in mind that once the ball has left the club no amount of work with the eye can have any effect upon it. Therefore keep your eye and your head down, and prepare your ear for the shout of "Good shot" which ought to come from your sportsmanlike opponent.

3. FOLLOW THROUGH

The club head is—with a full shot at all events—in contact with the ball for a very small fraction of a second. After the ball has left the club face it is clearly completely out of the player's control, and it would make no difference to the ball's flight if the club suddenly stopped dead, or swung out to the right, or, in fact, did anything that the best authorities say it should not do. Such being the case, many

people have foolishly drawn the conclusion that the importance of the follow through has been greatly overrated, and there are plenty of players to-day who deliberately refrain from slinging the club head after the ball in the manner recommended as one of the essentials of a good shot by the older school of golfers.

Where they make the mistake is in not perceiving that *the follow through is not a cause, but an effect*. It does not make you hit the ball correctly—it is merely the finest possible proof that you *have* hit the ball correctly.

This is so because the follow through is conclusive proof of proper personal balance.

If you have maintained that proper balance right through the shot you simply cannot prevent the club head following through.

For a golf ball to be truly hit the head must travel along the line in which it is intended that the ball shall fly.

If the club head goes out to the right, i.e. "outside the ball," then its momentum will pull the player on to his toes, and he will not be able to finish the stroke in a comfortable and balanced attitude.

If the club head comes "inside the ball"—the commonest fault of all—the player may often find it impossible to stand up without moving his feet into a new position: a clear proof that there was no true balance during the making of the shot.

4. DISPOSITION OF WEIGHT

The natural thing when one takes up one's stance in order to play any shot is to strike an attitude of balance. The only thing which tends to destroy this balance is the personal force used in making the stroke, or, in more scientific terms, the effort required

to overcome the inertia of the club head. Just as a gun gives a kick when the explosion of the powder drives forward the bullet, so when personal strength is used to accelerate the golf club there is a definite recoil.

On the up swing, that is to say, when the club head is being thrown backwards, the tendency is for the weight on the left foot to be increased, and the weight on the right foot to be slightly decreased. This is proved when a player makes a swing with his feet placed, not on the ground, but on a pair of scales. On the other hand, when the club is being brought downwards and is being accelerated forwards there is a tendency for the recoil to push the body of the player backwards.

It will very easily be perceived that since the up swing is slow, and requires very little force, and since the down swing is as fast as one can possibly make it, and takes all one's force, the greater tendency is for the weight of the body to be driven backwards on to the right foot. This is met by standing so that the majority of the weight is concentrated on the left foot, and in maintaining this arrangement as far as possible during the swing. It is by this means that balance is ensured.

Unless the weight is so disposed, that is to say, if the body is forced backwards as the club head is brought forwards, it will not be possible for the club head to follow along the line of flight of the ball. Instead, it will take an upward path, and the player, in order to recover his balance, will finish very badly.

Another extremely probable thing is that the forcing back of the weight will cause the swing to be across the ball from the outside to the inside, thus producing a slice. It is very noticeable that players who do not, as it were, "lean up against the shot," are very apt to slice and to sky the ball. Too much weight on the left foot is, of course, apt to upset balance in the

other direction, and will probably lead to a hook or a smother ; but in the ordinary way it is unusual to find this state of affairs existing.

Those who have watched the greater players, such as Vardon, Braid, and Taylor, playing in strong winds which would tear the game of the ordinary amateur to pieces, must have admired their extraordinary control over the shot, and must have wondered how it is that these players are able to keep a low, straight ball, not only against a head wind, but also when there is a strong wind across the fairway. This cunning but dependable wind-cheating shot is invariably obtained by putting an unusual amount of weight on the left foot, and again, to use a phrase which may well be borne in mind, "by leaning against the shot."

5. FOOT WORK

I am very strongly of the opinion that the very great importance of foot work in connexion with the making of a successful stroke at golf has never yet been sufficiently emphasized. I would not go so far as to say that the feet have a commanding influence upon the stroke, but I will assert, without fear of denial, that unless the feet are properly controlled, a well and truly hit ball is almost out of the question. The reason is, because the feet have such a great effect upon *balance*, and, in fact, it is by the movements of the feet, knees, and shoulders that balance right through the swing can be perfectly maintained.

In the photographs which illustrate this book particular attention is to be drawn to the feet. Let us take the case, for instance, of a drive. The idea, in seeking to hit a long, fairly low ball, which in nine cases out of ten constitutes the ideal form of tee-shot,

is to get the longest swing that is possible, so that when the club head meets the ball the former is travelling in an almost straight path.

For this purpose the club head on the backward swing must be taken just as far back as the straightened left arm will allow it to go, and on the forward part of the swing it must also be taken just as far forward as the straightened right arm will allow it to go.

But neither of these movements must be allowed to interfere with balance. If they do so a successful shot can only be brought off by a rare chance. Accordingly, the first thing to guard against in securing one's balance for a tee-shot is to prevent the body going back with the club head when the latter is swung backwards, for this would mean a transference of weight from the left foot to the right foot.

In bringing the club head forward again the player would not only have to accelerate this, but he would also have to move the weight of his own body forward at the same time; and it would therefore be very difficult for him to retain proper balance under these conditions, to say nothing of the fact that the power which he wanted to put into the ball would be largely wasted in the body movement, the body being so much heavier than the ball.

To prevent this tendency to swing the body back with the club, one of the surest precautions is to keep the edge of the left heel permanently in contact with the ground. If this is done, then the player can easily ensure that throughout the swing the right amount of weight remains on the left foot. If, however, he draws backwards away from the ball, and lifts himself up on his left toe, he will most certainly lose to a large extent his control, because he will not have a firm basis to work from. He will be, in fact, in the

same position as a gunner who is firing with a gun mounted on an insecure platform.

6. PIVOTING

If the human body were so constructed that the golf club could easily and naturally be swung in a perfect circle, the plane of which would be absolutely vertical, there would be no need for the player to pivot. As, however, the circle has to be inclined to the ground, inasmuch as the player stands to one side of the ball and not immediately over it, it is necessary for the shoulders to turn in order that that circle may be completed.

Such being the case, it is of great importance that this turning of the shoulders should not disturb the balance; and it may be said that it is of almost equal importance that the pivoting, the foot work, and the taking back of the club on the upward swing should be in complete unison. They should constitute a single smooth, graceful movement, free from jerk and free from any symptom of conscious effort.

In my experience the best way to secure that this is done is to make the left shoulder and the left knee always work absolutely together. Providing that weight is kept on the left foot, this will necessitate the left shoulder being kept on a level with the right shoulder instead of being ducked or lifted (which is not correct), and it will also ensure that the swing is not overdone; that is to say, it will provide a measure of control, the value of which cannot be over-estimated.

If the left shoulder and the left knee work together on the backward swing they will be given an opportunity of working together on the forward swing, and that in itself will not only promote balance, but will ensure that the club head travels along the desired path.

7. CONTROL OF THE CLUB

One way in which balance is easily upset—and this is a thing that I have observed in countless instances—is the letting of the club get out of control at the top of the swing, that is to say, it may be allowed to go too far, and in doing so this will cause a tendency for the left arm, which should have been maintained practically straight, to bend at the elbow.

The correction of this fault is not at all easy in any case; but even should the correction be made it is very liable to lead to the balance being disturbed so that the whole shot is thrown out of gear. One of the things I have always most strongly advocated, even to those whose joy in their golfing life, is to hit the ball "out of sight" without reference to whether it goes quite straight or not, is to sacrifice the remote possibility of a few extra yards, in order to obtain a degree of control which will keep the ball somewhere on the fairway. Therefore the swing should not be too long.

Reference to the photographs will indicate what I consider to be the maximum distance back to which the club should be taken. I will not say that if it is taken further back it may not in some cases result in greater distance, but I am certain that for the generality of players to develop a long swing which brings the club head somewhere down by their left knee is very bad practice. Always bear this in mind, that the shorter the swing the easier is it to maintain perfect balance, and without perfect balance a perfect shot cannot be played.

In the above brief consideration of the things which contribute to good physical balance, it has been naturally impossible to deal with each point as fully as is desirable. These, however, will be expanded in later chapters, especially in connexion with the descriptive matter which accompanies the photographs.

1873

CHAPTER II

ARMS AND HANDS

I REMEMBER some time ago there was quite a big discussion as to whether golf was a right-handed or a left-handed game. One school of thought, which by no means lacked its distinguished supporters, held that a right-handed golfer really made his strokes with his left hand, or, at all events, that it was the left arm and hand which counted most. Others equally convincingly, and also with the support of distinguished names, declared that golf was a right-handed game.

I did not enter into this discussion myself at the time, and I do not propose to do so now, for, as it happens, I believe that both these schools of thought are equally wrong.

Golf can certainly be played, and played well, with one arm and one hand. As a matter of fact, it can be played with either arm, but my belief is, that *the golf stroke should be made with both arms*, and that in this case each may be held to be as important as the other.

Supposing one takes up a club in the right hand and swings it so as to get the greatest possible pace on the club head as it hits an imaginary ball, it will almost always be found that the path of the club head, instead of being parallel to the shoulders, is a line which comes in towards the left shoulder.

On the other hand, if one takes the club in the left hand and again swings it perfectly naturally, so as

simply to make the head travel the fastest, one will find that the path of the club head is just the reverse. The swing starts fairly close to the right shoulder and finishes well out away from the left. Now, when both arms are used one sort of swing should correct the other, and the imaginary line of flight of the ball should be mid-way between them.

It will be noticed that both single-handed swings are across this line of flight, the one being across in one direction, and the other across in the other. What we obviously require for the perfect swing is a combination of these two, which will bring the path of the club head coincident with the proposed line of flight of the ball.

Incidentally it may be here remarked that of the two types of single-handed swing, that which is appropriate to the left arm is from a golfing point of view preferable to the other. The swing that starts inside the ball and finishes outside it will lead to a hook. That which starts outside the ball and finishes inside it will lead to a slice, and it may fairly be said that of these two evils the former is the easier of toleration; certainly it can be held that slicing is the commoner vice, and, since it leads to such a diminution in length of shot, it is also the more disappointing.

It will be noted from the above that the slice is produced when the club is swung by the right arm only, and I am satisfied that here we have the genesis of the great majority of sliced shots. Having taken his club back quite nicely, so that during the whole of the back swing the club head has been kept well inside the ball, the player, who is inclined to slice, brings his right hand to work too early; that is to say, he starts the club downwards with his right. *The effect of this is to throw the club head outside the ball instead of keeping*

it well inside on the down swing ; and, in fact, on the whole of the forward stroke you get a path for the club head which is almost the same as though the left hand had never been used.

It is, to my mind, no exaggeration to say that one of the greatest faults from which most golfers suffer is a hurry to hit the ball, which leads them into making too early an application of the power which their right arm and right hand possess. *If they would only wait, and get this power in when their left hand and arm had secured that the club was on its proper path, they would hit the ball a great deal straighter, and incidentally a good deal farther.*

One may say that if there is any distinction between the functions which have to be performed by the right and left arms, it is the left arm which should be relied upon to control the plane of the swing, and it is the right arm that should introduce the power just before the moment of impact between club head and ball.

Providing the swing is kept in the right plane it does not matter how much power the player uses, provided he does not throw himself off his balance. The harder he hits the farther the ball will go. Unfortunately, the great trouble is that it is so difficult to retain trueness of hitting at the same time as one gets hardness. Of the two qualities, trueness is the more to be desired. A clean-hit, but only moderately hard-hit, ball will travel farther than a badly-hit ball on which twice the power has been used. Therefore to this extent I would agree that golf is a left-handed game, namely, that straightness, which is the essence of good golf, does definitely depend upon the control of the left arm and hand.

It may be noted, in passing, that if the two arms do their work properly the swing of the club head will

be parallel to the shoulders, so that if control is retained of these latter, a pretty correct direction for the ball can be almost guaranteed.

When the club head meets the ball, a line through the shoulders of the player should point straight down the middle of the fairway, and should be an exact indication of the desired line of flight. Here one easily sees how the too early use of the power of the right hand will upset the direction in which the ball goes. Putting this power in early throws the club head outwards on the down swing, and almost invariably causes the right shoulder to swing round too soon. This means that if the ball is hit fair and square it will be struck when the line through the shoulders is pointing well to the left of the fairway, and it is in this direction that the ball will go.

In the meantime the player will feel that he is swinging across the ball, and will probably instinctively try to remedy this state of affairs by turning out the face of his club. The result will be a nasty, low, smothered slice, and a finish to the shot which clearly indicates not only that all the rules as to balance have been contravened, but that the player has been distinctly lucky to get the ball away at all.

CHAPTER III

THE PUTT

THE one branch of the game which has always fascinated me above all the others, and in which, without self-flattery, I may claim to have established some little reputation, is Putting. I may say that from the very commencement of my taking up golf I saw what an overwhelming advantage consistently good putting gave to any player, and from that time forward I was assiduous in my practice of what is at once the easiest and the most difficult shot in golf.

The majority of players do not practise putting anything like enough, and I sometimes think that they place too much faith in the old adage that "Driving is a Science, approaching is an Art, and putting is an Inspiration." One who is "off" his tee-shot will often take out half a dozen balls, and swipe them all over the course for hours on end; another will similarly devote himself to intensive practice with the iron; but how few ever realize that if they would only concentrate their attention upon putting practice they would soon be doing better at all the other departments of the game. Not, mind you, because they would be necessarily saving a valuable stroke when they got to the green, and so making up for previous mistakes nearer the tee—though this in itself is a form of recovery deadly to

most opponents—but because by studying putting they would gain the knack of hitting the ball always well and truly in every kind of shot.

Every year, as the season of the championships comes round and the expeditionary force comes across the Atlantic, the newspapers remind us of the manner in which the Americans remain for hours on the practice green, working and working and working at the putt until anything within twenty feet of the hole can be regarded as pretty well "dead." I fancy this sort of "propaganda" is apt to make some of the "defenders" a little bit nervous, until they regain their confidence a little on seeing that, after all, the Americans *can* miss putts, and that Britishers *can* hole long ones with reasonable regularity. Yet in spite of the fright the British golfer annually gets, he still does not practice putting half enough.

I would therefore like to emphasize the fact that, in my opinion, the Americans do not practise putting simply in order to acquire an ability to hole out. That is an advantage which comes more or less incidentally. What they really practise is *Hitting the Ball Truly, Keeping their Eye on the Ball, and Maintaining Perfect Balance right through the stroke.* They are sensible enough to see that putting teaches all these things, and that in a given time you can get far more practice at putting than you can at any other shot.

I would almost go so far as to say that providing a golfer has a reasonably sound foundation to his game he will never really need to practise any other stroke so long as he practises putting. With balance, eye-control, and a smooth, natural swing, his wooden and iron shots will not be much amiss, and these three desiderata he can certainly acquire on the green.

As I have noted above, I am not at all inclined to

agree with the idea that putting is an Inspiration. If I might be allowed to amend the quotation I should say, "Putting is a concentration"; for there is no other shot in golf that requires half so much thinking about, no other shot in which there is so small a permissible error.

I remember once hearing Sandy Herd observe about putting, "It's awfu' difficult to concentrate when you're really trying!" And in this remark there is a great deal of wisdom.

One often sees a player on a practice green rolling ball after ball stone dead or into the tin from a distance of ten yards. An hour later the same player is losing his match because he cannot get down in two putts. It is evident that his inspiration has failed him and that he has not been able to summon up a logical concentration worth relying on.

This can only come from regular and systematic practice, in which, first of all, attention should be directed to hitting the ball absolutely truly—which is only to be accomplished by resolutely keeping the head still and down, with the eye on that spot on the ball which the face of the putter is to hit.

It is too often forgotten that the ball goes out of holing range in the approach putt, not so much because it has been hit too hard or too softly, but because it has been hit *untruly*. The judgment of distance, and the power required to make a ball cover that distance, comes almost instinctively to anyone with a decent pair of eyes and hands—the average small boy plays quite a decent game of marbles without too much practice; but it is no good getting the strength and the direction right if the ball is hit in such a manner that it defeats both these objects.

Struck quite firmly, but on the heel of the club, the

ball disappoints its owner by stopping a couple of yards short. Hit nothing like so firmly, but right on the top, the same ball proceeds to astonish the player by "running it out" and finishing a couple of yards too far. Quite probably the "strength" was perfectly correct for each putt, but the manner of hitting was all wrong.

The thing, above everything else, to aim at in putting practice is regularly and consistently to hit the ball truly off the centre of the club face, and the wise player is he who regards as a "beastly fluke" any shot that finds the tin but was not originally properly delivered.

Clean hitting—I cannot too often repeat this great truth—is the real secret of putting. It, and it alone, will secure that both strength and direction are right.

If you watch any of the "great" putters—such a one, for instance, as Mr. Sidney Fry—you cannot but be struck by the perfect delivery which the ball always receives. It is never "off the toe" or "off the heel"; it is never "topped," nor is the ground hit first. But each and every time it goes away from the club with a "ring" that shows it has been struck with exactly the "driving centre" of the face.

If once the player can develop this accuracy of striking—and it is not difficult if he will only keep his eye on the ball—he will soon gain a reputation as a putter out of the ordinary.

Mention of Mr. Fry reminds me of the fact that I am indebted to him quite a lot for my own putting faculties, not so much from studying this wonderful amateur golfer on the green, but by studying his methods at billiards. At one time I frequently used to see him play, and it was a remarkable object-lesson in three things, which are as important in the game of billiards as they are in the game of golf, namely,

Physical Balance, Eye on the Ball, and deliberate Follow Through.

These three things are worth working for, since, as is an undeniable fact, the putt is the most important shot in golf. Bear in mind that even if you do a faultless seventy-two, the probability is that you have had to play thirty-six of those shots with the putter. And if you haven't, the rest of the game can scarcely have been faultless or innocent of fluke.

Also bear this in mind, that at any hole, be it one-shotter, two-shotter, or three-shotter, it is frequently quite easy to recover from a bad drive, or a bad iron, and to get down in the proper number of strokes. But from a really bad putt recovery is extremely difficult. "Two-perfect-shots" will only halve the hole with "Three-bad-ones" if both are on the green together and the former takes three putts to the latter's two.

The worst—should I, perhaps, say the best?—of putting is that in this branch recovery is so extremely hard to materialize. You can miss a drive without much loss of confidence, and what you have lost you can often get back at the very next shot, in which you triumphantly surmount the difficulties into which you have got. But where is the confidence of the man whose approach putt pulls up three yards short of the hole? Shaken badly, if not gone altogether; so that the next effort is an infinitely more difficult and anxious business than it otherwise would be.

My own methods of putting are tolerably orthodox, but they contain features which justify some little expansion, and I am bold enough to believe that if a player will study these features he will not fail to improve, to some degree, at least, his performances on the green.

First of all, as to stance. The positions in which I

place my feet and body in putting are sufficiently well indicated in the photographs to call for no detailed description ; and let me hasten to say that they are not by any means to be regarded as a *sine qua non*. I personally think that almost any stance will do for putting, providing always that it gives absolute steadiness, balance, and comfort, and enables the stroke to be completed without any feeling of a strain at any point. To adopt an artificially restrained sort of stance just because So-and-So, who putts so nicely, swears by it, is the greatest possible mistake, and it is also another great mistake to suppose that just because the stance is right everything else must necessarily be right too.

It is, however, certainly desirable to keep the weight well forward on the left foot, and to have the head so placed that the eyes are directly above the ball. They should be able to see the very spot on the back of the ball which the club is to hit right up to the time at which the ball starts moving away. And after that they should be kept, for a considerable time, upon the spot where the ball has been.

Next, in regard to the manner of striking the ball. Since the putt demands very little expenditure of physical strength every step should be taken to ensure an economy of muscular movement and effort. When a woman is trying to thread a piece of cotton through the eye of a very fine needle she does not move her hand, and knees, and shoulders, and elbows. She instinctively keeps almost absolutely still—probably holds her breath into the bargain—and accomplishes the operation with the smallest possible movement of the fingers alone. When you are putting it will do you no harm if you remember the simile of the threading of a needle.

And there is another thing too which applies right through any kind of stroke in golf, and that is, that in proportion as control becomes more necessary than length, so is a reduction made in the number of limbs and muscles that are brought into play.

In the drive, for instance, you have pretty well all your muscles at work; certainly there is plenty of movement on the part of the shoulders, knees, arms, elbows, and wrists. In iron play, as we shall see later, in the interests of getting greater accuracy at the sacrifice of distance, the action is considerably restricted, the body being kept firm and almost rigid, and the main operation being carried out by that part of the arms which is below the elbows. In the shorter type of approach we come to what is almost purely a wrist shot, in which not even the forearms come in to any great extent—and finally we get the putt. And in the putt, broadly speaking, of course, nothing comes in except the wrists and fingers.

Such reputation as I possess as a putter I largely attribute to the fact that in my youth I was an enthusiastic player on the fiddle. I gave up being a musical executant—to my lasting regret (these things, once dropped, are not easily picked up again)—but I always retained, and studied keenly to enhance, a certain nimbleness of the fingers.

More than one fellow-professional who has had the mortification of seeing a long putt rolled in at a critical moment has made the unwarrantable assertion that my fingers were meant for picking pockets rather than for handling golf clubs. There is something to be learnt from a joke of even this low quality. Given that in playing with the putter you develop and maintain a sensitiveness of the fingers—well, a good putt or two is a legitimate way of picking an opponent's

pocket, and consistent good putting is a most effective method of securing the transfer of real estate in the desired direction.

I emphasize the importance of finger work in connexion with putting, inasmuch as by this means the player secures the economy in muscular movement which ensures that the balance is perfect right through the stroke, and keeps all unwanted effects clean out of it. He need have no fear that, using the fingers with the merest touch of wrist behind them, he will be unable to get the distance required for a long putt. I know of no green on any golf course so big as to call for definite work on the part of the forearms. And I am inclined to add this, that practice with the putter on the lines of finger and wrist work only will in most cases have a most beneficial effect upon the other shots in the game. The player who seriously experiments along these lines will not have been at it very long before he surprises himself by the distances to which he can hit a ball with nothing but his hands in action. And I venture to think he will be delighted with the straightness that he can regularly obtain.

The reason for this is simply that in working with the hands almost exclusively he has eliminated a great many sources of error.

Take, for example, the case of the elbows. Just as the sempstress in threading her needle keeps one hand resting upon, and steadied by, the other, so the wise putter rests his elbows against his sides, so as to make sure that they do not obtrude themselves and spoil the shot.

Here I would like, with apologies, to draw aside for one moment in order to make an observation which may be helpful, and in which, furthermore, I believe I shall be corroborated by some of those who, like

myself, often have the task of teaching the game to others. If you want to putt well, study carefully the way in which the other man misses his putts—and then take jolly good care that you are not doing the same thing. In nine cases out of ten you can put yourself in such a position as to see whether, when he is putting, your opponent swings his club along the true line to the hole or not. From his errors you will be able to see how easy it is to go across that line, either in one direction or the other.

But to return to the business of the elbows, the bad management of which is, I believe, responsible for nearly as much bad putting as the commonplace removal of the eye from the ball. If you take the trouble to watch how people putt—especially their attitude at the conclusion of the stroke—you will see how often the left elbow finishes up in the air and well away from the side. In some of the photographs, namely, Figs. 46 and 47, I have endeavoured to give a pictorial representation of a fault that should be avoided at all costs.

I know exactly how this very bad state of affairs arises. Principally it is due to anxiety, and thus betokens an utter lack of confidence. Secondly, it is caused by a failure on the part of the player to keep down to his job. Thirdly, it represents a sort of "last despairing hope" idea of putting in the requisite follow through, with the club head travelling towards the hole which it is desired the ball shall enter.

As a matter of fact, it is a great deal more of a scuffle than a follow through. This last can only be obtained in one way, and that is by making, after the ball has been struck, the club head continue forward until the line of the shaft forms a practicable continuation of the right forearm. How, according to my

experience, the shot *should* be played is shown in Figs. 44 and 45. Figs. 46 and 47 show how it most emphatically *should not* be played.

A great deal has been said and written about the "pendulum" method of putting adopted by so many of the American golfers of the first class, and quite a number of people seem to think this is a new idea altogether. Actually, it is nothing of the kind. *All* good putters employ the pendulum principle, for this is the only means by which a true, easy, regular, and fluent swing can be given to the club. Lacking the presence of that sort of swing it is very difficult indeed to hit the ball truly.

Let us consider for a moment the case presented in Fig. 46, a state of affairs which literally thousands of golfers allow themselves to get into. Here there is certainly an attempt to do the work with the fingers and wrists alone, but what chance has the attempt got of proving successful? The left elbow is away from the side and is completely unsupported. It is therefore humanly impossible to keep it from coming into the shot in some way or other. Now, whatever movement it undergoes, whether it be conscious or unconscious, that movement is absolutely bound to vitiate the trueness of the swing. To play a "pendulum" shot with the elbows out from the body is by no means a physical impossibility, but it is extremely difficult; whereas what we want to aim at is to make the shot more easy.

Bear in mind that if when the club head is started forward the left elbow drops downward by so much as half an inch (which you will see if you try it for yourself is only a very trifling adjustment of the muscles), the result will be that the putter head will hit the ground as much as two or three inches behind

the ball. In these circumstances no putt can start off with any hope of reaching its destination unless by an absolute fluke, for half the power of the stroke will have been dissipated before the head meets the ball.

Under these conditions, the player, realizing at once what is happening, will instinctively try to effect a cure at the last moment. He will lift up his left elbow so as to raise the club head off the ground, and in so doing he will take away all chance that the club ever had of following through after the ball. In Fig. 47 the club head is only about a foot beyond the point at which the ball was originally resting, yet it has already risen eight or nine inches up into the air. This implies that the ball simply cannot have been hit truly, since it has been struck whilst the club head was rapidly rising. The probability is that the ball has been very badly topped indeed, and has set off upon its journey in a most pronouncedly half-hearted fashion. It is quite a mistake to suppose that a ball struck in this fashion will "run" because of the large amount of top spin imparted to it. The fact that the club head has, as it were, been lifted over the top of the ball will partially cause the ball to be driven into the ground, whereby it will lose most of its energy. Often and often we must have seen putts which start with an awkward little jump—a thing that is unavoidable when the ball lies in a hole—and this little jump is nearly always accompanied with pretty poor results in the matter of direction.

This last point is worth more than merely passing attention, for the badly directed putt is very nearly as common as the putt which is all wrong in respect of strength. I maintain that unless the left elbow is held into the side so that it acts in a purely passive

capacity it is next door to impossible to start the ball off on its proper course. Turning to Fig. 46, notice that when the club has been taken back the face, as, of course, is perfectly correct, has been partially turned outwards. As the club head comes towards the ball the action of the wrists causes the shaft to twist so that at the point of impact the face of the club is exactly at right angles to the line which it is proposed that the ball shall follow. So far as the *face* is concerned all is, consequently, pretty much as it should be.

When, however, we go a stage farther, we see the entrance of a new and disturbing factor. The ball (see Fig. 47) has now been struck and is well away. But mark the position of the face of the club. It is still at right angles to our imaginary line, and is square to the hole, whereas it should have been turned so that it points distinctly to the left.

The absence of a twisting effect on the club head almost inevitably causes the ball to start off with "cut" or side-spin. It will, in fact, have been sliced, so that some, at least, of its energy will be dissipated in turning it off to the right. This sort of thing is, I need hardly say, of no great consequence when putts of a foot or two in length are in question; at that distance the hole is big enough, in all conscience, and often enough this fact counteracts a host of errors; but when a putt of ten or twelve yards has to be negotiated, this partial slice may make all the difference between being "dead" and being "out of holing distance."

There is a school of putters who hold (I am, of course, judging from their performances rather than from their precepts, which they are generally wise enough to keep to themselves) that during the putting stroke the club

head should be like a shunting locomotive running upon invisible railway lines. That throughout the back swing, the impact, and the follow through, the face of the club should be consistently and definitely at right angles to the hole.

This method is perfectly practical and feasible when very short putts are in question, and when it is only necessary to move the head of the club an inch or two. When, however, longer shots have to be made I claim that to carry out these requirements is a performance of the most extreme difficulty. Pick up a putter, select a suitable line on the carpet, and try it for yourself. You will find that if you keep your elbows well in to your sides it is nearly a physical impossibility to take the club head back and bring it forward again along this line without altering the angle of the face. You cannot prevent this occurring unless you crook your right elbow outwards on the back swing, and also crook your left elbow out on the forward swing. To carry out this principle of hitting a putt, therefore, you have got to introduce a complication in muscular control which is quite fatal to the consistent success of the shot. You have given yourself extra things to be looked after, and consciously looked after (which is worse than ever), and you have accordingly made the stroke far more difficult than it need be.

In essentials the scheme of putting to which I have referred is the application on a small scale of the "shut-face" principle of driving, which will be dealt with later in its proper place. It is inherently bad because it involves a thoroughly forced, uncomfortable, and artificial form of swing.

When you swing a club over a line on the carpet, using the hands and wrists only so as to retain the pendulum-like action, and when you do this swing so

naturally and easily that you feel as if the club were itself doing all the work, you will infallibly find that :

(1) On the back swing the club head moves in the arc of a circle struck from a centre somewhere behind your heels.

(2) On the forward swing it follows a similar arc of the same circle.

(3) On the back swing the face turns outwards, and that the edge of the face points approximately to the centre of the circle.

(4) When the face makes contact with the ball, it is at dead right angles to the line.

(5) On the follow through the face turns in again, its edge still pointing to the centre of the circle.

These motions are the natural ones for a golf club head to follow, and it is, accordingly, of the highest importance that the golfer should make no conscious efforts to depart from them. To do so is to introduce factors which must derange the shot unless they are most carefully controlled. It is just this control that we want to get rid of, because it means that more and more nerves and muscles are brought into play, so that there are more and more things which can go wrong.

Almost anybody can balance a walking-stick on his chin, but when you ask the performer to balance another couple of walking-sticks, one on the back of each hand, at the same time, he will tell you that he is not a professional juggler. Now, many people who completely fail at putting do so because they are trying to make themselves into jugglers. They have a perfectly simple and straightforward job to carry out, but they deliberately introduce, gratuitously, additional jobs into it. Their attention and concentration is thus distracted, and they automatically lose

that confidence which is so absolutely necessary for the playing of any golf shot.

It is my belief that when many golfers see, in idly swinging a club over the carpet in the manner I have suggested above, that the swing is in a curve and that the face undergoes an alteration in its angle according to the point of the swing, they imagine that these actions are things that ought to be got rid of. I cannot imagine a more disastrous fallacy. The arc-like swing and the turning of the club face are absolutely natural and necessary. It is only by retaining them that crisp, clean, straight hitting can be achieved, and I want to say here and now that this applies (with very few exceptions) to every kind of golf shot whatsoever.

I very well remember giving a lesson to a gentleman who in his putting used the shut-face method which I have described. It was the acme of clumsiness and inefficiency, and more particularly noticeable, inasmuch as in other departments of the game he was orthodox and by no means to be despised.

I asked him why it was that he putted like that, and he replied that on the green he was trying to hit the ball exactly as one would hit a nail with a hammer. It may be added that this was not the first time I had heard this notion alluded to. I then pointed out that the theory was excellent, the only thing being that he was coming nowhere near carrying it out. He was not hitting the ball as though his club was a hammer, but as though his club was a pile-driver, working up and down in parallel guides. As a matter of fact, the ordinary use of a hammer is exactly analogous to the manner in which a golf club should be used. Very little thought will show that the hammer face is only at right angles to the nail when it is actually in contact

with the latter's head. At the top of the stroke the hammer face will likely enough be parallel with the nail. If we imagine the nail to represent the line of the putt, and the hammer to be the putter, we shall perhaps see how natural and necessary it is for the arc-like swing and the variation of club face angle to take place.

Whilst on this subject I propose to pursue this hammer analogy a little bit further, because it is often easier to make an idea clear by this form of illustration than by seeking to analyse the thing itself. On the assumption—a fair one, I think—that you can't hope to drive a golf ball (and a putt is only a very short drive, after all) unless you can drive a nail, I would like to suggest that you ask yourself what you do with your strong right hand when you carry out this common domestic operation. Is it not a fact that, on the down swing of the tool, you have your hand in such a position (i.e. allowing for the shape of the hammer head, just a little above the level of the head of the nail) that when the hammer meets the nail its face will be square with the latter? Is it not a fact that if your hand is not so held the nail will be "sliced" or "pulled," or dealt a glancing blow, which will *not* send it to its destination?

Now, exactly the same thing is true with the properly played golf shot, and of all golf shots most particularly is it true of the putt. In order that the pendulum action shall be present, and shall ensure a sweetness and freedom in delivery, it is essential that the hands shall be in the right place when the club comes on to the ball. For ordinary putting I am convinced that the player cannot do better than have his hands exactly level with the ball, though they may be just a shade in front, perhaps, if the putter is a lofted one. In this

position the hands will tend to take the left out of the face, which is just as well if the putt is of ordinary length. Glance for a moment at Figs. 44 and 45, which show the method of putting which I advocate. Both on the up swing and on the stroke the hands are kept as closely as possible level with the ball. In Figs. 46 and 47 (especially the latter) the hands have moved considerably—not because they have been deliberately made by me to do so, but because in a stroke carried out in this manner it is almost impossible to prevent them from doing so.

I particularly wish to draw attention to the manner in which the club is shown to have turned in Figs. 44 and 45, and, in the case of the latter picture, to the pronounced follow through. The shaft of the club is, as a matter of fact, pointing straight at the hole. It will be noticed, however, that there is a manifest economy in body movement, that the balance is well maintained, and that the head has not been moved. It may also be perceived that in putting I overlap two fingers of the right hand over the left. The purpose of this is to reduce the grip of the right sufficiently to ensure that the left gives a smooth pendulum-like action to the club. The aim should be not to hit with only one hand, but with both simultaneously and in unison.

Several putters of my acquaintance whose performance on the green is usually by no means to be disdained, work on the following principle. They let the club fulcrum from the left hand, so that it remains definitely a pendulum, and they deliver the blow exclusively with the right. Generally speaking, the idea seems, in the hands of some players, to be satisfactory and effective, but I am not in love with it, firstly, because, unless one is very careful, one is apt

to pull the putt—a very dangerous thing on a keen green ; and secondly, because the extra little “ shove ” that the right hand has to give is liable to put one a little off one’s balance. In the main, however, this method is much to be preferred to that in which both hands are allowed to come forward with the club head (which is of all methods the worst), and those who have got into this dreadful habit may do worse than try the right-hand punch method as one way of getting out of it.

They are advised, if they do this, to take care that, in spite of the right hand effect the club head swings in the proper arc, such that as it “ goes through ” the ball the head is travelling in the direction of the hole. In scientific terms, one would say that the line to the hole was a tangent to the arc made by the club, meeting the arc at the point at which contact was made with the ball.

In the case of at least seven amateurs out of ten a careful scrutiny of their putting methods reveals the fact that as the club head comes on to the ball it is not moving straight for the hole. In the majority of cases it comes across from the right, or, in other words, from the outside, and it tends to finish to the left, or inside, of the proper line. If at the moment of impact the club face is correctly square to the line, a slight slice will be given to the ball, and, furthermore, the ball will be hit most likely off the heel. The nett result will be that the ball will finish short of the hole and to the right of it—and I have no hesitation in saying that the great majority of putts come under one or the other of these descriptions.

It is, of course, always very difficult to get out of a habit, especially the habit of coming across one’s putts, but the remedy which should under no circumstances be adopted is that of allowing for the slice

and playing deliberately to the left of the tin. Such a remedy cannot fail ultimately to become far worse than the disease, for, however carefully the calculations are made, the ball will receive sufficient side-spin as almost to prevent it going into the hole unless it is absolutely dead bound for it. A ball that is rolling straight along a line plumb correct for the hole has far more chance of dropping than one which is approaching it in a curve. On countless occasions one has seen balls that looked "in all the way" suddenly boggle at the last inch and turn off, to the disappointment and disgust of the player. I do not hesitate to say that more often than not this "cussedness" of the ball is due to the unnecessary spin which has been imparted to it. Any billiards tyro will acknowledge that when "side" is put on a ball it is always much more difficult to keep the ball straight.

Exactly the same thing applies to putting. Hitting the ball clean and truly off the middle of the club face and dead straight all the way (subject to the conformation of the green) is THE BASIC SHOT. When one can do it, one is on the way to becoming a good putter, which means a regular match-winner. Later on I intend to indicate how, when occasion demands, putts can be "pulled" and "sliced" on purpose; but I particularly want the reader to understand that this sort of thing is the refinement of putting and not the groundwork. If I may go back to my old building trade for a text, I would say, get the brickwork up and fit to stand without the scaffolding before you start messing about with wall-paper.

THREE TYPES OF PUTT

For my own part, I regard putting as comprising

three distinct types of shot, and I believe that thus to regard the problem is to make it easier than it otherwise would be. No one can get away from the fact that from any part of any green a perfectly "plain" knock with the club will put the ball in the tin, providing that strength and direction are equally correct; but that in itself does not constitute any argument for playing all putts in the same kind of way. I am not referring here, of course, to altering one's methods in respect of stance, grip, etc. I am rather recommending that the player's attitude to the problem in hand should be varied according to the difficulty of that problem. The variations in question are comparatively small, but in my judgment they are of very great importance, and I offer a study of them as being worth serious consideration by anyone who wishes to improve his game on the green.

The Long Putt

First of all, we will take the long putt—in some ways the easiest, in others the most difficult: easy because one is not expected to get into the hole, but only within a three foot diameter circle surrounding it; and difficult because as the strength of the shot is increased the liability to error is also increased, to say nothing of such effects as gradient, texture of turf, wind, and other influences which may creep in.

It has always been a source of amazement to me that so many players treat the long putt in either of two ways, both of which I regard as equally bad. One way is to go up to the ball, take a brief glance at the ground that has got to be traversed, and then give the ball a nonchalant knock. This class of player apparently takes everything for granted; and from

his offhand manner you would think that he relied upon some little cherub sitting up aloft to deposit the ball within the magic circle of complete mortality. How utterly different he behaves when, thanks to his carelessness, he finds himself yards off the tin as a result of his initially bad approach putt. It is then that he begins to sit up, or rather crouch down, and take notice of the very things he could not be bothered with before. But since he has already destroyed his overweening confidence at, so to speak, a single blow, it is long odds against his six footer going "home."

The other type of bad "long-putter" exhibits faults in precisely the opposite direction. He takes a week over a job that only requires a few seconds, and ends by muddling himself most completely. That is because he takes too much trouble altogether. What he ought to be doing is to study the gradients of the humps and hollows, and, what is of even greater importance, to study the general "run" of the green, whether the shot has got to go uphill, downhill, or across a slope, and so forth; whether the turf is slow or fast, what the wind will make the ball do, and so forth. What he often does instead is to walk up and down surveying the "line" from both ends, finishing up by picking up microscopic fragments of grass-blades and other odds and ends. By no possible stretch of the imagination can such minute particles of flotsam and jetsam have any material influence upon a long putt. To pay attention to them is therefore needless, and in point of fact it is definitely worse than useless. It does actual harm in two directions. In the first place it distracts one from the things, such as slopes and slow patches of turf, that really matter, and in the second place it means the removal of marks that can often prove most valuable as a guide.

If, looking over the line which the putt is intended to take, the player sees something on the green, be it a weed, or a match, or a chip of straw, or a leaf, or a worm-cast, or indeed anything recognizable past which he has got to steer, let us say, six inches to the right, he must be a fool to take it away, thereby leaving himself in some little doubt as to where he is to go. Of course there is good sense in picking up or removing any object that could deflect or pull the ball up if it chanced to strike it, but one should not find such things on any well-kept green. The ultra-careful player merely adds difficulties to those which already exist, and would do, I am sure, far better if he made it his object rather to put the ball "dead" than to attempt in a somewhat fussily theatrical manner to hole it from the edge of the green. If you are consistently dead with your long putts *some* of them are bound to go in. No ordinary human being can expect to do much better than that.

I am convinced, as the result of my experience, that the surest and best way of getting a long putt dead is to "let it roll." It is quite beyond the ability of the ordinary player to make absolutely correct allowances for the pace of the green, its slight irregularities, small slopes, and so forth. Just as a ball that is rolling will often get past a sticky patch of fairway, whereas one that is bumping and bouncing will generally pull up, so a putt delivered with a strong rolling influence will be far less affected by external factors than any other.

Many and many a time gentlemen playing with me have said, "I can't make out how your ball managed to finish so close up. You hardly seemed to hit it at all, and I thought it was going to pull up half-way." This is precisely what I want them to say, because it

is proof that I have played the shot as I intended to play it.

Figs. 44 and 45 represent my method of executing the long putt, and as I have already had occasion to refer to these several times from a general standpoint it will suffice if I now deal solely with this particular application, pointing out, in passing, that, as the photographs show, this is definitely a wrist shot and that the stance is such as to let the club go well through after the ball without calling for any body movement whatever.

The object is to hit the ball firmly and squarely and to impart as much top-spin as is possible to it. There is only one way in which this last can be accomplished, and that is certainly not by striking it on the top; it is by keeping the club face as long as is practicable in contact with the ball on the follow through, and during this movement, by turning the face of the club so that at the finish of the shot the face is pointing away out to the left. This action is, of course, produced by means of the right wrist rolling over the left to such an extent as to leave the back of the right hand more or less in a vertical plane. If the back of this hand finishes pointing towards the ground the ball will not receive enough top-spin. If it points towards the sky the shot is liable to be smothered or pulled.

It will be noticed incidentally that the manner in which this shot is played is precisely similar to that of the old-fashioned (but still wonderfully effective) "Scotch" pitch-and-run, except, of course, that in the case of the putt one is using a club with little or no loft in its face.

In a shot of this character, in which, other things being equal, the distance the ball runs is of over-

whelming importance, it is clear that "timing" plays a prominent part. And so, for that matter, does clean hitting. Referring to the latter it is equally bad either to top the ball "into the ground" or to hit the ground first, and consequently it is absolutely imperative to keep the elbows tucked in to the sides in such a way as to ensure that they cannot act objectionably. Timing—which simply means striking the ball when one *wants* to strike it—is assured by economizing the movement of the hands and by keeping them in such a position that, under all conditions, the "club head leads." May I add, too, that in this particular stroke success is altogether out of the question if the club head does not lead. The least trifle of "open" angle on the face of the putter would make top-spin into side-spin, and instead of the ball bravely climbing gradients and coasting gaily down them the other side, we should see the shot ending far short of its objective.

It has always been a saying of mine that many are the occasions when the ground would beat a truly struck ball, and that therefore what we want is a ball with plenty of "work" on it. Later I shall elaborate this point, but I mention here, in connexion with long approach putting, that the work required most emphatically in this particular department is that of "rolling." To practise long putts, carried out in the way I have endeavoured to describe, is to realize to what an extraordinary extent one can retain (until it definitely leaves the club face) control over the ball. When one has got well into the way of working it in this manner it sometimes feels as though the ball were attached to a piece of string, so that one could pull it back when one thought it was going too far. That is a very fine feeling, and it comes from a

combination of circumstances. First, the surveying and the realization of the difficulties that have to be overcome. Secondly, the confidence that one has hit the globe on the line intended for it and imparted to it energy enough to get it to its destination.

At risk of "exhausting the obvious," I wish to impress upon the golfer who is ready to consider any tip that I can give him that the long approach putt, duly and accurately laid dead—not just once, but time after time—is a sure shield behind which one's half-crown can jingle in the pocket with impunity. It is an unanswerable argument. It is calculated—under steady repetition—to stagger the opponent whose well-considered iron play has equally constantly put one under the obligation of playing the odd upon the green. It puts one instantly in a position of domination, because it is, in a sense, a shot of triumphant recovery. But, above all, to be able to do this performance time after time is telling, inasmuch as, on the green, there is so little that can be called fluky. Now and then your mashie shot may pitch well up to the pin, grip the turf, and roll slowly to within a foot of the flag. But it is only now and then that the best of us can bring a shot like that off. It will not disturb your opponent, because he is well aware, probably, that one or two shots of that kind are in his own bag. When, however, from the edge of the green, or even just off it, you roll up those shots that seem as though they never will stop for any hump or hollow, leaving yourself a putt that a blind man could not miss, you are knocking at a door that will certainly open to you. Put yourself dead every time in the first nine holes with each of your first putts and it is odds on your making your opponent take three putts on any of the next half-dozen greens. There is

something horribly relentless and unmerciful about a succession of long putts laid "stony." I strongly recommend the acquisition of this habit, under the belief that any man who can deal consistently, crisply, and cleanly with this shot is not only a good putter, but must necessarily be in a position to play the rest of the game none too badly. This is the one shot above all others that cannot be practised too assiduously.

Putt
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The Medium Putt

(fo Roughly speaking, I would describe a medium putt as anything from four feet up to four yards. I place it in a different category from the long putt, and I regard it as demanding somewhat different treatment, for the reason that it is now no longer a question of putting the ball "dead": it is a question of getting it *in*. The good putter will hole a shot of this length (four yards), not just now and then, but frequently. The bad putter will contrive to sink one occasionally, too, and I therefore do not regard it as quite so important as the "approach putt," because in the latter event the good putter will be stone dead whilst the other will probably be out of holing range. None the less the shot is deserving of the closest consideration because, if one's mashie play is tolerably accurate the command of the medium putt may so often make the difference between "in in one" and "in in two."

In the medium putt the hole itself begins to figure largely. In saying this I do not wish to suggest that one is not aiming at the hole in the long putt—one ought to be consciously aiming at it from the moment that one is within reach of the green irrespective of the club that is taken out of the bag—but rather that now we come into conditions in which the hole itself

and the sight of the hole, begins to exercise a great influence.

In my opinion, the existing lack of really good putters is due to the fact that whilst many players can manage well enough when the ball is the only thing to worry about, too many fall down when the tail of their eyes catches the sight of the hole. This engenders anxiety in them. They take the club back admirably; they bring it down again in first-class style. But just before the impact occurs the head starts to come up in anticipation of seeing the little white thing disappear. Here is a case for denying to one sense what another can supply. "Putt with your ears" is a good motto. Wait until you can *hear* the ball fall into the tin, and then—don't look at the hole! You will get far more satisfaction by looking at the face of your opponent.

But I am very much inclined to think that the dearth of really good putters is to be ascribed to the fuss which so many people make over the sinking of a four-yarder. In the old days greens were nothing like so good as they are now—mostly they were but little better than stretches of fairway that pernickety members would grumble about nowadays; and yet I know that if some of the three- to five-yard putts that had to be sunk by such great money-match players as Willy Campbell, Willy Fernie, Ben Sayers, and Willy Park had not found the hole there would have been grumblings, not without justification. To-day (I was an enthusiastic caddie in these old times) the game, on the green, at all events, is any amount easier. What with close-shaving mowing machines, plenty of rolling, imported seeds, and artificial fertilizers, the poorest courses to-day boast greens that would have been any golf club's envy in the 'eighties. More

twelve-foot putts ought to go in than do, and I am convinced that one reason why they don't is because golfers have invented so many fetishes, have written out such a fearsome programme of what they must do and what they mustn't do, that often enough they almost forget the real business—which is the hitting of the ball. I have seen many a so-called first-class player tackle a crucial "medium putt" in a way that would have disgraced a school-marm with an umbrell'a. The man ought to have had a chemist with him to analyse the odds and ends that he contemptuously picked up off the green. He would look here, and peer there, and ask his caddie's advice, and then not abide by it. He would waggle and shuffle, and glance up angrily at moving spectators, and worry somebody about a fluttering flag—and then in a great reverent hush of silence he would hit a putt that never had the name of the hole, or anything in its neighbourhood, written on it.

In the old days an old "Fussy-whiskers" of this kind would have had short shrift. People didn't worry about the tiny details of style—what counted was where the ball finished, and none of these great old warriors that I have named would have dreamt of taking the trouble that you see most modern players putting themselves to. They took their line to the hole. It may have been the right line, it may have been the wrong, but it was the line for them, and for better or worse they put the ball over it with enough stuff to take it past the hole. There was small gratitude for those who were dead short of the tin—the man who was past it took the laurels. He, at any rate, had made a bold try for it.

Another thing, too, in those old days there was little call to quarrel with a man's manners on the course.

The gentlemen for whom I had the honour to carry clubs (Mr. J. E. Laidlay I served in that capacity for three years, and a finer exponent of golf and a finer gentleman I never hope to see) were not constantly worrying about trifles. They had stomach enough to put up with trivialities, and it never worried them, even when they were on the most important putt (a hundred a side was common enough), that somebody moved, or a dog barked, or the lads at the back broke out into a wrangle. Right in the thickest part of a "blood" battle they would snap their fingers at things that the modern golfer would bring up in front of his committee. And why? They knew the game and the real backbone of the game. Knew that all the walking up and down, the picking up of straws, the stage-management, the window-dressing, the beautiful style and extravagant courtesy, mattered not a copper. What they were concentrating upon was the hitting of the ball. To them it was the playing of the game—chattering and other disturbances were the same for all—and they knew very well that the hitting of the ball came first all the time.

I hope to be forgiven for getting a little reminiscent, but it is quite unavoidable. There were giants in the days when I was a lad, and I see so few giants in these times. I see lots of fine golfers, and lots of nearly fine golfers; but I see also that the real heart and soul of golf is being obscured by "stylism," and that there are too many who pride themselves more on how the shot was played than what happened to it. Do not imagine that in citing these fine old chaps who used to play for what in these days was a fortune I am seeking to belittle those who at the present time fight firmly and nobly for a modest two-and-sixpence. All I am seeking to bring out is that under harder condi-

tions there were men who disdained to recognize outside agencies that would to-day be regarded as conducive to taking one's eye off the ball. All I am saying is that, in spite of distractions and interruption, they kept their heads down, they refused to acknowledge that their shots could be interfered with, and if the putt stopped on the lip, they were ready enough to say that it was no fault but their own.

It is not altogether without reason that I have made these remarks about the medium putt, for this is a stroke above all others that calls for resolute determination and conviction. It is a putt which, to be successful, must have no question marks hanging round it. It must either be *in*, or hit the back of the hole and have "hard luck" shouted at it. The way I look at it is this: Ten per cent too hard on a thirty foot putt—and you are still within holing distance. Ten per cent too soft on a ten foot putt—and you never gave the hole a chance. You might have been beyond the edge of the green. In the medium putt, then, you must be up, and you can forgive yourself easily enough if you are a foot too far.

Personally, as I have suggested, I accord to the medium putt a character and (incidentally) a respect that does not apply to the long putt. There is a vast ocean of difference between "dead at all costs" and "in or dead." And I hold, therefore, that it is only appropriate that there should be a different way altogether of playing the two shots.

Whereas in the long putt I stand fairly free so as to give latitude to the arms and wrists (but not to the elbows), for the medium putt I adopt a far more constrained attitude. Fig. 48 shows the conclusion of the stroke. My feet are wider apart than in the longer shot and the movements of my muscles are

distinctly more economized. The swing back is shorter than before, and the swing forward is *much* shorter. I do not follow the ball with the object of giving it top-spin. On the contrary, having selected my line I give the ball a definite and firm *rap* along it, restraining the follow through in order to get something of the "screw back" quality that the accomplished billiards player turns to such good account when accuracy of direction is demanded. By this means I know that I can hit the ball bravely and surely without any serious fear of its running, and running, and running. Invested with a trifle of under-spin, which it is my aim to give it, it will pluckily hold its line, and the least vestige of under-spin will help it into the hole.

The thing to say to yourself is, "Hole or nothing." By all means take full advantage of the survey of declines and rises that you have been able to make, but do not give them quite so much consideration as you would in the case of a long putt. Tell yourself (which is a fact) that the firmly struck ball, with the bottom-spin that comes from the sharp rap, will take less notice of those than the slow moving ball of the rolling kind. Therefore you can afford to treat the contours of the green more boldly. Bear in mind that ten per cent too hard is a virtue not to be over-estimated. Ten per cent too soft is an unforgivable sin.

In this type of shot decision is everything, and accordingly the club head must lead. The smallest indecision about the hands is bound to lead to failure. They must be kept back, with the elbows tucked in and the forearms firm, so that (as far as possible) it is only the fingers and the club head that move. The ball must be got away with perfect crispness, such a putt being ruined if the sole of the club should touch

the ground before the face of the club has parted with the ball, and in these circumstances it is just as well that any loft that the club possesses naturally should be nullified by addressing with the hands just a shade in front of the head.

Struck with just the suspicion of a downward blow the ball goes forth in what I may call a peculiarly sensitive manner. It travels fast until the last few feet, and then pulls up very quickly. Under these circumstances it is rarely inclined to overrun the hole, but, given an opportunity, it pops in with rewarding readiness.

It will be understood that in the above I have stated merely a general case, and it by no means follows that *every* medium putt is to be treated in the manner described. Quite often, with shots of this character, the only way in which the ball can be holed, owing to its positive relation to slopes and so forth, is by a process of persuasive trickling. Faced with a downhill putt on a very keen, hard-baked green, no player of sense would dream of striking the ball with a firm rap or make any attempt to impart under-spin to it. The results would be simply disastrous.

Since circumstances alter cases, it behoves the golfer very carefully to consider how he shall attack putts of the medium type of length. He must adapt the style of shot to the conditions, recognizing when certain methods are advisable and when they are utterly impracticable. The good putter is he who putts with his head.

Whilst on this subject I may turn aside for a moment to consider the case of the putt that has to be made out of a bad lie on the green. Now and then one is bound to find a hollow, cuppy sort of lie, for no green-keeper in the world can absolutely guarantee a

perpetual absence of bare spots. According to my observation the modern school of golfer, who, in my opinion, has been "spoilt" by greens of an excellence that becomes more marked every year, takes it for granted that he has been infernally badly treated if he should find a lie of this sort, and instantly turns it into an excuse for finishing up half a mile short of, or half a mile past, the pin. This sort of golfer ought to have played upon some of the things that were considered good greens thirty years ago. Had he done so he would not to-day allow a baddish lie to inspire him with an attack of funk.

As funk it can only be described, seeing that, in nine cases out of ten, the man who has to putt out of a cup at once says "good-bye" to his pluck. It is long odds that he will attempt a running shot, and will end by topping the ball in a most miserable manner. It will then, of course, jump very visibly and he will call all present to witness that he had unsurmountable difficulties to cope with. By this means he will earn the loudly expressed sympathy of his opponents and (if he has one) the sincere execrations of his partner.

He certainly would not get any sympathy from *me*, for I have no respect whatever for anybody who cannot adjust himself to circumstances, or, for that matter, for anyone who thinks that on the green all shots are putts and therefore all shots should be played in exactly the same way.

When the cuppy lie is only moderately bad, irrespective of the distance the ball may be from the hole, I advocate the medium putt method of playing the stroke. Hit the ball firmly with a slightly downward blow, employing a "rap" with the least possible follow through, and use, for the purpose, a putter

having a distinct loft on the face. If your putter has no loft do not hesitate to take your pluck in both hands and make use of an iron or even a mashie. A straight-faced club is valueless if the ball is to be cleanly propelled out of a bad lie. One would not use it *through* the green, and there is no sense in using it *on* the green.

Properly and crisply struck the ball can be made to start off at a good pace, while it will have sufficient under-spin to pull it up remarkably quickly. When playing a long putt in this manner it should be remembered that a fast-running ball will not answer to the influence of slopes anything like so readily as one that is moving slowly.

The Short Putt

For the most part, the conditions of the short putt may be regarded (especially when the greens tend to be flat and free from slopes) as exactly similar to those of the medium putt, that is to say, the ball should be rapped firmly up to the tin. When, however, one is a yard and a half from a hole surrounded by a noticeable undulating configuration the straight-forward bold treatment of "banging it in" is scarcely applicable. Nor is it to be recommended for short putts when the green is extremely fast. When the circumstances of the case call for a good deal of calculation and consideration, it is advisable to remember that in these conditions it is the ball with the most "work" upon it that finds the tin, and we should therefore seek to meet the natural difficulties of the shot not so much with boldness as with cunning. There can be no question in my mind as to this being the best method of obtaining success. An illustration will make my meaning clear.

Supposing the player is six feet from a hole which is cut on a slope. The ball is level with the hole, and therefore he has to putt across this slope, which we will suppose is running downhill from right to left.

In the ordinary way a putt of this kind would be tackled by striking the ball well out to the right, so that the slope will bring it down to its desired destination. There are several people who can hole shots of this kind with reasonable regularity, but there are very few indeed who would be prepared to regard them as no more difficult than a dead straight putt of similar length. The difficulty is, of course, the making of exactly the correct allowance for the effect of the slope, and is also due to the fact that the ball has got to enter the hole partially from the side, instead of being directed straight towards the target. In short, one has had to add to the already knotty problem of estimating distance, another gradient problem very nearly as bad.

Now, I think it is undeniable that if a method of playing this sort of putt can be devised in which the second problem is very largely, if not entirely, eliminated, such a method is a desirable and a valuable one. I am not by any means claiming to have invented the method in question, but it is one, at least, which I have for many years consistently applied with highly satisfactory results.

The idea is to straighten out the putt that has to cross a slope by the simple means of deliberately slicing or pulling the putt, according to the requirements of the situation. For instance, considering the case above, one can strike the ball straight at the hole so long as one imparts to it sufficient side-spin, or slice to hold it up against the slope. The ball thus travels in an approximately straight path instead of following

a markedly curved one. Lest anybody should think that this deliberate slicing, or pulling, as the case may be, is in itself a mortally difficult proposition let me hasten to assure the golfer who will practise it for a few moments now and then that he will find it very easy indeed, apart from which it is, in any event, a shot that ought to be practised for, as we shall see, another reason altogether.

In order to get a slice, the best *modus operandi* is to address the ball so as to hit it well off the heel of the club, the face of which is to be laid square to the hole. The stroke is delivered by bringing the club head across the ball from right to left, the angle made with the line to the hole being about ten to fifteen degrees. In order to impart the required side-spin to the ball the face must be kept as long as possible in contact with it, so that a pronounced follow through is called for. In the case of a slice the direction of this follow through is distinctly to the left of the hole. It is quite surprising how easy this shot is to bring off after only a very little practice, and, as a matter of fact, so many players habitually slice their putts that one is driven to think there must be something instinctive in bringing the club across from right to left.

The pulling method, which is used when the slope runs in a contrary direction, is perhaps not quite so easy to apply, but it is no less effective. In this case the ball is addressed right off the extreme toe of the club, the face of which is again dead square to the hole. The club is swung in a direction well towards the right of the hole with a firm follow through, so that whilst the ball is in contact with the face it moves, as it were, from the toe to the heel. The spin so given is accentuated by slightly turning the right wrist over the left, and it is quite astonishing to see the amount

of spin that can be so obtained. It is quite enough to hold a ball straight against a very pronounced slope.

Why I so strongly recommend practice in the art of making the ball run from right to left, and from left to right, with the putter is because, apart from the question of cheating slopes, it is so extremely valuable in the negotiation of stymies. I have never deviated from my conviction that the stymie is both a fair and a desirable factor in match play, and I retain, also, the opinion that the vast majority of stymies are open to negotiation. Obviously you can't go through your opponent's ball, but you can go round it on either side, and you can also go over it. Both types of shot are perfectly legitimate and perfectly practical, and it has always been a great surprise to me that so few players ever practise the art of negotiating the stymie with the deliberate intention of meeting the occasion when it arises. I should say, offhand, that it comes about once in every thirty-six holes, if not oftener, and it is therefore a factor well worth reckoning with.

One thing I cannot understand—perhaps because I am Scots and the stymie is held to be a peculiarly Scottish institution—is the attitude of so many golfers towards what is, after all, one of the most piquant points in the game. If by laying my opponent a stymie I can win the match I consider that not only am I entitled to do so but that it is my duty to do so, since I cannot tell but what somebody, entirely unknown to me, has heavily backed me to win. If one should apologize for sinking a long putt, then one should equally apologize for laying a stymie; but, personally, I never could see either sense or courtesy in manifest insincerity, and I regard these apologies as quite needless. The whole thing is precisely on a

par with the sinking of the white ball at billiards. A complete misinterpretation of the underlying principles of the game has caused people to look askance at, and to regard as "unsportsmanlike," a shot that as often as not is the quintessence of match-winning strategy. Not to "pot the white" and to embrace the chance of stymieing your opponent is exactly equivalent to a bridge player failing to trump his opponent's card when the opportunity presents itself. There is a relentlessness about the logic of card games which might with advantage be extended to golf, and I, for one, hope that it will be many a long day before the sentimentalists legislate the stymie out of existence.

One thing to do is to refuse to be dashed and depressed when that other unwelcome ball comes, by the most fiendish of ill luck, between one's own ball and the hole. Never mind whether your opponent was "never up, never in" (I notice that stymies are very rare when one's own approach putts are consistently past the hole, while the six inch rule is a useful ally to the man who has taken trouble over his shot); do not allow yourself to worry about the unkind turn of the wheel, but make up your mind to be master of yourself and to dominate the emergency. If you are too close for any hope of circumnavigation, do not hesitate to take a lofted club—a mashie for preference—and loft over the obstacle, bearing in mind that of all the shots in the game this is the one, *par excellence*, in which "eye on the ball" is necessary above all things. But do not leave the consideration of this delicate "chip" until the crucial moment has arrived. Give it a little occasional practice, whereby, when the opportunity for showing your skill turns up, you can come to the job with any amount of confidence.

Nine times out of ten—particularly if the green is

not a dead flat one—attention to the run of your opponent's ball will give you information of the most valuable kind as to the minor slopes between yourself and the hole. This information should quickly enable you to decide which way to negotiate the stymie. For instance, with the slope running downhill from left to right it is not only possible but easy to make your ball, by means of a slice which works *with* the gradient, take a pronouncedly curved course. Under other conditions the pull may be used with great advantage. I would almost go so far as to say that a player who had taken the trouble to acquire the finesse of putting, who had seriously developed his skill, knew what he had to do and was perfectly ready to show his ability to do it, would overcome a stymie laid by something far bigger than a golf ball.

I am aware that to some minds the juggling sort of putt, where it is all a question of how much "work" can be got into the ball, savours of "trick golf," which, I assume, is held to be a department of the game that should not, normally, be cultivated. This attitude does not appeal to me in the least. For one thing, it seems to me that there is rather too much tendency nowadays to make every shot a full shot, and I think that it is just as well that when difficulties crop up in the immediate neighbourhood of the hole there should be scope for skill, delicacy of touch, and cleverness.

There is now a point about short-putting that I desire to deal with in the hope that certain tips which I myself have found extremely useful will prove similarly so to those who care to give them a trial. We all of us know the abandonment of despair to which we lend ourselves only too readily when that "unmissable" two-footer has gone wide of the hole.

We know how failure to accomplish so trivial a performance—we could always have done the thing one-handed and with the back of the putter—digs a great vacant hole where our confidence used to be, so that for many a shot afterwards the malignant influence is still there, making the game more uphill than ever.

If only we never missed these very short putts!

Here is a principle the following of which I have found of the utmost utility and help. It sounds at first quite ridiculous, and in recommending it I am aware that I am saying something that seems quite inconsistent with what I have written before; but here it is, none the less.

When faced with a crucial short putt do not hesitate to make it as difficult for yourself as you can. The underlying idea—and I am convinced it is a thoroughly sound one—is to give yourself a problem that loudly demands your absolute and unmitigated concentration. It is sheer carelessness that keeps the short putt out. Very well then, you must at all hazards eliminate the liability of carelessness appearing at all.

It is difficult enough to hit the ball smoothly and cleanly off what is roughly the middle of the putter face. In spite of that I find it pays me, in the case of short putts, to concentrate upon *hitting the ball off some definite point* on the face. Sometimes I use the extreme toe of the club, at other times the extreme heel—it is all according to the slopes of the green—but under all circumstances I make up my mind that the ball shall make contact with that chosen point, and that point alone. Bear in mind that this is now no longer a question of slicing or pulling—it is simply the gratuitous imposition of a task that calls for the most extreme concentration. In fixing

your mind upon that arbitrary point of the club face and upon the tail of the ball, you can contrive to forget the existence of the hole. Accordingly, you will keep your head down, your eyes will not suffer to be taken off the contact, and your reward will almost inevitably be the satisfying "plonk" that tells your ears that the object has been accomplished. This method I have never found to fail. I do not suggest that I never miss short putts, though I certainly will not plead guilty to missing them very often; but I will assert that when they have gone wrong it was because, in spite of this plan, I have allowed my attention to wander, and the result has been that I have not hit the ball according to plan. Such carelessness comes directly from the assumption that the shot is too easy, and over-confidence is nearly as bad as no confidence at all; therefore, I hold, the logical thing to do is to exorcise that demon of carelessness by a feat of extreme concentration.

To sum up all the advice that I am qualified to give upon the greater half of the game of golf—which is putting—I would say:

(1) For long approach putts use the running method, taking full advantage of all the slopes of the green. "Persuasion" is here the watchword.

(2) For medium length putts pay less attention to slopes, use under-spin and go boldly for the back of the hole.

(3) For shortish putts seek rather to counteract the slopes than to allow for them by direction. "Work" the ball home.

(4) For short putts do not content yourself merely with cleanly hitting the ball. Hit it off a selected point of the face—and watch yourself do it.

Now a word or two with regard to the type of putter.

Personally, I use a putter of the cleek type, with just a trifle of loft and not too long a face. But it is well known that there is a school of opinion which holds that the wooden putter is the only kind worth having, whilst others swear by the aluminium putter of the same shape as the wooden.

Now, clearly the only real difference between these two distinct types of club lies in the distribution of weight. In the cleek type it is well forward; in the wooden and aluminium heads it is farther back.

In my judgment this rearward position of the weight absolutely demands a true pendulum-like action, and I think it is very good training, therefore, now and then to take a spell of practice with this sort of putter, as it readily enables one to get the feeling of striking the ball dead true. I find it gives one the feeling on the backward swing that the wrists are following the club head, and similarly on the forward stroke.

I know this statement is contentious and open to argument, but, as far as I am concerned, I have rarely seen a consistently good "holer out" who used wood or aluminium, and I personally find that neither of them allows one to get quite so much work on the ball as steel.

CHAPTER IV

IRON PLAY

SOME years ago I remember a gentleman who always took a very keen interest in the game of golf—though, like so many of the older school of enthusiasts, most of his own play was performed in a comfortable smoking-room arm-chair—coming to me, and saying, "I cannot understand you modern professionals, if what they say in the newspapers is true. Now and then you're 'on' your woods and 'on' your irons at the same time, but more often you're 'off' one or the other. You'll be driving perfectly and then socketing your mashie chips, or else you'll be pulling and slicing your tee-shots and playing your iron like an archangel. Dash it all," he went on, "in my young days if I was in decent form and had my 'eye in,' all the clubs in the bag came the same to me. If it was off the middle of one it was off the middle of the others. Now, you fellows seem nowadays to play one kind of shot off the tee and another through the fairway and another one on to the green, and so on. The game was difficult enough before, but you're making it more difficult still with all your new ideas."

It was a justifiable onslaught, and I found it a bit awkward to find an answer to it, especially as just about that time I had had a few lapses for which I hadn't quite forgiven myself. Like many a better

man than myself, I had had my little attacks of head-up-itis, and right-knee-itis, and so forth.

May I here say a word about my fellow-professionals. Golf for a living is the same as any other business ; but I must say that one of the pleasantest thoughts I have about the profession which I have embraced for good or ill is the memory of the hundreds of times in which I have known one professional help another, although they might be at the time both competing for the same substantial prize. " Harry, you're not keeping your head down ! " " Jack, you're letting your feet go for a walk. " " Ted, you never looked at it. " Here are examples of goodheartedness and brotherly feeling if ever there were any. The amateur—no matter how distinguished—can always take the " pro " out for an hour and get a glimpse, without loss of pride, of how others see him ; but for the poor professor there is no available court of appeal. He has to worry things out for himself until the other " pro," no less a friend because he happens to be a rival, comes along to say the inspired word.

This is a wide digression for which I must ask pardon. To return to my questioner : I admitted the facts and told him some of the things that I am going to endeavour to set out in this chapter. But first of all I want to make it clear that in admitting these facts I did not come forward with a general plea of " Guilty. " You are not to suppose, for instance, that when one of the great and glorious triumvirate—Braid, Taylor, and Vardon—was described as being " off " his irons or his long game, there were any 87's and 90's knocking about. Far from it. One of these fellows I remember seeing described by a critic as " *right off his game* " compared with the other two ; indeed, he fell so far from grace as to return a 74

when the others had got a 71 and a 72 between them!

I think the point is well worth consideration, even if for a moment or two it keeps me away from the real motive of this chapter, because it illustrates a point of which, in my opinion, nothing like enough has been made in the literature of golf. This is, fundamentally, that whereas the gap between the amateur's "off his game" and "on his game" may often be represented by twenty strokes, if not more, the first-class professional has no such allowance of error. How often, in the championship, to take a case in point, do you find him under the necessity of tearing up his card and burying it with suitable imprecations and obsequies in the nearest ditch?

The last thing I want to be accused of doing in this book is preaching, for few golfers are less qualified than I to stand in the pulpit. But I do want to remind the amateur golfer of this fact, that although the game may not be his livelihood, as it is the "pro's," nevertheless he ought to be just as proud and as jealous of his reputation. Many and many a time I know that every one of those great Three, after "mucking" a drive into some horrible place, has gone up to his ball with a feeling of overmastering indignation, has wanted to take his brassie and do his damndest to a lie that called loudly for the niblick. And why has he not had that fine, wild, temper-destroying, neck-or-nothing wallop, which so many amateurs would have committed? For no other reason than that—because his living is in the game—he has realized the utter futility of making a fool of himself.

Supposing one did this sort of thing, one could not justly feel sore if Mr. Darwin or Mr. Croome wrote,

"Without the least call for heroics Jack White now elected to play an impossible shot and was deservedly punished. In spite of his bad drive he could easily have been on the green in three. In the circumstances, to take a brassie to a ball that no human agency could put on the green in two, was merely foolish." For that reason most of us refrain from attempting stunts until there is *definitely something to be gained*. To be frank, it seems to me that one of the most frequent causes of amateurs losing matches is because they *will* gratuitously take long odds, when to be successful does not imply any gain at all. "Fozzle—mediocre shot—mediocre shot," will often be putting level with "Fine shot—fine shot—not quite so fine shot." But "Fozzle—fozzle—fozzle . . ." never (and rightly so) has a dog's chance.

I think if you take the trouble to follow the way in which professionals play the game of golf you will find that the best of them play strokes as thoroughly bad as any that you have ever played yourself. But with two great differences. One is, that they don't play quite so many of them, and another is, that having got themselves into a mess they very rarely try the "super-shot" method of getting out of it. They see at once that they have lost a stroke and they lay themselves out to get that stroke back, not *immediately*, but during the play of the next few holes.

If only the ordinary amateur would regard the "rotten shot" as a debt, recoverable not at the next shot, nor at the next hole, but some time or other during the rest of the round, how much better would the ordinary medal return be and how seldom would the half-crown go in the wrong direction!

But again I have wandered miles away from my point, and I am sadly afraid that the reader will say

that I have not only sliced into the rough, but I have made heavy weather of it in getting back on to the fairway.

What I originally wanted to point out (only so many things impinged upon this point) was that the genuinely wonderful golf was not performed until it was realized that the wooden club shot and the iron club shot represented two entirely different problems. I know exactly how the gentleman referred to in the opening sentences of this chapter played his game. He took a fine old lolloping full swing with his driver from the tee, and he followed it up with a fine old lolloping full swing with his iron. To all intents and purposes they were the same shot, and that was the way—in his time—that the greatest practitioners played golf.

In my convinced opinion it was Mr. John Laidlay, and no other, who revolutionized all this out and away before anyone else (at least so far as my knowledge serves me). He perceived that an iron club head was no mere substitute for a wooden one, but a new factor in the game which had the most immense potentialities.

In the first place, it was certainly he who exploited the possibilities of the "hit" as opposed to the "swing"; and in the second place, it was certainly he who showed that the perfectly controlled "hit" could best be accomplished with the overlapping grip.

Here it may be just as well if I try to explain what constitutes the main difference between the "swing" and the "hit," for I am well aware that the great majority of ordinary golfers, whilst appreciating that there is a radical difference between the two strokes, do not really know what it is.

A very large number, to take an example, imagine

that the "hit" is a method of striking the ball so that the club head stops dead practically where the ball had previously rested. This is utterly nonsensical, for in the "hit" there is just as much follow through as in the "swing"—if anything, there is more follow through.

In dealing with the modern method of iron play, as to the correctness of which there can be no possible argument, it is essential to differentiate between the "swing" and the "hit," and on this occasion, therefore, I will not apologize for making a digression for the purpose of studying this point.

In the "swing," that is to say, in the true swing—which, by the by, one very rarely sees nowadays—the pivot about which the club moves in the manner of a pendulum is formed by the shoulders, the shaft of the club forming, as it were, an extension of the arms.

In the "hit" the wrists come into action, and play a part of the utmost importance, for it is they that tend to become the fulcrum about which the club moves. During part of the swing the club may be acting as a pendulum hung from the shoulder, but as the head approaches the ball it is rapidly and resolutely accelerated by the wrists.

The distance to which the ball is propelled is, other things being equal, strictly in proportion to the speed of the club head. The old school of players used to get that speed by means of a long, long swing involving a comparatively slow acceleration—they used regularly to wind themselves up and then laboriously unwind themselves in the course of the stroke; the modern player prefers, especially in connexion with irons, to use a shorter swing and a more forceful acceleration. The difference in these two styles of getting the ball away is the difference between "sweeping" it along

and "banging" it along, or between, say, pushing a man and giving him a brisk kick.

It is to be understood that in both cases the "timing" is the same, for timing is merely connecting with the ball when the club head is at its maximum velocity.

Now, the swing pure and simple is a perfectly feasible form of shot when it is simply a question of striking the ball, as, for instance, off the tee or away from a sitting-up brassie lie. It is not, however, suitable when turf has to be taken away with the ball, owing to the fact that the additional resistance offered in these circumstances is antagonistic to the general looseness of the muscles which characterizes the easy and well-controlled swing. The moment you begin to brace up tightly and firmly to take the divot, or to dig the ball out of a bad lie, you altogether destroy the very foundations of the swing sort of shot.

In the case of the "hit," however, as is shown in several of the photographs, it is not only possible to keep the left arm as stiff and straight as a poker, but it is downright desirable to do so. It is by virtue of this stiff left arm and the fact that the left wrist is thus able to act as a fulcrum enabling the right wrist to whip the club forward that the necessary speed of the club head is obtained. In other words, one can get real strength into the shot, and strength is a very valuable asset when a ball has to be hit a long way out of a heavy lie. At the same time there is far less tendency for the balance to be disturbed than would be the case with the long swing. The whole shot, in fact, is far more self-contained, and involves less actual bodily movement.

Nowadays a very large number of golfers use the "hit" for every kind of shot. In this I believe they

are overdoing what is undoubtedly a most valuable asset in its proper application. In the long game the swing, with the run that it automatically imparts to the ball, is, in most circumstances the easiest way to get length without undue forcing, and is also probably the surest way of keeping down the middle.

Long before the rubber-cored ball came in there were plenty of golfers, such as Mr. Laidlay, who had the "hit" to perfection, but they used it to nothing like the same extent as the ordinary golfer of to-day. For one thing, the old gutty ball had to be struck extraordinarily well and truly before it would answer at all, and I am quite sure that many a "hit" shot from the tee that elicits loud praises would never have got off the ground if the ball had not been rubber-cored.

I am not altogether certain about the point, but I believe I am right in saying that the introduction of the overlapping grip owed its existence to the realization of the value of the hit in the playing of iron shots. Bringing the two wrists closer together makes the club relatively a lever of greater length, so that the wrist action is able to impart a greater measure of acceleration to the club head just as it is coming on to the ball.

I have mentioned that, providing a drive is straight, as a rule the farther it goes the better. In the case of an iron shot the conditions are wholly different. You want the ball to go a definite distance, neither more nor less. Hence the less the run upon the ball the greater the accuracy with which the shot can be played, for whilst the air is a known quantity, free from all bunkers, the ground is full of irregularities and variations. The two most stable, reliable, and homogeneous things on a golf course are the green and the atmosphere, and it is with these two things (as

far as is reasonable) that the skilful iron player concerns himself, at all events for the majority of his full iron shots. Naturally, in the case of the pitch and run, or of the long rolling semi-putt, the ground figures largely, but these shots are only played when one can see what the intervening ground is like.

The reason why the "hit" iron shot came in and knocked all other methods of iron play to smithereens was because it enabled the ball to be struck cleanly and firmly with any amount of back-spin, whereby the ball could be boldly dispatched straight for the pin, with no uncertainty about what was going to happen to it on the way. This valuable bottom-spin it is next door to impossible to get with the swing sort of stroke, because to get it one has *always* to take a certain amount of turf—not, be it noted, behind the ball, but in front of it.

It is of the utmost importance that this difference should be made, and such being the case it is as well that the motive and reason for it should be understood. In the case of the ordinary "swing" shot, as, for instance, when the ball is hit off the tee or out of a "cushy" lie, the head of the club rises above the horizontal, i.e. it travels slightly upwards, after the ball has been struck. Since the ball is elastic, it compresses itself against the face and is in contact with it, therefore, for a quite measurable interval of time. The fact that during this period the club is rising causes a top-spin to be imparted to the ball, so that on alighting upon the ground it tends to run.

In the case of the iron shot we do not want this run. We want nothing but carry (except in such cases as demand run on the ball—as, for example, when the lie is too bad for a brassie, but yet distance is strongly called for—and accordingly we set about the

business in a somewhat different manner). In order to get bottom-spin it is essential that the club head, after hitting the ball, should descend below the horizontal.

If we imagine the swing as the arc of a circle we see at once that for the "ail-air route" shot to be played the club must strike the ball a little before it gets to the bottom of the swing.

In these circumstances it is desirable, since it facilitates the whole action, that the stance should be such that the fulcrum, which is the left hand, should be in front of the ball, rather than directly over it, or a little behind it. This should ensure that the club head meets the ball when the former is travelling slightly downwards. And that, of course, means that the divot is taken after the ball has been hit. The follow through is just as essential as ever, for this implies a lasting spin on the ball, which will quickly bring it to a stop after it pitches.

At the same time, this notion of standing in front of the ball, so as to get the downward punch, is a thing that can be easily overdone. It should be only a question of inches, whereas in many players I have observed that—in both senses of the word—it is a matter of feet. What is the result? The club head is given a path that, if maintained, would mean the digging up of a hole in which a dog could be buried. The player instinctively realizes that the club head cannot be dragged through in a legitimate manner, and instantly attempts to bring it through illegitimately by pulling his hands forward. It is not surprising that the shot is smothered, that it has top-spin, and that it draws away to the right, for all these conditions are the negation of the clean hit.

In view of the fact that not only has the ball to be hit away but a section of turf has to be cut out as

well, it is absolutely essential that at the moment of impact the club head should be leading. The combined resistance of the ball and the turf will slow the club head down and tend to bring the hands forward. Consequently this tendency must be firmly dealt with. This implies plenty of physical force. Physical force in its turn calls for balance. This can only be obtained by screwing the feet down very solidly and restricting the whole bodily action to the fewest possible number of muscles.

What are the deductions to be drawn from this state of affairs? One is clearly that the swing back must be shortened; another is that the forward swing or follow through must be similarly qualified; and a third is that the more work the wrists can do in the shot, and the less the arms and shoulders are counted upon, the better it will be.

It will be seen that in dealing with these fundamentals of iron play I have endeavoured not so much to analyse the shot and to expose *how* it is played as to build the shot up upon a logical basis and to show *why* it is played in a certain manner. With their guiding principles of trial and error the pioneers of the modern iron shot concerned themselves with the "how." Thanks to the light of their experience we can consider the "why," and so form a foundation upon which we can erect something in which our own natural style will play a part.

Dear me, I don't seem to be able to get away from the building trade after all!

Since the illustrations of so many types of iron shot are accompanied with more or less detailed descriptions it is unnecessary for me here to elaborate them. The economy of body movement and the necessity for firm wrist action I have already dealt

with. It now remains to say something about the disposition of weight and the plane of the swing.

The latter I will try to deal with first. In most iron shots, as I have observed already, we have first of all to consider getting the ball up, for it is either carry we want or the negotiation of a bad lie. A moment's thought will show—and practice confirms the idea—that whereas a flat swing will certainly tend to hit the ball horizontally the farthest, an upright swing will be the one by which it is easiest picked up and thrown into the air. In the iron shot, therefore, we can afford to keep the plane of the swing as vertical as possible, the hands, in fact, coming up towards the right ear rather than to the right shoulder. This movement will tend to prevent the club from going outwards and away on the downward swing, and to ensure that when the club comes on to the ball the face is not opened too much. I regard it as of the highest importance that in the ordinary type of iron shot the club should be addressed to hit the ball, and should, in fact, hit the ball with a good deal of the loft taken out of the face. In other words, the face should be distinctly closed. This I need hardly say is an idea which is altogether disconnected from the "shut-face" method of play to which some attention will later on be devoted.

The reason for closing the face on an iron shot is as follows :

In the normal shot, as I pointed out in the chapter upon Putting, as the club swings forward the face turns. At the top of the swing the club head lies in the same plane as the flight of the ball ; at the end of the swing it is again in the same plane. But at the bottom of the swing it should be dead at right angles to the line of the ball's intended flight.

Since in the iron shot we are deliberately hitting the ball somewhat before the club reaches the bottom of the swing, it follows that, unless we take precautions to avoid it, at the moment of impact the club face will not have arrived at the position in which it is square to the line of flight. It is for this reason that the face of the club must be turned inwards. If this is not done, then the ball will be hit, as it were, too early in the swing, the face will be turned out, the ball will be cut high up into the air, and in the great majority of cases will tend to drift away to the right. These are faults from which the iron play of most golfers tends to suffer very badly. They would cease to exist if only these golfers would remember that in standing a little in front of the ball, and in hitting downwards upon it—which is perfectly correct—they are automatically using a turned-out, or pronouncedly opened, club face.

I desire it to be understood that in speaking of the ordinary iron shot I have been referring to the stroke which produces a comparatively low-flying ball which will drop with a moderate amount of back-spin upon it. Figs. 27 and 28 relate to this stroke, and in these I would particularly draw attention to the general economy of muscular movement. The swing is upright and the ball is just a little farther back than would be the case with a drive, or brassie shot. At the top of the swing I am definitely leaning forward—a factor that cannot be too exaggerated when playing dead into the wind. It will be particularly observed, I hope, that the left shoulder and the left knee make a straight line with the ball at the top of the swing.

Now, there are plenty of occasions in which it is desirable to hit not only a full iron shot, but a high

one. In Fig. 29 I have endeavoured to show what adjustments should be made to attain this object. At first glance many people would suppose that Figs. 27 and 29 were exactly the same. Actually there are very important differences. In the first place, it will be seen that although the stance and the position of the ball relative to the feet are substantially the same, the poise of the body is by no means as before. Instead of "leaning against the shot" (which is a device for keeping the ball low) I am standing far more upright, that is to say, at the top of my swing the body is more behind the ball than it was in the other photograph. There is, likewise, more weight on the right foot, though I am still giving the left plenty to do. The swing, as will be observed from an examination of the wrists and arms, is even more upright in plane than before. But so far as the opening of the face of the club is concerned there is no difference. Since, however, in the case of Fig. 29 I am hitting the ball a little later than in Fig. 27, it automatically follows that, on impact, the club face is more opened. Hence the ball is picked more quickly up into the air, and rises to a greater height. Generally speaking, however, *except* for the poise of the body—in the first case definitely forward, in the other somewhat held back—the two shots are practically the same, and in each the ball is struck before the divot is taken.

We now come naturally to the type of iron shot in which what we are seeking is an even lower trajectory to that which we get in the normal iron stroke, and at the same time one in which the maximum of back-spin is obtained. There are many circumstances in which the command of a shot of this character is of excellent value. It is, for instance, a magnificent

wind-cheater. Whilst it bores boldly into the air, however, as soon as the spin begins to defeat the forward travel it drops very suddenly indeed.

To all intents and purposes the shot is played exactly as is the normal iron shot except in respect of the finish of the stroke. It will do no harm, however, if one stands a little farther forward to the ball than normally. In this shot the utmost concentration should be devoted to the left wrist, the action of which almost exclusively determines the success or failure of the shot.

Let us consider Fig. 30. Note how far forward the body has been allowed to go, that the club shaft is still in a straight line with the left arm, and that there is a remarkably small amount of follow through. Also, particularly observe that the face of the club is, even at the finish, square with the line of flight of the ball. The reason for these things is as follows:

Ordinarily, if we keep the left hand back as the ball is hit, and use it as a fulcrum about which the club swings, the face of the club, as it proceeds forward, *after hitting the ball*, will make a greater and greater angle with the horizontal; or, in other words, its effective loft will be increased, since the ball remains in contact with the face for quite a substantial period of time.

In order to get a *very* low-flying ball, with bottom-spin, which is the object of the push shot, our aim must be to reduce this loft as much as possible. Hence, as the club face goes through, we take the left wrist forward with it. This has the effect not only of reducing the lofting effect to which I have referred, but also of flattening out the lower arc of the swing. At the same time, the head having been kept in contact with the ball as long as possible, and having come on

to it on the downward part of the stroke, the ball is invested with any amount of bottom- or back-spin, for the head has, as before, come down on the ball and goes forward *under* it.

The reason the face is kept square to the hole is because if it were allowed to turn, as for the finish of the ordinary iron shot, it would not give us the tremendous amount of under-spin that we require. And that, too, is why the follow through is so restricted. If a larger follow were adopted it would mean (try it for yourself) that the club face would have to turn over, and there would consequently be a tendency for the ball to run rather than to stop dead.

Here it may be as well if I point out that the amount of run which the player can give to a ball is practically independent of the natural loft of the club face. You can play a perfectly good push shot with a brassie, if you have the wrists for it, and the ball will drop "like a toad from roost." Equally you can play a running shot with a niblick. The reason for this is because *Run is imparted to the ball by turning the club head over, whilst Stop is given to the ball by hitting down on to it.* If I could have afforded it I would have had this last sentence printed in red ink, for I am quite certain that the rank and file of golfers are utterly ignorant of this immensely important and fundamental fact.

To take a case in point. Nine times out of ten when you see a player faced with a pitch-and-stop shot he will take his mashie or his niblick and address the ball with the face turned right out, so that it is square to a line aiming about forty-five degrees to the right of the hole. Then he will come across the ball from right to left. What is the result? The ball gets up quick enough in all conscience, but instead

of having bottom-spin it has an overwhelming amount of side-spin, and upon alighting it goes running away as though Old Nick were behind it.

The thing to do, when you want "stop," is to trust to the loft of the club face, and resolutely determine that your follow through shall be in a line towards the hole, and not away off to the left of it. For maximum stop, keep the face of the club square to the hole after hitting the ball. For run, turn the club face over with your right wrist.

Above all, don't imagine that the loft of the club, by itself, will give you back-spin. It won't. It will lift the ball into the air, but it is *you* who must put the work on the ball.

For the most part practically all that I have said about iron play so far applies equally to mashie play. After all, the mashie is only a form of iron designed for giving less length of shot with a greater degree of control, and with it you can get just as much "run" or just as much "stop" as you like, always provided that you practise the proper use of your wrists. When you have a chance to do so it will benefit your play (or make you despair of it, which is the royal road to reclamation) if you watch J. H. Taylor at work. He, above all others, will show you that in order to get the ball up quickly and give it plenty of back-spin it is not necessary to come across it with a half-hearted slice.

The great secret of mashie play—as of iron play in all departments—is to keep the elbows tucked in and do the business with the forearms and wrists. Since economy of movement means accuracy, I would always much prefer to see a player take a well-controlled three-quarter shot with a light iron than a full bang with the mashie, for I am an advocate of

using this last club not for forcing purposes but when circumstances of length and lie call definitely for it. It may have been noticed that I have consistently avoided making any reference to the sort of length which one should get with any particular club. I have, in fact, in discussing iron shots, made no distinction between the driving iron, the No. 2, the No. 3 (the two last coming generally under the category of mid-irons), and the various mongrel clubs that come between the iron and the mashie. In all cases—according to my judgment—the mode of procedure is the same, the length of these various clubs being a matter that the individual player must ascertain by experience. There are plenty of golfers to whom 65 yards is a "full mashie"; and there are plenty of others to whom 165 yards is easy enough with the same club. It is all a question of scale, and this is a matter upon which it is quite impossible for me to adjudicate through the medium of pen and ink.

Figs. 31, 32, 33, and 34 show stages in what I consider to be a good style of mashie play. The swing should be economical and upright, and the stance should be such as to enable the ball to be picked up out of a baddish lie with confidence. Since lofting the ball is, as a rule, of the utmost importance, the player can afford to keep back a bit with his body. Since he has plenty of power in hand he can afford also to keep very firm on his feet. In fact, he can keep his whole body very stiff and taut indeed, providing he keeps his head down and lets his wrists—and the club—do the work.

In playing an ordinary mashie, especially when hazards have to be lofted over, the face of the club may be turned outwards a little—but not too much—in order to help get the ball up; but in this case it

must be remembered that when the ball alights it will tend to run from left to right. Hence the shot must be directed to the left of the flag. When the ball lies nicely, and there is no question of picking it up, the face of the club can be normally directed, i.e. with the top edge square to the hole, and the shot played straight for the pin, with, of course, the necessary allowance for the contour of the ground, etc.

The only other point which, I think, calls for emphasis is this. Seeing that the swing is, normally, short and upright, and as nearly as possible in the arc of a circle described with the left wrist as its centre, this left wrist constitutes a most dominating factor. It is quite unnecessary for me to enter here into an argument as to whether the shot is definitely played with the left hand or the right—some say one thing and some say another—but one assertion I will venture to make, and that is, that in no circumstances must it be the right hand but the left so far as retaining control of the fulcrum of the club is concerned. Players who are apt to be too right-handed may do worse, in mashie play, than to overlap two fingers of the right hand over the left, so as to ensure that the left wrist is able to carry out its allotted function. This is, above all, to control *direction*, and in a mashie shot, once the ball is up, direction is everything.

In Fig. 35 I have endeavoured to give a horrible example of how the mashie shot should *not* be played. Such a finish is, alas! only too common. Notice how the left elbow has been brought away from the side in a desperate endeavour to pick the ball up, how the face is opened so as to give it a violent slice, and how all decision has been eliminated from the shot. Of all the strokes in the game of golf the mashie shot must be crisp, resolute, and determined.

We now come to the pitch-and-run shot, which may be described very truthfully as a very long lofted putt. According to circumstances, this is a shot that may be played with any of the ordinary iron clubs, but, for myself, for short range operations I prefer the mashie to any. Its depth of face gives confidence, whilst its loft allows any ordinary lie to be dealt with.

For the difference between the pitch-and-run up—both played with the mashie—I will refer the reader to Figs. 33 and 36 respectively, and merely point out that *it is all in the finish*.

In the pitch the club has been brought up quickly, so that it points at the end of the stroke almost vertically into the air (though upon this point I do not by any means insist; it is simply proof of the swing having been carried out in the up-and-down fashion). In the pitch-and-run the club finishes pointing straight at the flag, and it will at once be remarked that the face has been turned well over.

This turning over of the face (for additional information see my notes on run-up putting in a previous chapter) is absolutely essential if the ball is to have top-spin. Once the knack of doing it has been properly acquired the player really feels as though he had the ball at the end of a string and could still control its movement long after it has left the club head. I know of no symptom more eloquent than this that the shot has been played correctly.

When we come to mashie niblick play we find, if we practise the short pitch shot, that the conditions remain almost exactly the same as for the iron. There are two types of stroke available—one in which we merely lob the ball up into the air and let it drop anyhow, the other (which comes in particularly valuable when a bad lie has to be negotiated) in which

we hit down on the ball and trust to the back-spin to stop it.

The method of bringing off the lob shot is obvious. We can stand well behind the ball, pick it up clean with the club face turned outwards, and, if necessary, in order to get rapid loft, we can come across it. The need for such strokes is, however, somewhat rare, though those who play upon courses upon which trees figure largely as hazards may find it well worth while to cultivate this form of approach.

Far and away the more useful mashie niblick shot is the pitch-and-stop, and within reasonable limits it is played much in the same manner as the push shot, to which I have already referred. If you glance at Fig. 37 you will see, as before, the pronounced rigidity of body attitude. The feet are firmly anchored to the ground and not even the right heel has been suffered to lift. The elbows are well in to the sides. The club face has been kept open and the follow through has accordingly been very restricted. The swing back has been suitably slow and short. The punch forward has been firm and crisp, and the club head has come down on the ball, taking its divot from the turf between the ball and the hole, and not from the turf behind the ball.

In Fig. 38 I have endeavoured to picture what I have myself seen far too often on the golf course: the mashie niblick shot played with an utter absence of pluck and resolution. Nothing but disaster can follow that dreadful crooking out of the left elbow—and nothing but disaster *ought* to follow it. Take heed that you never play such a form of shot yourself.

We will now consider the various types of bunker shot in which the niblick proper is called into play, though under favourable conditions the employment

of the mashie niblick may be quite feasible. By the way, I hope it will not be thought that I am suggesting that just because a ball happens to lie in sand a lofted club must necessarily be used. If it lies in such a manner that you can get to it with your brassie, and if you want brassie length, well, then, by all means take the brassie and have a go at it, always bearing in mind the circumstances of the case. Generally speaking, however, he who has got into a bunker had best get out of it as quickly as possible and try to get his wasted stroke back on the chip or with the putt. But there are occasions upon which heroic remedies may be applied with excellent justification.

In Figs. 39 and 40 the camera can tell the tale much better than I can. The ball was in a shallow sand bunker and lying quite decently. With the mashie niblick I hit it, with no great effort, a distance of 150 yards. This shot is full of wrist; there is precious little arm in it and no body at all. Stand well in front of the ball and come down upon it with all the firmness and resolve you can command. Go well through, though keeping the swing short and stiff, and do not neglect to turn the face of the club over as you do so. Note that the sand track indicates the complete absence of any attempt to come across the ball.

A bunker shot played in the "coming across from right to left" method is, however, not without its uses. For this purpose lay the club face as far back as it will go—that is to say, as open as possible—and play the shot so as to pick the ball up and slice it to eternity. Aim well to the left of the hole, as the ball on alighting will spin off to the right. With this sort of shot it is possible to pick the ball up amazingly quickly, but only when it is lying fairly well. It is essentially a follow through stroke, and therefore

when a lot of sand has to be taken it is not at all easy to bring off.

An altogether different type of bunker stroke, though no less useful, is pictured in Figs. 41 and 42. This is the explosion shot. It is played when the ball lies badly in the sand and when the distance to be covered is small, as, for instance, close beside the green, or in circumstances of "on the fairway at all costs." The basis of this stroke is a sort of hatchet action, accompanied by a modified follow through that makes the club head describe a swing like a capital V. In addressing the ball I find it advisable to crouch down a little, having both knees bent, but braced and not sloppy. The point I concentrate my mind upon is not the ball so much as a particle of sand one inch and a half or so behind it. Moreover, I do not address so as to hit the ball with the face of the club, but to dig into the sand behind it with the neck, or heel, of it. What I attempt to do is to use this heel, which is more or less pointed, as shown in Fig. 41, as a wedge, and by driving this into the sand behind the ball I create sufficient disturbance to force the ball out of any lie, however bad it may be.

I come almost straight down with my wedge upon my selected patch of sand, and I then proceed to lift the club up as quickly as I possibly can. This latter function is performed with the left arm and shoulder, as well exemplified in Fig. 42. The right hand helps as much as may be, but there is no attempt to get the club head through the ball.

The way to practise this shot is to find a bunker with a high bank, drop your ball into it, and then *tread* the ball into the sand. A reasonably well-played explosion shot will easily get it out, and you will be surprised, if you practise seriously, how easy it is to

maintain control of a ball that is struck in this manner. The shot looks to be extraordinarily difficult. Actually it is quite easy, providing one remembers to hit behind the ball and with the neck of the club head. If you try to use the face of the club head it is long odds that the shot will never come off, as you will not create your "explosion" immediately behind the ball. Remember that this is a hatchet stroke and that the club is going up and down rather than backwards and forwards.

A shot of great utility, especially in whins, heather, brambles, long grass, etc., and also occasionally in sand, is the "jab," the principle of which is shown in Fig. 43. In point of fact, it is a short push shot with the mashie niblick or niblick. Obviously when a lot of rough stuff is surrounding the ball you cannot execute a stroke with a lot of follow through. Also you naturally want the club to travel horizontally as short a distance as possible, as in these conditions its movement will be least interfered with.

For a shot of this kind make no attempt to produce a "lob" effect. Stand well in front of the ball, hit down upon it, let the swing—such as it is—be straight for the hole, trust to the face of the club to loft the ball and to look after the under-spin, which, with the downward action, should be strongly marked. By this means on occasion one can get extraordinary distances out of the most impossible looking lies; whereas to try and hit the ball in the ordinary way might often not move it a single yard. For this sort of shot always take a deep-faced club, since, as the head goes forward and downwards, the ball moves over it from top to bottom. The same sort of stroke may be used in the fairway with very valuable effect, particularly when the run up to the green is soft and

sticky, and one wants, therefore, a very short pitch that will run only a very little distance. I may mention that the considerate golfer will only use the stroke with discretion, since it means that a big lump is going to be taken out of the turf. I am one of those—reactionary perhaps—who, in spite of all modern notions, hold that the man who habitually plays the jab niblick shot for short approaches ought to be made to pay a double subscription.

To return, in concluding this chapter, to the question of stopping the ball, I would like to affirm that this is not a question of the club—it is a question almost entirely of the man who wields it, and of his knowledge of how the shot should be played. The Royal and Ancient can legislate ribbed mashies out of existence if they choose, but they will never stop a good player from pulling the ball up stone dead. Mr. Laidlay proved that years and years ago, and, as I have already said, I regard him as the originator and the most accomplished exponent of one of the most beautiful shots in the game of golf. He it was who first demonstrated that in this delicate, yet forcible, stroke it was the grip that mattered most. It was the overlapping grip, with (if desired) two fingers of the right hand overlapping two of the left, that gave the left wrist that domination which alone makes the shot possible. The really perfect short chip that drops plumb and runs only a yard or two, is done with a "snick." It is a whip-like stroke, calling for the removal of very little turf. Above everything else, it calls for perfect timing and a determination to *let the club head lead*. Unless there is conformity to this last condition you might just as well use your feet and kick the ball into the nearest bunker so as to save time and temper.

CHAPTER V

THE DRIVE AND THE BRASSIE

THERE are at least a couple of features about this book which distinguish it from other works on golf, and it is, perhaps, incumbent upon me to point out that they are neither accidental nor incidental. One of these is that in proportion as the stroke calls for less and less distance I devote more and more attention to it. If you glance at my chapter on Putting you will find that the number of its pages seems to be out of all proportion to the chapter on Driving, to which these remarks form an introduction. You will find, too, that I have more to say about the iron than I have about the wood. This is not because I am myself any better with the one than with the other, but solely because I conceive that, in golf (as in so many other matters), the nearer one gets to the goal the more profound must be the concentration. Since Balance comes into all golf shots I have devoted a special chapter to this extremely important consideration and have put it next to the Preface.

The second unusual feature to which I have referred is this, that whilst the illustrations start with the drive and then go on through the iron, the mashie, and the niblick to the putts of various types, the letterpress goes the other way altogether. It starts (leaving aside Balance and a small digression upon Arms and Hands) with the Putt and ends up with the Full Smack.

There is a definite method in this arrangement, and I have adopted it because, owing to the unequal distribution of pictures and letterpress, no matter how this book was bound up it would have been next door to impossible to get the illustrations and the appropriate text opposite to one another. Accordingly I have made a bold bid to make a "book within a book." The letterpress goes logically, for I maintain that the putt is the beginning of all golf strokes and should be learnt first. On the other hand, I have only won one Championship, and that was a long time ago, and I do not feel that I am quite big enough to kick all conventions out of doors. There will be, I hope, a lot of golfers who will just glance through this little book, and they will naturally look at the illustrations first. They will expect the pictures to start with the drive—the opening flourish of trumpets—and they will expect me to leave the stage after the execution of a nimble little "snick-shot." I have no fault to find with their sentiments; thanks to tradition, I would expect to find exactly the same progression myself; and, accordingly, so far as the photographs are concerned, I have stuck to what is conventional. As far as possible I have avoided references which would mean the turning over of a lot of pages—that is to say, as far as possible I have tried to deal with the whole matter from two entirely different points of view: the one, which relates to conscious cause, being confined to the letterpress; the other, which relates to unconscious effect, being exposed in the photographs. Each series has a tale to tell, and it can only tell its tale in its own manner.

Now to come to this driving and the general playing of wooden club shots.

The great thing to attend to in a stroke in which

you have only direction to think about and can hit as hard as your muscular system will allow is to secure balance, for without that quality the whole smoothness and rhythm of the swing are destroyed and anything may happen to the ball. I have said this same thing once or twice already ; but if I had said it fifty times I would not have said it once too often, for it is the be-all and end-all of the full shot. You can do almost anything with your legs and arms and feet and wrists and head, *always providing that you maintain balance.*

If you glance at the series of photographs from 1 to 10 you will be able to see exemplified in them the factor which I regard as of the utmost importance in connexion with balance. This is the working in unison with one another of the left shoulder and the left knee. It is secured by first taking the club back with the wrists and letting the body movement follow it. A great many players make the cardinal mistake of pivoting too early. They can check this, however, if they remember that throughout the entire stroke—not downwards but upwards—the club head must “lead.” In short, it is not the pivot action which causes the club head to travel back in the right direction ; on the contrary, it is the determination to keep the club head moving along its proper path that makes it necessary for the pivoting to take place.

This idea of the club head leading is of the utmost possible importance in the whole of the drive swing, inasmuch as we want to hit the ball as far as we possibly can. Consequently, at the moment of impact the club must not be coming down on the ball, but must be coming right behind it, so as, so to speak, to catch it squarely on the tail. The swing must therefore be such that the club head follows a circle of the greatest possible diameter. Furthermore, we want

the path of the head to be as near as possible horizontal and parallel to the ground just before and just after the ball is struck.

This last sentence means that the pivot, or centre, about which the club swings can only be in one place, and that is directly above and directly level with the ball. Clearly the actual pivot is the left shoulder, about which the arm and the club forming a sort of pendulum can freely swing.

It will be noticed (Fig. 1) that in what I call the preliminary survey of the shot I bring my left shoulder and my left foot into such a position that the plane which they form with the ball is at right angles to the line to the hole. In this plane I also place the club face so that it is also square to the hole. These factors in themselves give me the proper sense of direction; they tell me already all that I want to know, and in subsequent adjustments I do not disturb them unless I have a very strong reason to do so. For instance (in the case of a brassie shot), at a second glance it may seem that the ball is lying a little more cuppily than seemed to be the case at first. I may have to say to myself, "In these circumstances I shall have to cut the ball up into the air rather quickly, and the probability is that that will produce a touch of slice. Very well, then, I will move round a little so as to play to the left of the line."

In the ordinary way, however, and at all events as regards tee-shots, this form of readjustment should not be necessary.

Having taken my line and got my left foot and the club head in position, I can now move my right foot to put me into a proper striking stance.

The great advantage of this mode of address is that it enforces, during the movement of the right foot,

the concentration of practically the whole of the weight of the body upon the left foot, and that in itself is a good start, for it is upon that foot that the weight must consciously be concentrated.

Some authorities demand a square stance (see Fig. 2), some prefer an open stance. Personally I am convinced that it is absurd to be didactic upon these matters. The player must find out for himself what manner of stance best enables him to keep his balance by allowing his left shoulder and left knee to work together (always maintaining their line with the ball). For myself, I stand just a shade open, as I find this enables me during the address (and subsequently at the moment of impact) to keep the line through any two shoulders pointing straight for the hole.

Before going any farther I must make a slight digression in order briefly to analyse the swing, and I may say that this analysis applies just as much to the iron shot as to the full blow with the wood from the tee.

Basically and fundamentally the club is a pendulum swung about the left shoulder, the shaft forming merely an extension of the left arm.

To this action another is added, namely, that the wrists also act as a fulcrum about which the club can swing. If we take the club back, keeping the left arm perfectly stiff and straight with it, we shall find that we cannot get it up very much past the horizontal on the back swing. If, however, we use the wrists as an additional fulcrum we can get it back another half circle at least. The object of lengthening the swung in this manner is to give ourselves the maximum time in which to accelerate the club head, but at the same time we must not lengthen the swing to such an extent as to allow complications to be introduced, as, for instance, the bending of the left elbow.

If you happen to be very strong, you can use a very short back swing and get the ball away a long distance with a short sort of punch. But the distance the ball travels is dictated by the speed of the club head at the point of impact. Hence the shorter the swing the greater must the acceleration be, and again, the greater must be the physical strength expended.

A high velocity gun causes a much bigger recoil to be felt than one which fires a slower speed shell; and if you are using this method of quick acceleration you must remember that there will be, with it, an appropriately strong recoil, which will tend to pull you off your balance. By the way, it is the function of the right leg to act as a prop against this recoil action, and therefore at the moment of striking the ball it must be braced as stiff as the pillar of a cathedral.

By bringing the wrists and the left arm into action together we can get a swing which will enable great speed to be imparted to the club head with only a moderate degree of acceleration, and with, therefore, the least possible tendency to upset the physical balance of the player.

Since the club head in reality swings fundamentally from the left shoulder, and also secondarily from the wrists, it is desirable that the movement at each point should be, within reasonable limits, more or less constant.

Take Fig. 3 for example. Here the movement of the left arm has accounted for the club going back through about fifteen degrees, whilst the movement of the wrists has taken it back about thirty degrees, a total of forty-five degrees altogether. In other words, the wrists perform twice as much movement (this, of course, is only approximate) as the left arm.

If we go through the whole of the proper full swing

we shall find that the rough proportion named is fairly uniformly complied with.

In Fig. 4 the club is at the top of the swing and has passed through 270 degrees, of which the left arm has accounted for not a great deal more than ninety degrees, for it has only been taken up a little above the horizontal. Much the same thing will be seen from Fig. 5.

There is no fixed mathematical rule about the action to which I have referred, and I have only pointed it out simply in order to draw attention to the immense importance of wrist work, especially at the top of the swing.

Broadly speaking, the left arm can only be used effectively to swing itself back through ninety degrees from the vertical, and to swing itself forward again through the same distance. The whole of the rest of the swing—which is a full three-quarters of a circle—must be taken care of by the wrists, and the wrists alone.

I mentioned that the motion of arm and wrists should be more or less constant, but at one part of the swing an exception must be made, namely, on the beginning of the down swing. Compare Figs. 4 and 5: here it will be seen that the wrists have moved the club through about 150 degrees, whilst the left arm has only accounted for a trifling motion. It is in this part of the swing that the wrists exercise so valuable a function. With the club fulcrumed from a point (the left wrist) right away behind the ball, they start the club head backwards upon its great circle of swing with a smooth and an easy acceleration. The club head has *got* to go backwards upon this section of the swing, but the arms cannot make it go backwards. It is only the wrists that can do this.

Harry Vardon used to practise this back-and-out wrist action—which is the key to all long, straight, and clean driving—until, as he has told me, he was

nearly physically sick. But by practice he mastered the thing and made it so automatic that a German band could not have put him off his tee-shot, and, as every one knows, at that period of his career he was one of the most perfect, consistent, and powerful drivers the game has ever produced.

He who aspires to drive far and straight cannot do better than follow the Great Harry's example and spend as often as possible a few minutes acquiring the art of throwing the club head back with the wrists, until, as shown in Fig. 5, it is getting towards lying in a straight line with the left arm. If that has been done with a smooth and easy motion that will not disturb the balance, and if there is still plenty of weight on the left foot, then upon the forward part of the swing the player can safely use all the strength that Providence has given him without coming to any harm.

It is, in these circumstances, especially necessary that the left arm should be kept straight, for to crook it at all would inevitably mean that the hands will have started to come through before the club head, which, of all things, is the most potent and common cause of bad driving, slicing, smothering, and everything else that is detestable in a tee-shot. So long as the club head leads, the ball will always be got away crisply and cleanly; and, what is more, it will automatically produce a correct follow through. In fact, the club itself will pull the arms and shoulders of the player into the correct position.

I would particularly draw attention to Fig. 6, which shows the club head leading as it comes on to the ball. If you compare this with Fig. 5 you will see that once more the wrists have moved the club through just about twice the angle as the arms have moved it. But by now the club head is already

travelling at a good pace, so that plenty of power can be applied with the arms, without any fear of them coming through too quickly.

As soon as the ball has been hit the function of the right arm is to be straight in line with the club shaft, in place of the left arm. This involves that the main fulcrum of the club changes from the left to the right shoulder, and in order that, immediately after the ball has been struck, the follow through may be as horizontal as possible (so as to get well after the tail of the ball), the right shoulder must be allowed to come well forward. Thus the shoulders square up to the line of the hole.

But on no account must the right shoulder be dropped, nor the right knee bent, otherwise the effective fulcrum about which the club swings will be lowered, and the tendency will be for the club head to dig into the ground. Feeling it is doing so the player will try and correct this, with the result that he is almost sure to finish by coming across the ball and delivering a half-hearted slice.

I would like notice to be taken of the fact that both in Figs. 7 and 8 the weight is practically all on the left foot, and that I am definitely and resolutely "standing up" to the shot. As a matter of fact, the left leg is now quite straight. The head is still down, and is exactly in the same place as it was through the previous part of the swing, namely, directly over the ball.

In Fig. 8 the head has been allowed to be lifted—incidentally to see where the ball has gone, but necessarily to allow the club shaft to go right through to a finish over the left shoulder.

With regard to the action of the arms, the pictures tell their story very effectively. There is one little tip I should like to give, however, and that is this: both

in going up and in coming down the upper part of the left arm should literally "scrape" the player's chest. Let him keep this part of the arm just as close in as he can possibly get it.

On the down swing the upper part of the right arm can also be kept tightly against the body. At the top of the swing the right elbow is crooked and vertically under the handle of the club. It should not be allowed to crook outwards.

HOOK AND SLICE

For the most part we ought to be satisfied to hit a good straight ball off the tee with regularity. But there are plenty of occasions when either an intentional hook or a skilful slice can be made to give very satisfactory results, and may greatly facilitate the playing of the hole.

There should be no greater difficulty in playing either of these perfectly legitimate shots than in hitting the ball dead straight down the fairway.

The great point to be borne in mind by the player who seeks to control the flight of the ball from right to left, or from left to right, is that the dictation, so to speak, of the shape of the shot resides in the right shoulder.

It is, perhaps, easier to demonstrate this by illustration rather than by description; accordingly, I will merely say that if in the action of the swing the top of the right shoulder follows a curved path, either in one direction or in the other, then the ball will tend to follow a path of exactly similar curvature.

This is shown very clearly in Figs. 13 and 14. In the former I have driven a pronouncedly sliced ball, and it will be noted that the right shoulder has finished

somewhat "under," enabling the club face to be kept extremely open. Viewing this shot from the same point of view as the camera, the observer would say that my right shoulder had done a sort of little swing on its own account, starting downwards and finishing upwards.

Fig. 14 shows the finish of a low, hard-hit, "running" ball, with any amount of top-spin on it, and a deliberate pull, and in this case, from the point of view of the photographer, my right shoulder has started by coming upwards.

For the slice the right shoulder finishes well below the left. For the pull it finishes well above the left.

The completely different aspects of the club shaft and the club head will also be noted. In the case of the slice the follow through is sufficient—and that is all one can say about it—the object being to keep the face distinctly, even exaggeratedly open. In the case of the pull the follow through is far more elaborate, due to the fact that the right wrist has got well above the left with a view to keeping the face markedly turned over. A glance at the photographs will be sufficient to tell the eye of the experienced golfer the sort of shots to which each respectively relates. He will see at once the symptoms of the pull in the "right shoulder high" and those of the cut in the "right shoulder low."

Lest it be thought that there is any magic in the shoulder movement, let me hasten to point out that it is the angle and the turn-over of the club face that really does the business in both cases, and that the shoulder action is simply a convenient means of getting the turn, one way or the other, on the club face. Incidentally the wrists play an important part, but it is really their positive relation to one another

which really matters, and in this they follow the dictates of the shoulder.

For either the slice or the pull, visualize a point on your right shoulder, and as you come through the ball on the down swing try and make that point follow the path which you wish the ball to take.

Incidentally, if you make your shoulder come through in a straight line, pointing directly to the hole, you will almost infallibly drive a dead straight ball.

Without being an advocate of the "draw" sort of drive, I am of the opinion it is better, if the tee or brassie shot cannot be dead straight, that it come away to the left, as a general habit, than go off to the right. The best way of ensuring this is to make certain that during the first part of the follow through the club head distinctly goes *outside* the line representing the path of the ball. Fig. 9 represents a good way of practising in order to get this effect consistently. A club is laid on the ground beside the ball to indicate the desired direction, and by this means one is able to see to exactly what extent the club is coming across.

The most common fault is for the club head to be outside the line when coming on to the ball and to finish inside of the line, which is precisely the reverse of what is wanted, and in nearly all cases it is due to *hitting too early*, under which conditions the hands come through before the club head.

Two golden rules to observe in the down swing of the full shot are Hit Late and Pivot Late ; in other words, keep the club head distinctly leading all the way, and on the follow through keep your shoulders back until you actually feel that the impetus of the club is pulling them round.

I could deal with driving and brassie (or spoon) play at very much greater length than I have done,

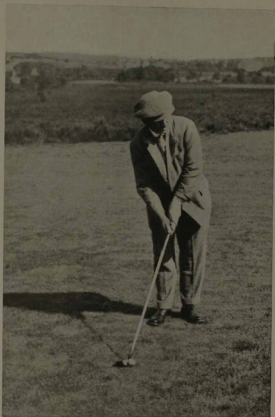


FIG. 1

CONSIDERING THE SHOT

There is no commiseration, but a great deal of truth, in the remark which a player is not infrequently heard to make when his opponent plays a really bad shot:

"You never looked as though you were going to hit it."

Many a stroke is completely spoilt for lack of a deliberate consideration and appreciation of what has got to be performed. Avoid "hurry" and unpreparedness by taking a preliminary survey of the shot. Carefully select the line of flight which the ball is to follow, and place the club head behind the ball with the face at right angles to this line of flight and the ball immediately in front of the striking centre of the face.

All this will greatly help the player to visualize the shot, as a result of which he will be able to tackle it with confidence.

If, in this introductory positioning, the club shaft and the left forearm are kept practically straight with one another the left foot will automatically fall into the proper position for the stance.

Note that even in this very early part of the stroke the pose is one of complete balance.

THE ADDRESS

The principal points to notice about this photograph are, first, that the position is one of determination, and second, that the body is in a state of balance, freedom, and ease.

The arms are not so low as to produce any tendency to stoop, nor so high as to make the player feel that it is an effort to stretch out to the ball.

The club face is absolutely square to the line of flight.

The ball is level with the heel of the left foot, and the feet are about sixty degrees of angle with one another.

The disposition of weight is such as to put more on the left foot than on the right, that is to say, the player slightly leans up against the shot.

The head of the player is well over the ball, and is going to be kept in that position during the whole of the stroke.

The left arm forms a straight line with the club shaft.

Comparing this photograph with No. 1, it will be seen that practically the only movement the player has made is to place his right foot into position for the stance, this position being indicated quite naturally by that of the left foot, and by that of the club itself.

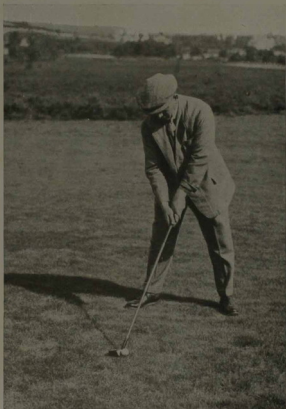


FIG. 2

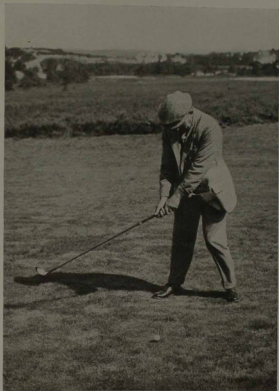


FIG. 3

TAKING THE CLUB BACK

This picture is intended to bring into the fullest prominence the fact that the body does not go back with the club, but rather tends to move in the opposite direction, thrusting still more weight on the left foot.

The head is kept perfectly still, and both eyes are concentrated on the back of the ball—the very spot which the face is to strike.

The left arm is still straight, that is to say, it is moving, not from the elbow, but from the shoulder, and the upper arm is held, as the coat shows, tight into the chest.

The right elbow does not leave the side, but is also kept in.

As the club head goes back it is caused to follow, by means of the pivoting action and the straight left arm, the longest possible arc. In other words, the club head moves upwards only because it is moved backwards. It is not consciously lifted upwards.

This movement is accompanied by a simultaneous movement of the left shoulder and the left knee. These two act absolutely together, and they are kept approximately in a straight line with the ball. By studying this perfect balance is maintained.

Note that this is a purely "Open Face" shot, the left wrist rolling over as the left arm swings from the shoulder. To allow this movement to take place freely the right elbow is kept "in," and must be kept in.

THE TOP OF THE SWING

Observation is directed to the following important points :—

The head is still and both eyes are well on the back of the ball.

The left arm is almost perfectly straight.

The right elbow is still close in to the side and is vertically below the right hand.

The club is only taken back to the horizontal position. The shaft lies just above the right ear and well inside the right shoulder, and it points exactly in the direction of the proposed line of the shot.

The left shoulder and the left knee have moved a good deal round, but they still make a straight line with the ball.

The club face is thoroughly open, and lies in a vertical plane.

The bending of the left knee has brought the left heel off the ground, but this foot has not been allowed to come right on to its toe, and it still bears a great deal of the weight of the body.

All the weight that is on the right foot is on the right heel, and the right leg is as stiff and rigid as a column.

The inner part of the left upper arm is kept squeezed tight against the left breast.

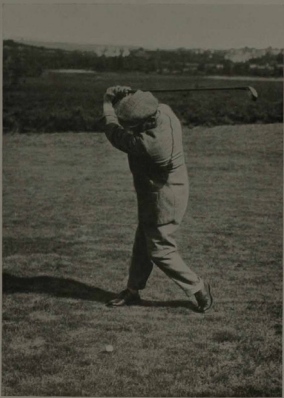


FIG. 4

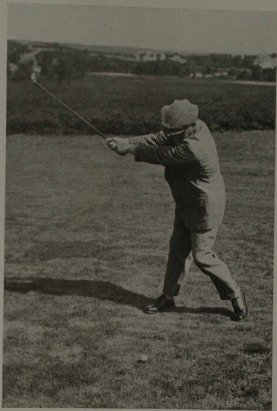


FIG. 5

COMING DOWN

A comparison between this photograph and No. 4 should be made by those who wish to improve their long game, for it demonstrates what is undoubtedly the "key" to the full shot.

This consists in the fact that whilst the hands have only descended a few inches, and whilst there has been practically no movement on the part of the knee and shoulders, the club head has gone through an arc which is almost a complete semicircle.

In short, it has been thrown backwards, as far as ever it will go, by the wrists alone.

Harry Vardon used to practise this throwing backwards movement until, as he has told me, he was almost too tired to face his food—but it meant that nothing in the world could ever put him off his drive.

The whole idea is to make the club head lead.

This is done by the wrists, which by themselves swing the club until the shaft is again in a line with the straight left arm.

Note that there is as yet no suggestion of "hitting." The club head has been started off on its great circular path, and the arms are being kept back to deliver their full force as the club comes on to the ball.

If there had been any attempt to start hitting, the hands would be much lower down and the club head would not have travelled so far, so that it would not be leading at the moment of impact.

The left shoulder and left knee are still in a line with the ball.

The right leg is firmly braced—ready to take the recoil when the real hitting starts.

THE CLUB COMING ON THE BALL.

Here we see the object of the wrist movement—the throwing back action at the top of the swing.

The club head is now coming on to the ball with all the strength of the player behind it, and it is several inches in front of the hands.

This will automatically produce a proper follow through.

The left arm is straight with the club and the upper arm tight in to the chest.

The right leg is still braced.

The left shoulder and the left knee are both moving forward, but they still make a straight line with the ball.

The right shoulder is beginning to come well round, but it is not being allowed to descend.

The club face, the angle of which is dictated, right through the swing, by the back of the left hand, is returned in such a manner that it is as it started, namely, square to the proposed line of flight.

Note that this principle of making the club head lead is a sure guarantee against "digging" underneath the ball, inasmuch as the club head does not hit from above the ball but from behind the ball.

To anyone who wishes to practise driving so that he can be sure of always hitting a pretty good tee shot and nearly always hitting a quite good one, I strongly recommend the study of Photographs 4, 5, and 6. It is the throwing out with the wrists and the principle of letting the club head lead that really matter, and they cannot be practised too much.

Providing the club head is leading, you can put every ounce of strength into your full shot without running the least risk of its going astray.

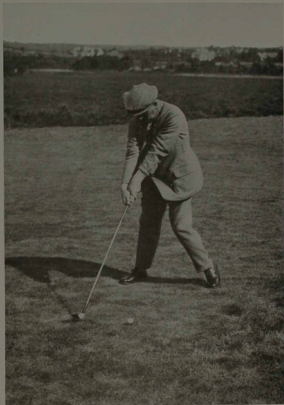


FIG. 6



FIG. 7

BEGINNING OF THE FOLLOW THROUGH

The point which I wish to bring out most particularly in connexion with this photograph is that, providing the previous stages of the swing have been properly carried out, this position is attained perfectly automatically, so that there is really no need to think about it.

The fact is that the club head, through having been leading all the time on the latter part of the down swing, has gone right "through" the ball, pulling the hands of the player after it.

This in turn has straightened the right arm, which is now in a line with the club shaft, and it will be noticed that both arms are well away from the body.

At the same time the weight of the body has also been pulled forward, thereby straightening the left leg and causing the right heel to come off the ground.

The left foot is now as firmly anchored down as it could possibly be, and there is no tendency whatever for the player to come on to his toes, whereby he would lose balance.

The left shoulder and the left knee have worked together and are still in a line with the spot where the ball originally was.

The ball has probably travelled thirty or forty yards, but the player still has his head well down and his eyes concentrated on the spot where the ball had been.

The hands and the club are pointing along the line of flight, and the club head is swinging just as far forward—after the ball—as it can possibly go.

The club face, thanks to the determination of the left hand, still bears its same relation to the back of this hand and has rolled over forwards, imparting a "run" to the ball.

THE FINISH OF THE SHOT

The player, not without justification, can now allow his head to come up in order that he may admire the results of his effort.

The club is finishing over his left shoulder, or rather, between his left shoulder and his left ear, just as, at the top of the down swing, it was over his right shoulder and above his right ear.

The right shoulder is now in the same spot as was, at the top of the down swing, occupied by the left shoulder.

Observe that the body is still in a state of perfect balance—there is no tendency to fall over or to come on the toes. Without any effort the player should be able to hold this position for several seconds on end, inasmuch as it is a perfectly natural one.

Practically the whole of the weight of the body, thanks to the speed of the club in the follow through, has been transferred to the left foot.

The club face is now turned so as to be again vertical. It is thus in a position exactly the converse of that shown in Photograph No. 5, that is, it faces directly away from the camera instead of directly towards it.

It will be noted that there is now a general relaxing of muscles. The club grip is held quite loosely and both knees are a little bent. There is nothing in this, however, beyond the fact that it indicates that the power was applied at the right time.

After the ball is hit away the properly directed club head can safely be left to "do the work."



FIG. 8



FIG. 9

" THROUGH—AND OUT "

The commonest of all driving and long shot faults is slicing. This is caused by the failure of the player to keep the club head moving along the very same line that he wants the ball to take.

If at the top of the swing the wrists (this is very likely to occur if the right hand is trying to get in too soon) are permitted to move not directly backwards, as in Photograph No. 5, but slightly outwards, there will be a strong tendency to come across the ball and to finish with the club pointing away to the left of the hole. Such a finish is all wrong.

In this photograph a club has been laid down on the ground just beside the ball with its shaft pointing towards the hole.

The proper finish involves the club head going outside of this line after the ball is struck, which means that, on the down swing, the club head has been inside of the line—as is perfectly correct.

Practising with a club, or a line, on the ground, taking good care that at the finish of the swing the player's club is pointing, if anything, slightly to the right of the hole, is one of the best ways of curing a slice.

But bear in mind that the club head must lead—if not, the face will not be square to the line of flight of the ball.

THE THROWING OUT ACTION

This photograph illustrates, by way of a back view, how the club should be taken back at the beginning of the down swing.

Compare this picture with the front view given in No. 5.

Note that the weight is well forward on the left foot and that the left arm is almost perfectly straight with the club shaft.

The right arm is nearly straight, that is to say, the club head is being taken just as far back and away from the ball as it can be got to go without moving the body, as a whole, backwards.

Under these circumstances the arc of the club head will be desirably flat, so that at the moment of impact with the ball it will be travelling in an almost perfectly straight line. This, of course, is what is required in order to strike the ball absolutely cleanly and to impart to it a top spin that will tend to make it run when it meets the ground.

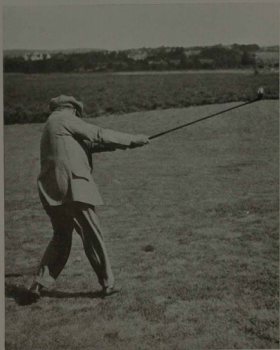


FIG. 10

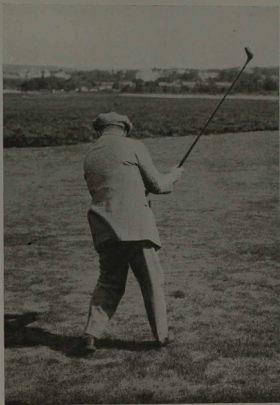


FIG. 11

DOWN SWING—THE WRONG WAY

Here the photograph shows how not to drive. Yet I am afraid that this picture might have been taken of a great number of golfers, for it represents something that is only too common a fault.

Instead of the player performing the first semicircle of the swing with his wrists alone he has allowed his arms to come into action far too early.

The result is that his hands are a long way in front of the club head, and from this it follows that, unless he has the most extraordinary power of wrist, the hands will still be leading when the club comes on to the ball.

As a consequence, the shot will either be smothered and the ball will scuttle along the ground to the left, or, what is even more likely, the club head will hit the ground several inches behind the ball, which will be scooped up and badly sliced.

When feeling himself in this position the player will try and get the club "through" somehow or other, and is very likely to develop that worst of shots—the "stomach-punch," with the head finishing somewhere down by the left knee.

One often hears of players being rightly described as playing their drive and brassie shots as though they were mashie chips. Here is the cause of it: a swing of short radius, in which the ball is hit from above instead of being hit from behind.

Anyone who wishes to play shots from the tee that will give him satisfaction is recommended to avoid, at all costs, getting into the position shown in this photograph. Unhappily, it is only too easy to acquire this desperately bad habit.

THE DRAW

One of the most effective shots in golf, because when properly controlled it is so valuable as a distance-getter, is the tee shot with "draw," that is to say, a slight pull on it.

For the greater part of its carry the ball goes straight and flies low. It then turns a little from right to left, strikes the ground with any amount of top spin on it, and rolls—and rolls—and rolls.

This result can be entirely obtained by the action of the right shoulder, a point on which must be moved through a path precisely equivalent to that which it is desired the ball shall follow.

Immediately after the ball is struck, i.e. during the follow through, the right shoulder in this case is moved over and round towards the left.

This causes the club face to be turned slightly inwards, so that it loses its loft and also imparts a left-handed spin to the ball.

This effect will be gained almost automatically by merely keeping the right shoulder rather more "up" than usual, and by making a really strong follow through, finishing with the shoulders sloping downwards to the left and the right hand well over the left hand.



FIG. 12

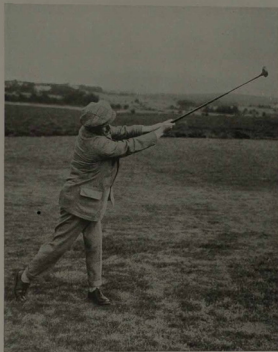


FIG. 13

THE DRIFT

In this shot, which is also extremely useful, both from the tee and when playing through the green, the ball finishes with a slight slice and runs from left to right. It is not, however, hit with a serious amount of "cut," and in consequence runs quite a distance before stopping; but it is not so essentially a long-running shot as the draw.

Here, it will be seen, the right shoulder, by a slight movement, exactly indicates the line of flight of the ball, that is to say, this shoulder moves in and under instead of, as with the "draw," out and over.

The result is that at the end of the swing the line of the shoulders slopes downwards from left to right, and the right hand is somewhat under the left. This means that, as shown in the photograph, the club face is kept well "open" and points more or less to the sky.

If continued farther than the point shown, the follow through would finish with a twirl of the club, not over the left shoulder but in front of the player's head. With this shot, however, the player wants a lot of control, and too long a follow through is apt to impart an excessive amount of slicing spin to the ball.

It is as well to bear in mind that for the perfectly straight drive the finish of the shot should find the shoulders level with one another. For the draw swing the right shoulder a little "over"; for the drift swing it slightly "under."

These two actions, under proper control, can be made extremely useful with iron shots, especially in connexion with cheating bunkers and taking advantage of slopes.

THE WIND-CHEATER

When one is playing in very strong winds, such as are commonly met with on many seaside courses, and especially when one is playing against the wind, it is generally somewhat dangerous to "let loose" at the tee shot; for the wind, although it will not very much affect the flight of a ball hit with absolutely perfect precision, is very apt to exaggerate the least little touch of "slice" or "pull" until it seems to be a most glaring error.

In these circumstances it is rather better to go for direction rather than distance, and preferably to keep the ball so close to the ground as to prevent the wind getting hold of it.

A wind-cheating shot of this nature is really a form of push shot, more attention being paid to control than to anything else. Hence the abbreviation of the follow through.

The back swing is also shortened as much as is consistent with getting a reasonable length.

Note that the weight of the body is thrown markedly far forward on to the left foot, and that the position of the player is one of stern firmness.

The ball is hit a definitely downward blow and should not rise more than six or seven feet above the ground, finishing with a strong run.

It is essential for this shot—at which J. H. Taylor is a great adept—to keep the elbows tucked well in to the sides, and the knee and foot movement should be economized as much as possible. In the photograph it will be seen that both heels are kept on the ground.

The shot involves a sacrifice of distance, but it enables the ball to be kept on the course when otherwise that might be difficult.

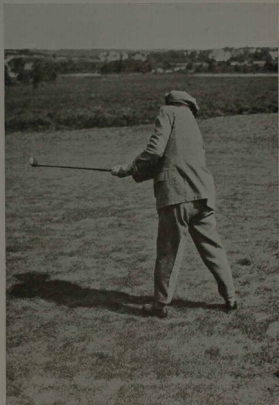


FIG. 14

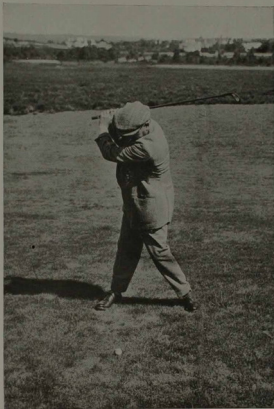


FIG. 15

LOSING CONTROL

There are quite a number of notable players who claim that there is nothing wrong in allowing the left arm to crook when the club is at the top of the swing, but, with all due respect to them, I beg to differ.

I am convinced that for the average golfer, that is to say, for at least nine players out of ten, it is very advisable to stick to the straight left, and I therefore reproduce this photograph as an example of what should be avoided.

By crooking the left elbow the club can be taken very much farther back—distinctly more so than is shown in the picture; but I strongly doubt whether there is anything to be gained from this extra length of swing, particularly as with the left arm crooked it is not so easy to perform the "throwing-out action" with the wrists, to which reference has several times been made.

There is, in fact, a strong tendency, unless this is very carefully checked, to come down on the ball with the left arm still bent, a state of affairs that cannot possibly conduce to a good shot.

Another thing which is very liable to happen is for the right elbow to move away from the side of the body and to start, as it were, working on its own account. This in itself is a constant contributor to badly hit and uncontrolled shots.

Those who play with the bent left elbow have my admiration because they demonstrate the ability to overcome self-imposed difficulties. There are, however, quite enough of these as it is, and I therefore recommend the straight left principle as being the better because it is the safer.

THE BRASSIE OUT OF A BAD LIE

It is probable that several people on seeing this photograph will observe: "This is more like physical jerks than a golf shot."

Yet there are many occasions when this curious stooping kind of shot can be played with great advantage, and Harry Vardon has often enough exemplified the benefit of getting well "down to it."

This sort of style is no sort of use unless the shot wants special treatment, as, for instance, is the case when it is necessary to be able to get plenty of distance on a ball that is not only a bit cupped but is also in a distinctly hanging lie.

Under these conditions, unless the body is stooped it may be very hard to pick the ball up and get through with the club head into the bargain.

In a shot of this character it is always as well to carry in your mind the idea that the sole of the club is going to hit the ball—for the very last thing you want to do is to dig into the ground.

By starting the down swing with an upright position of the body one secures the downward blow. By finishing with a stooping posture one ensures that after impact the club rises fairly quickly. If the stroke were played otherwise there would be a big tendency to pull in the hands and so make a badly sliced cut shot.

With a little practice at this emergency stroke it is astonishing what really unpromising lies can be negotiated with an almost straight-faced wooden club.

A little bit of "advanced golf" this, perhaps, but a tip well worth keeping in mind.

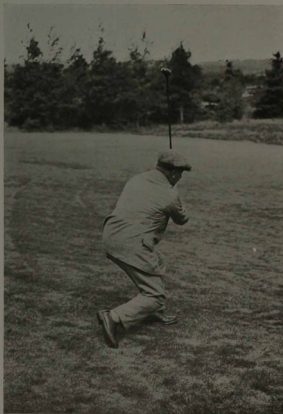


FIG. 16

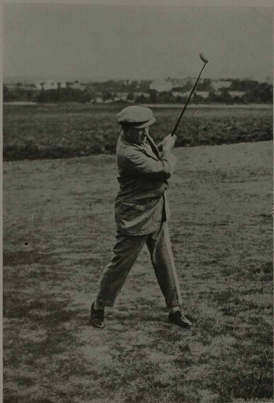


FIG. 17

THE WORST SHOT OF ALL

Just as St. Patrick used (so the legend has it) to take around with him an "awful example" to preach about, so I think it just as well, in this series of pictures, to have at least one shocking demonstration of how not to do it.

Yet every week-end you will see hundreds of painstaking golfers finishing their tee shots in this abominable style.

Hands through before the head of the club, arms pulled into the body, and not the least sign of a follow through. Head up, of course, as well.

Small wonder that the ball goes anywhere but in the desired direction.

The only way to cure a habit like this is to make up one's mind to sling the club head after the ball at all costs, not caring where the ball goes.

In short, to cultivate a rapturous carelessness in place of the anxiety which is the root cause of a bad finish like this.

It is only the man who is getting no younger who makes this sort of stroke, and for the simple reason that he is trying to think about too many things. A youngster would never have such a style—he would think only of hitting the ball as hard as he jolly well could, and he would do anything but pull the club in and back at the moment of impact.

Simply hit the ball is the motto. And, if the worst comes to the worst, let go of the club altogether. Anything rather than pull the grip into the chest.

THE SHUT FACE

I do not believe in the shut face.

I have known plenty of golfers who greatly improved by going from the shut face style to the open face, but I never heard of one who did the reverse procedure without wishing that he had never been so foolish.

If the open face was good enough for Harry Vardon, John Ball, and John Henry Taylor, it is still good enough for all the other golfers.

It is possible that by its means a very strong hitter may get a little extra distance, but the few extra yards are purchased at very great expense, inasmuch as that in the shut face shot the player is deliberately introducing another factor which enters into the timing. He has got to resist the turning of the wrist which is a component of the natural swing, and under these circumstances I hold it to be definitely more difficult to preserve that the club face, at the moment of impact with the ball, is dead square with the proposed line of flight.

In the subsequent follow through, too, the wrist work must be very perfect indeed in order to keep the ball straight.

But, perhaps, the worst feature of the shut face is that in this stroke the right hand is deliberately encouraged to beat the left, and it is the left hand and arm which the wise golfer regards as the key to direction and clean hitting.

Don't imagine that the shut face will cure slicing. Rather is it likely to produce it.

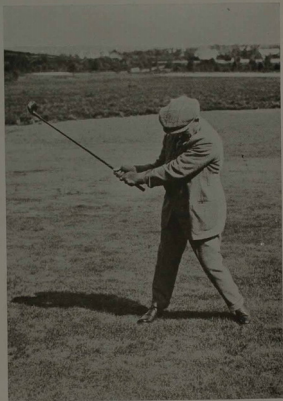


FIG. 18



FIG. 19



FIG. 20

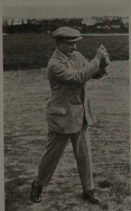


FIG. 21



FIG. 22

PRACTICE WITHOUT A CLUB

Nearly all good golfers know that for keeping themselves consistently in good form there is nothing like constantly handling clubs and so keeping the appropriate muscles tuned up to concert pitch.

To many this sort of practice is out of the question, for it is probably on only one or two days a week that they get a chance of play at all. On the other hand, all can, now and then, indulge in a little useful practice that calls for no large space.

It is a very good thing to be always practising "balance," and this can be done quite well without using a club at all.

No. 19 shows the back swing with hands only, the object being to get that most valuable simultaneous movement of the left shoulder and the left knee.

No. 20 illustrates the beginning of the down swing—the wrists accomplishing that most important "throwing out" of the imaginary club.

In No. 21 we have the right kind of finish to the exercise—left leg straightened and carrying most of the weight, shoulders square to the line of flight and level, right foot slightly on the toe.

No. 22 is another example of how not to do it—a dreadful case of failure to keep balance: weight on the right foot, right shoulder down, no attempt at follow through.

Lacking the real club in your hands you will rarely go back far enough on the back swing, and you will probably not get the desired straight arm effect in the follow through, but you will get—if you persevere—a sound idea of the true physical balance which is the making of all good golf shots.

THE GRIP

Whilst it is very evident that good golf—yes, first-class golf—can be played with the palm grip and the open finger grip, I am satisfied that the overlapping grip is far and away the best for the vast majority of players.

Beyond everything else it leaves the left hand with the fullest possible control of the club, and that is a very valuable asset.

The accompanying photographs show the two stages in the completion of my own grip, about which I can only say that there is nothing very special about it except that it is natural, easy, and comfortable. It may be noticed that the upper part of the club handle is well roughened—indicating a faith in the left hand.

I overlap one finger of the right hand for ordinary shots—drives, brassies, irons, and so forth, but I am convinced that it is perfectly safe to overlap two fingers. Certainly I am sure it is better to do this than not to overlap at all.

The two finger overlap is very much to be recommended in the playing of short chip shots in which plenty of "stop" on the ball is wanted. This is essentially a left-hand stroke, and the more the right is kept out of it the better.

I also believe in getting the fleshy part of the thumb squarely on the handle rather than squeezing the thumb against the forefinger. This latter arrangement is very apt to give a feeling of stiffness and constraint which should at all times be avoided. No one can play golf with stiff hands and wrists.



FIG. 24



FIG. 23



FIG. 26



FIG. 25

THE HANDS AT THE BEGINNING AND END
OF THE SWING

The point which I particularly want to emphasize by means of these two pictures is that, before the ball is hit, one should hold tight (not too tight, of course), and that, after the ball is hit it is sufficient if one just holds in hard enough to prevent the club flying out of one's hands.

In my opinion a very large number of what would otherwise be quite good shots—especially in the case of the driving—are spoilt because the temptation to hold on like grim death is so hard to resist. Under these conditions the club head, instead of following naturally after the ball, is checked and consequently a follow through can only be made with a great effort.

Now a natural follow through is done with no effort at all, for the club has no option but to do it on its own account.

Therefore, for this part of the swing, the club will look after itself—providing it is given a chance.

At the top of the swing the important factor to bear in mind is the necessity for maintaining a close, firm, and determined grip with the left hand. Even if you have to shorten the swing to avoid it, you must not let your left fingers open so that the handle slips up towards the upper joints. Keep it well against the palm, otherwise that demoniacal right hand—which always wants to do everything—will endeavour to get control just when its officiousness is least welcome. Let it come in for all it is worth when the ball is struck, but let the left hand start the club head outwards and backwards.

This is the whole secret of timing. Hit late if you like—but never early.

FULL IRON SHOT : TOP OF SWING

As has been pointed out already, the essence of the good iron shot is control. Only reasonable distance is called for, and consequently attention can be properly paid to economizing the muscular movements in the interests of preserving perfect balance.

Accordingly the iron shot can be best performed with a relatively short swing. And it should be so performed. In saying this I am well aware that in actual play the great majority of good golfers swing back very nearly as far with iron as they do with wood, but I am quite confident that not one of them really intends to, for they all realize the virtue of restraint.

I consider that in this photograph the iron has been taken just as far back as is desirable and requisite, and I freely confess that at the time the photograph was taken I was under the impression that the club had not gone past the vertical position.

The straight left arm will be noticed and also the fact that the left shoulder and the left knee are in a line with the ball, the two having been moved quite simultaneously and absolutely in unison.

I would also draw attention to the completely open face of the club.

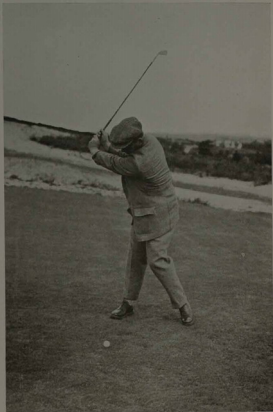


FIG. 27

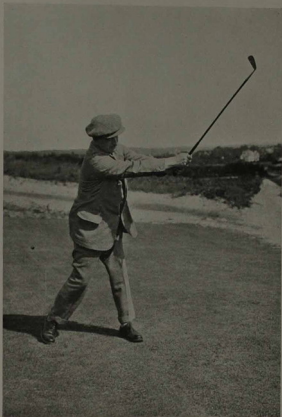


FIG. 28.

FINISH OF FULL IRON SHOT

In this picture the two most important things to mark are :

- (1) *The absolutely straight left arm (note this also in the previous photograph), and*
- (2) *The suggestion of bodily rigidity.*

This last is apparent simply because the shot is one in which control is of the utmost importance. Hence there is a certain amount of "tightening-up" all round.

With a drive one is entitled to lash out at the ball, casting discretion aside. With an iron shot one is well advised not only to be deliberate in considering what has to be done but to be deliberate in carrying the task out.

A shorter back swing, a shorter follow through, a firmness of pose—all these are indications of a determination to be sure rather than sorry. Every good iron shot has an element of "pawkiness" about it, and for that reason it is always better to over-club the shot instead of under-clubbing it.

A three-quarter shot is always to be preferred to a full "bang" wherever and whenever such a fully controlled stroke is playable.

By carrying in his mind the idea of a restricted follow through the player will help himself in the always difficult job of standing still.

THE LOFTED IRON SHOT

It often happens that the presence of bunkers guarding a green necessitates the playing of a type of full iron shot in which everything has to be sacrificed to "carry." Consequently the ball must be picked up as quickly as possible.

In these circumstances it is desirable to hit the ball somewhat later than is advisable with the ordinary sort of iron shot which is intended to fly low. Accordingly the body is kept rather more back, and the swing made as upright as possible. There is a greater concentration of weight on the right foot, that is to say, the player does not "lean up against the shot" so much as he should do for the normal full iron stroke.

In order to get a quick pick-up the player is often tempted to open the face of the club, but this is a mistake. By standing a little more behind the ball he will ensure that he hits it later in the swing, and this factor, in itself, will produce the more pronounced loft which is required.

This picture should be compared with Fig. 27, from which it will be seen how a different type of trajectory is secured, almost solely by a different pose of the player, the finish of the shot being the same in both cases.

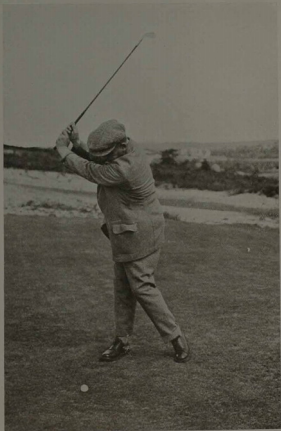


FIG. 29

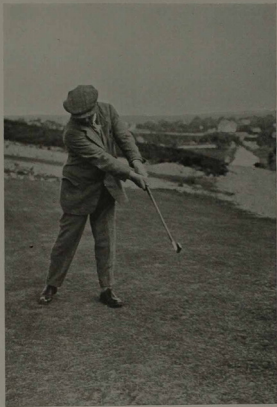


FIG. 30

FINISH OF THE PUSH SHOT

The billiard player knows perfectly well that in the screw-back shot he gets the "work" on the ball by a well-controlled follow through. If this follow through is too long, much of the screw effect is lost—lacking the follow through the ball is merely "stabbed" or "stunned."

In the push shot we want a screw-back effect, therefore a certain amount of follow through is essential. If, however, we let the club head rise too much above the line of flight, we shall tend to put top spin on the ball, which is the last thing we want.

Therefore the head of the club must be kept low, so that all the while it is in contact with the ball it is imparting bottom spin.

Clearly to get the flattest arc for the shot, the ball must be played off the right foot so as to ensure that the blow is downward.

Further, the club, as a pendulum, must swing about the left shoulder.

Accordingly to play the push shot most effectively the club and the left arm must be kept in a straight line from the moment of impact until the end of the stroke.

This photograph shows the idea, and it will be seen that the push shot is the very antithesis of the pitch-and-run.

In the ordinary iron shot the club should finish with the shaft in line with a straight right arm; in the push it finishes straight with the left arm, and in these conditions the club face, right to the end, is kept square to the line of flight. If the club face be turned over, the ball will run instead of stopping as soon as it alights.

MASHIE SHOT : ADDRESS

In the mashie shot we are going out for "carry," and are realizing that when the ball alights it will simply drop with little or no spin of any kind upon it.

Such being the case the ball will be hit not on the downward swing, as in the case—particularly—of the push shot, but practically at the dead bottom of the swing.

This involves the left shoulder, which is the point about which the club should be swung, being brought nearly opposite the ball.

At the same time, with the object of providing a firm anchorage and in order to keep the body from trying to get into the stroke, the stance is made fairly open.

The club face is turned out a little so as to make sure the ball is picked up.

In this stroke the ball must be hit before the ground ; but, off a goodish lie, the ball should be taken without any turf at all.

Note that in the address the head of the player is kept distinctly behind the ball, as well as above it. This is done with a view to maintaining plenty of weight on the right foot, the object of which will be seen on reference to a subsequent photograph.

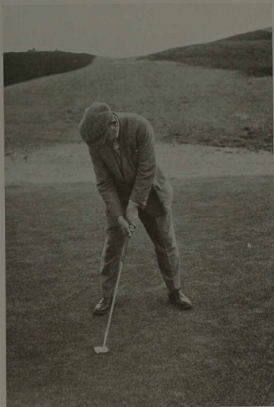


FIG. 31

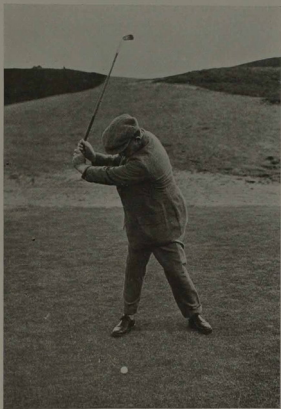


FIG. 32

MASHIE SHOT : TOP OF SWING

The object of the shot being to obtain a quick pick up and plenty of carrying power—it is something to be grateful for that there are no bunters up in the air—there are two important factors in the swing.

Firstly it must be upright—the more vertical the plane of the swing the better ; and secondly it must have a short radius.

This last is in direct contrast with the drive swing, which should have the longest possible radius.

Note how at the top of the swing the shaft is extremely upright ; carried farther back still it would just about touch the player's right ear.

Also note that the movement of the left knee is very much restricted. It is hardly bent at all. In the meantime the right leg is braced very firmly and the weight is kept well on the heels.

The club face is thoroughly " open."

MASHIE SHOT: FINISH

As I have mentioned, the arc of the club head travel must be kept of short radius. If the body be allowed to go forward at all this movement will tend to flatten the swing—and accordingly, in this particular shot, the body must be kept well back.

The best way of ensuring this is to determine that the right heel shall not leave the ground during any part of the swing. Nor the left heel either.

If that is done it is a physical impossibility for the body to move.

In this type of shot the only part of the golfer that does any work at all is that part of him which is above the waist line. What is below it simply acts as a support like the tripod of a camera.

It will be noticed that at the finish of the shot the shoulders have not been allowed to swing round until they are at right angles to the hole. Instead they are in much the same position as they were when the ball was hit.

This is done to enable the right shoulder to remain well back, with the result that the club head, after hitting the ball, is brought up very quickly.

Almost of overwhelming importance in a shot which has to be played probably more often than any other type of iron stroke is the rigid determination with which the head is kept down long after the ball has sailed away. To bring the head up quickly is most infallibly to spoil a shot of this kind, inasmuch as it will involve the movement of the whole body forward.

If you don't look up until the ball has dropped you can be pretty certain that the shot you have played is a reasonably good one.

To look up too soon with a shot of this kind is to be invariably disappointed. Let the other man admire the ball whilst it is in the air.

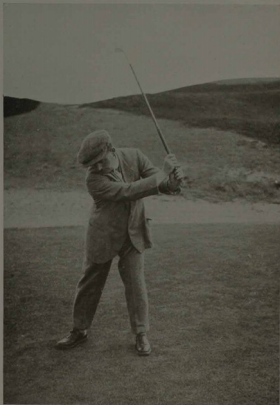


FIG. 33



FIG. 35

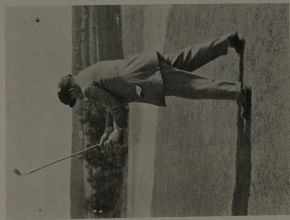


FIG. 34

RIGHT TYPE OF IRON FINISH—AND WRONG
TYPE

In the photograph No. 34, I endeavour to indicate, by way of a three-quarter back view, how to make a finish to an ordinary iron shot. The finish of the push shot, of the lofted shot, and of the pitch-and-run shot, are all slightly different, and each will be fully exploited by the adept golfer.

To a very large number of players, however, all iron shots, be they mashie, light iron, mid iron, or straight-faced iron, are all very much alike except in the matter of distance. If they cultivate the finish shown in this picture they will not go far wrong so far as the general utility sort of stroke is concerned.

The head faces the hole—as also do the shoulders. The club shaft also points towards the flag—or rather where the flag would be if the stick were a very high one. The face of the club is vertical.

Above all, the left elbow is kept close in to the side.

In photograph No. 35 I show a finish to an iron shot which is seen hundreds of times every Saturday and Sunday on any golf course.

Mark the utter lack of control and decision about it.

There is no sort of direction about the club itself, which is away off to the left. The player is facing also to the left of the hole, but he has got the club face turned out so that it is a certainty that the ball is drifting off to the right. A million to one, too, his hands have come through before the club head so that he has got no distance into the shot.

Good architects place plenty of bunkers to catch this form of stroke and they are eminently right in doing so. It is one of the worst shots in golf and a monument of wasted, mis-applied, and fruitless energy.

Keep that left elbow in and you cannot go very far wrong.

THE PITCH-AND-RUN

Generally speaking about half the approaches on a modern golf course are of the pitch-and-run type—that is to say there is no hazard between the ball and the green—the remainder calling for the pitching type of stroke. Frequently, however, if one gets off the line an approach that would normally be a simple run up involves a delicate pitch.

To be able to approach properly the golfer should make himself thoroughly at home with both sorts of shot, for they are equally valuable. I do not believe in pitching when the run is available, as I am convinced that the latter is, as a rule, the easier stroke to bring off successfully, also a slightly topped ball is not liable to lead to a heavy penalty.

In the right way of playing the running up approach the club should finish with the head and shaft pointing straight to the flag. The feet and legs should be kept as still as possible—for the shot is, after all, only a form of putt. The shoulders must be kept out of it, also, and there must be no taking of divots.

In consequence the eyes must be "glued" on the back of the ball and the head must not come up until the shot is completed.

Note how in order to make the ball run well after alighting the right wrist has been allowed to turn the club head over a little. The ball should be addressed with the head also turned in so as to reduce the loft of the club.

In playing the shot dwell on the ball as long as possible and follow through with an absolute avoidance of jerkiness.

The run up shot is a little hit with a lot of persuasion.

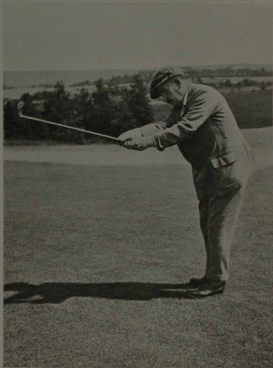


FIG. 36

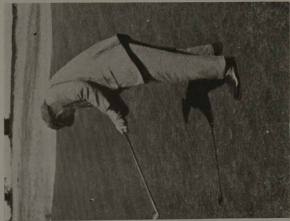


FIG. 37



FIG. 38

THE CHIP SHOT : RIGHT AND WRONG

The chip shot is a pitch with the maximum amount of stop on the ball so that, having alighted, it runs the least possible distance.

It is the parallel of the screw back at billiards and is played on identically the same principles.

With both elbows tucked firmly into the sides and with a short back swing in which the wrists do nearly all the work, the ball is hit a sharp, decisive, downward blow.

The follow through is definitely restrained so as to encourage the club head to finish low down and as close to the ground as possible.

Any divot that is taken must come after the ball has been hit—and not before.

In the follow through the motion of the club head may be stopped in the position shown in the photograph, with a distinct jerk. By this means a great deal of bottom spin can be got on to the ball, indeed with a perfectly smooth-faced club it can be made to "bite" on even a fast green.

An excellent tip in the chip shot is to overlap two fingers instead of one, for the stroke is essentially one in which the left arm and wrist carry most of the responsibility.

Whatever you do, never attempt to play your chips in the manner illustrated in No. 38. Keep the left elbow braced against the side as though your life depended on it. Otherwise you will get merely sloppiness instead of the crispness and certainty which you really want.

THE CLEAN NIBLICK SHOT

There are plenty of occasions when it is perfectly legitimate to take a mid iron or even a spoon in a sand bunker in order to get distance, but in the generality of bunker shots what the player is wisely content with is the certainty of getting out with the accompaniment of a reasonable distance.

Far too often an attempt is made to dig the ball out rather than to hit it cleanly—the reason being that the player is thoroughly afraid of the sand.

The photograph shows the address for a shot out of a bunker in which a steep side has not got to be negotiated and where the lie of the ball is good.

The following points may be noted. Eyes fixed on the back of the ball right through the stroke. Body perfectly still, elbows well into the side. Club held light.

There must be a determination to get a reasonable follow through at all costs, and accordingly the club should not be taken very far back on the up swing.

*The ball is addressed with the face of the club well open.
Stand firmly on the heels and do not bend the knees.*

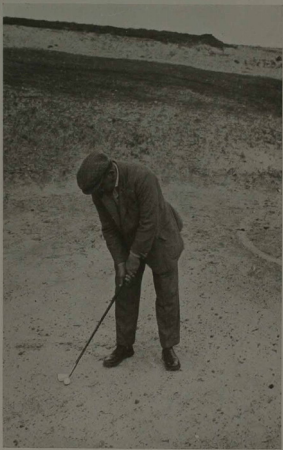


FIG. 39

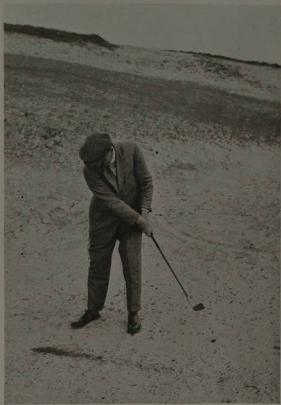


FIG. 40

CLEAN NIBLICK SHOT: FINISH

This is the finish of the clean shot out of sand, and in connexion with this I particularly wish to draw attention to two things—the sand itself, and the legs and feet of the player.

With regard to these last there has been no movement at all—not even a transference of weight, for the weight is still as it was in the beginning, equally borne on both feet.

As to the sand, it clearly shows that there has been a follow through and that there has been no attempt at digging at all. The sole of the club has gone into the sand about a quarter of an inch, and the club head has been forced right through with the forearms. Had the club head been allowed to stop the whole shot would have been spoilt.

As a matter of interest I may mention that the stroke of which this is the photograph, the ball was, without any forcing, hit a distance of about one hundred and fifty yards with the mashie niblick. It was not greatly lofted but had about the same trajectory as an ordinary mashie shot.

Note that in playing this stroke there is no attempt made to come across the ball from right to left. This method is, however, very useful when it is required to get only a short distance and to pick the ball up quickly.

THE EXPLOSION SHOT

I have watched a great many players attempt to bring off the explosion shot out of a very bad lie in a very bad bunker, and I ascribe the very large percentage of failures that followed to the fact that very, very few of these players had any idea of what they were doing. Many of them evidently thought that this stroke merely involves the scooping up of a prodigious quantity of sand.

This, however, is not the case.

Supposing we found our ball lying very badly and that we were allowed to work the club head underneath it until we could simply "hoick" it out, we should have no difficulty in sand bunkers. The rules of golf wisely do not permit this scoop shot.

What we have therefore to do is to get as nearly as possible the same effect with a legitimate blow.

Address the ball as though it were a log and your club were an axe. Aim to hit—almost vertically downwards—so that the pointed heel of the club enters the sand about a quarter of an inch or so behind the back of the ball, that is to say, definitely attempt to hit it off the heel. As you are striking downwards this will bring the blade into the correct position on the ball.

What you are really doing is to make a swing of the shortest possible radius whereby the club head only travels a very short distance forward before being rapidly brought up again.

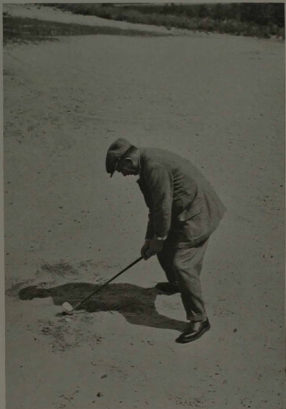


FIG. 41

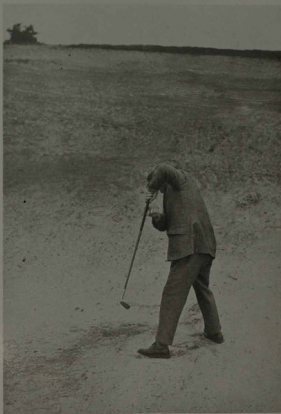


FIG. 42

EXPLOSION SHOT: FINISH

This photograph shows the finish of the explosion stroke, and it would be a shockingly bad position for any other form of golf stroke.

A great deal of strength has had to be used to pick the club head out of the hole in which, on the down swing, one has sought to embed it, and as is only natural this strength has been concentrated in the left arm. Here the elbow is not only crooked but very markedly crooked, and if such were not the case it would be impossible to get the club up and forward out of the sand.

Note also, that here too, another thing has been done that should not occur in any other golfing shot—namely the whole body has been raised by straightening the back and the legs. This, again, is done to help pull the club head upwards, and it is in this direction that such follow through as there is takes place.

The ball goes no great distance—only twenty yards or so out of a really bad hole in the sand—but it rises quickly, which after all is the principal thing one is aiming at.

Mark the fact that the head is kept well down. To keep it so is probably the most difficult factor in this very useful and effective shot.

THE JAB

Very often a niblick shot has to be played under conditions which absolutely prevent the ordinary swing being used. This is particularly the case when the ball lies in heavy, rough grass, in heather, or in loose sand.

Clearly, under these circumstances, you want the club head to hit the ball without going through a lot of stuff on its way to it, so that a very pronounced downward blow is necessary.

For this purpose a club with a very deep face should always be used to ensure that one does not go underneath the ball altogether.

Stand well in front of the ball and lean the club shaft so far forward that all or most of the loft is taken out of the club face.

Using the wrists only for the delivery of the blow and employing, therefore, quite a short back swing, hit firmly and let the follow through go right into the ground. That is to say make no attempt at following through horizontally.

By this means the ball may be knocked out of almost anything, and often very surprising distance can be got in spite of the fact that it will have a lot of stop on it.

This type of shot one sometimes sees used on the fairway by players who rather pride themselves upon their adroitness with the niblick. Such a practice is, however, very strongly to be deprecated, for in the first place the shot is nothing like so "safe" as the ordinary clean hit pitch, and in the second place it is highly destructive to the fairway, from which an immense divot will be taken.

When playing this shot out of the rough use plenty of power, for a stroke of this kind without strong decision in it is quite useless.

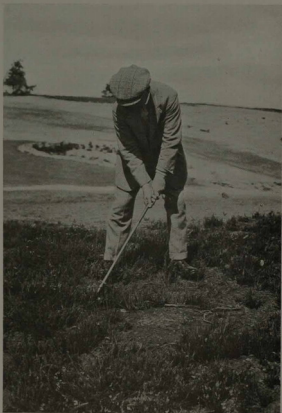


FIG. 43



• FIG. 44



FIG. 45



FIG. 46 •



FIG. 47

THE APPROACH PUTT

This is a shot of anything over about ten yards. When properly played it is probably the greatest stroke saver in the game.

The two upper photographs show the right way to bring it off, the two lower pictures indicating the cause of certain disaster.

The object of the shot is to make the ball run so that it will go on travelling irrespective of little inequalities in the green or in the approach fairway immediately in front of the green.

At the same time you want the maximum of accuracy in regard to direction and strength. Accordingly the greatest possible economy of muscular movement must be secured, and this is done by using the wrists only. This in turn implies that the back swing cannot be very long, nevertheless you can easily get the required distance by means, largely, of the very pronounced follow through.

Note that the left wrist is allowed to turn the club face out on the back swing, while the right wrist turns it in on the forward swing. This is the action that imparts run and at the same time secures direction. Elbows are kept well in until the extreme end of the stroke.

Many players fail miserably at this shot because, as shown in the lower photographs, they will "play forward" at it and get the elbows away from the sides. If they do this they are certain to go utterly wrong both in direction and strength as they are not, as it were, striking from a firm base. Consequently the club head is never thoroughly under control.

The wrists alone take quite enough looking after—to manage elbows as well is almost out of the question.

Getting "work" on to the ball, in the form of top spin, is the keynote of the long run up approach putt.

THE MIDDLE PUTT

I call the middle putt a stroke of anything from three to ten yards. It is one in which there should be some distinct probability of the ball holing out and an absolute certainty of its being not more than a foot from the tin.

It is in this length of putt that one must begin to get work on the ball. By this I do not mean simply top spin—indeed, there must be not too much of that—but rather that cut or pull, to a very slight extent, should be used to counteract the slopes that have to be negotiated.

It is almost needless to say that great concentration is required and that the ball must be hit absolutely cleanly.

If the general slope between the ball and the hole is downwards from right to left, the ball should be hit slightly off the heel of the club so that the resulting tendency to slice keeps the ball fairly straight in spite of the slope.

If the green falls from left to right the reverse principle should be adopted and the ball slightly pulled by hitting it off the toe of the putter.

With practice, this method of neutralizing the slopes will be found to be easier and more effective than merely allowing for them, the ball seeming to prefer to spin into the hole rather than simply to roll in.

It will be noticed that as there is less follow through and less movement generally in this length of putt than in the approach putt, the player can crouch down more so as to make sure that his body remains absolutely still. The shot is performed entirely with the wrists and any stance that will give rigidity to the parts of the body not in action may be adopted.

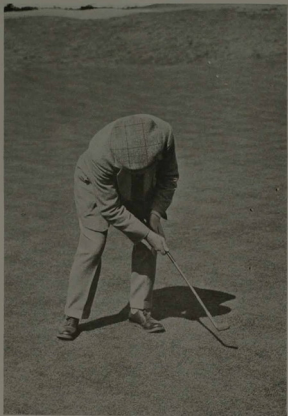


FIG. 48



FIG. 51

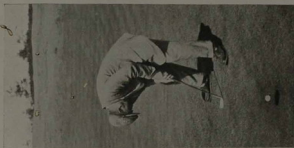


FIG. 50



FIG. 49

THE SHORT PUTT

The chief point about the photographs of the short holing-out putt, i.e. one of three yards or less, is that it is very difficult to see in them the evidence of any movement.

This shot is best done with a finger movement, the wrists hardly working at all but keeping just as still as they can possibly be held.

The back swing is very short, the follow through is very short, the club moves exactly along the line which the ball is to take, and the ball is simply given a sharp rap. This enables it to be hit far more firmly than if it were given any top spin. In other words the ball is banged into the hole rather than persuaded in, for no risks of small irregularities turning it off in the last few inches are going to be taken by anyone with pretensions to the title of "a good putter."

Having taken the line to the hole, consider first the back of the ball, and secondly the exact spot on the blade of the club with which you are going to hit it. Concentrate your mind's eye on that spot and let nothing interfere with your striking the ball exactly upon it.

Above all do not look up to see what has happened to your putt. Keep your head down until your ears are greeted by the sound of the ball dropping into the tin, and make up your mind that you are going to hear this pleasing tinkle.

The best way to cure lack of confidence on a putt of this sort—upon which so much often depends—is to make the shot definitely harder for yourself by aiming, say, to put the ball in off the toe of the putter. This will force you to concentrate very intensely, and it is concentration that does it.

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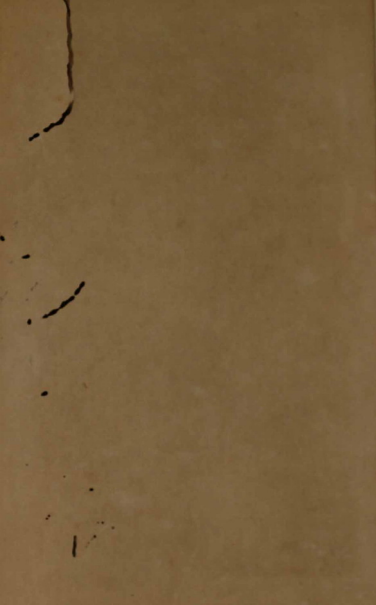
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