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LAWN-TENNIS.

By H. M. PILLANS.

THE popularity of lawn-tennis, as a game, can never be disputed. It has remained in favour now for many years, and still holds its own against golf, cycling, and many other forms of amusement which fashion decrees from time to time must be indulged in by all those who wish to be considered up-to-date.

It is true that among the many enthusiasts of the game there are few who obtain any real degree of proficiency, most girls reaching

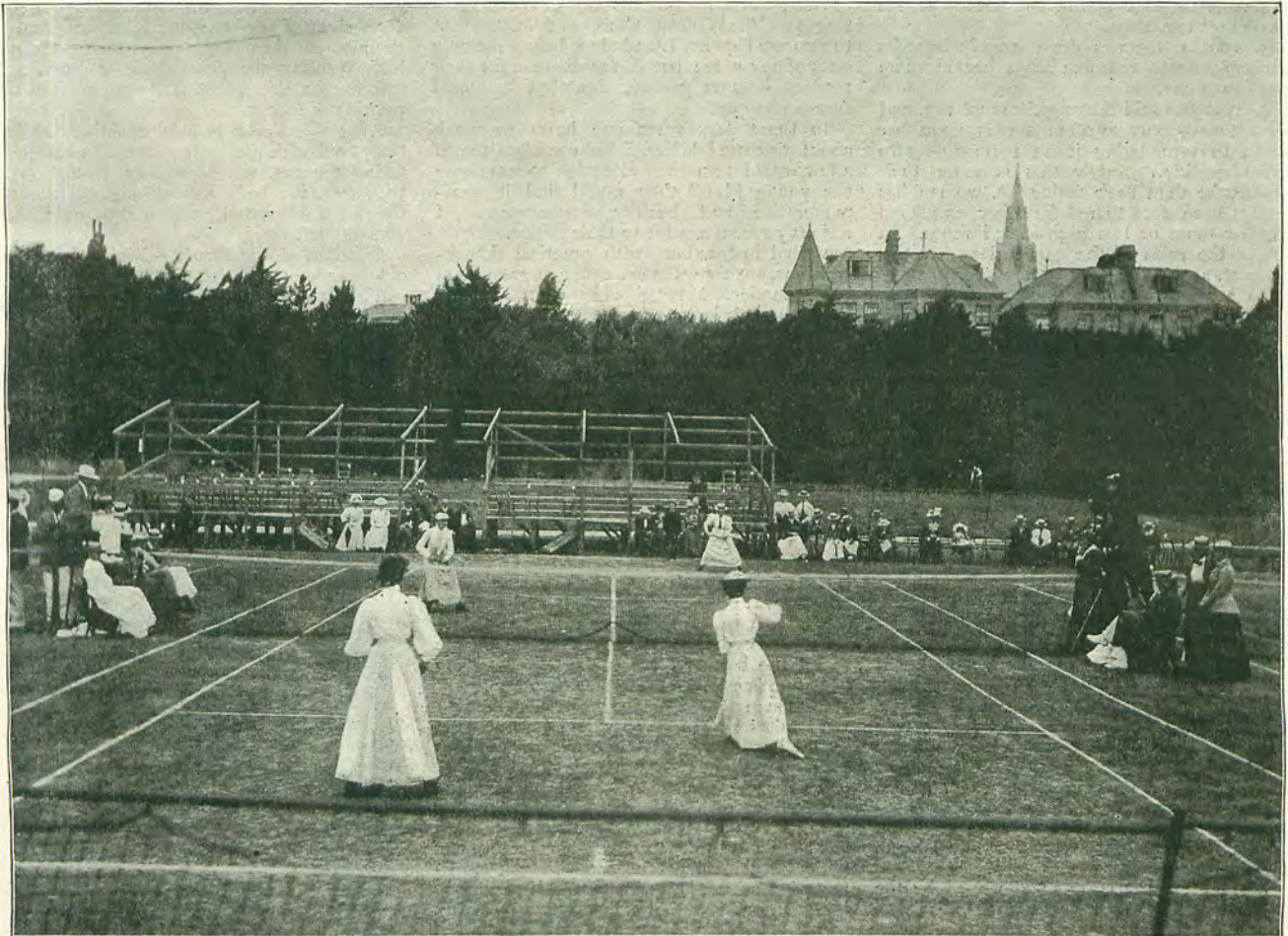
only a moderate standard, from which they find it impossible to advance.

Few games, however, can surpass it, providing, as it does, the combined advantages of healthy exercise for both body and mind, at the same time being an interesting game to watch, and affording much pleasant social intercourse.

The question has often been asked in the tennis world, "Why is the standard of the

average girl's play so far below a man's?" Not implying, of course, that one ever expects to see "equality of the sexes" in this respect; but in the case of a game requiring skill rather than brute force the weaker sex should certainly be able to show to better advantage than at present.

The answers to this problem are many and various. I will first enumerate some of the reasons usually given, afterwards adding my



A LAWN-TENNIS TOURNAMENT.

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FIG. 1.

personal opinion as a player of more than ten years' standing.

1. That a girl is not physically strong enough to make a powerful player.

2. That the sex are naturally unoriginal and incapable of working out the theory of the game for themselves.

3. That a woman's dress greatly impedes her movements and handicaps her in more ways than one.

4. It is also said that a girl cannot run, and on a tennis-court so often stands upon her heels, thus rendering it an impossibility to move quickly. Surely this is more their misfortune than their fault? A woman has always been accustomed from her childhood to wear more or less high-heeled shoes. In tennis the rules of the games deny her this support, at the same time telling her to stand upon her toes. Observation shows, however, that she usually stands upon her heels, or strains the muscles at the back of her foot, which are unaccustomed to being stretched in this way. Doubtless this is one of the many reasons why a girl tires so easily, because this strain must act indirectly upon the spine, and soon gives a feeling of exhaustion.

My personal opinion is as follows:—

1. I agree that although the average girl is very persevering, she will not apply any theory to the game. She simply clings to the idea that "practice makes perfect"; this I can tell her from bitter experience is a fallacy. Unless she is going the right way to work, she may play for half a century with practically no result. There is always a right and a wrong way to do everything; and unfortunately the girl's natural way of playing lawn-tennis is usually the wrong way.

2. Sporting women are practically a new creation. Until recent years it was never considered necessary for them to use either their brains or their muscles, which consequently have remained undeveloped for generations. Therefore it is not to be wondered at that the girl of the present day labours under many disadvantages.

3. They are too often handicapped by the problem of £ s. d. Girls and boys should be treated alike in this respect; with the former, however, it usually means an appeal to a parent or guardian, who is often willing to

lavish money upon the boys, but begrudges every sovereign asked for by a girl. This takes the spirit out of her at the very commencement, for to become a first-class player cannot be considered a cheap amusement.

4. On the vexed subject of dress there is a great deal of nonsense talked. A girl with any common-sense never wears a long or heavy skirt for tennis, or, in fact, any garment in which she does not feel perfectly free and comfortable. Although I am an advocate for reform in many ways, I do not like to see dress made a handle for excuses. The faults much more often lie in the girl herself than in her dress. This does not take into account the frivolous individual with an eighteen-inch waist and a large hat who poses upon a tennis-court. Doubtless her dress considerably impedes her movements, but happily this type of player is now almost as extinct as the dodo. In the matter of shoes, if a girl feels the want of support previously alluded to, and is inclined to stand upon her heels, it is a good plan to have shoes made with a half-inch cork elevator fastened inside. The upper leather of the shoes, of course, must be cut proportionately higher to allow for this heel.

Lessons.—On the subject of lessons in lawn-tennis there is much to be said. Not only is it beneficial for a beginner or bad player to receive tuition from a competent teacher, but undoubtedly it is an absolute necessity for all those who desire to become good players. Almost without exception is instruction needed before proficiency can be acquired in any accomplishment or sport. Therefore why not in lawn-tennis, which is acknowledged to be one of the most difficult of ball games? True, there are few professionals who teach the art, those at Queen's Club, West Kensington, FitzWilliam Club, Dublin, and at the covered court, Llandudno, being the only ones of any note; but if the demand for their services became greater, doubtless it would create a supply.

In these days when one hears so much about distressed ladies, I feel confident that if a few would turn their attention to "training the young idea," they would find it a remunerative and healthy employment. I seriously recommend it to their notice.

Verbal instructions, with practical demonstrations, are always much easier to grasp than book theories. Many girls also are too bashful to have tennis lessons from a man.

A book, recently published, entitled *Lessons in Lawn-Tennis*, by Eustace M. Miles, however, gives a great deal of useful information, with diagrams of good positions and angles, and would be a great help to many. But it must not be supposed that people can be made good players all at once. The process requires great patience and perseverance, the would-be reformer remembering that it is much harder to unlearn a bad habit than to learn a good one. This recalls the incident of an impetuous young Irishman taking lessons from a professional. On being asked how he was progressing, replied—

"I seem to have unlearned all the strokes I used to score by, and still find myself unable to hit the ball as I am told. Therefore my last state is considerably worse than my first."

Like many other deluded mortals, he thought the strokes looked so easy, and imagined he would be able to put the whole system into practice in two days.

This same professional mortally wounded the feelings of a poor damsel by telling her she did not possess a back-hand stroke. Poor girl! To be told this after many years of patient but blind practice, was indeed mortifying. I notice, however, that this same lady is since considered to have improved her games more than fifteen, and she now plays in the matches for her county, besides blossoming as a first-class player in the open tournaments.

Positions.—The following remarks, let it be clearly understood, are in no way original, but simply a repetition of "counsel's opinion."

In recent years it will be seen that the general style of play has been altered considerably. Fig. 1 shows an example of the old-fashioned laborious style. This meant hitting the ball when quite near the ground, the striker standing directly facing the net. Needless to say, this was a lifting and most tiring stroke. Note the grip of the racket, with the wrist facing outwards, the position of the body, the right foot being foremost, also where the ball touches the racket. The striker is evidently looking towards the spot where the ball is intended to go to. Now look at Fig. 2; imagine this player standing in exactly the same place; compare the grip and position of the racket, the angle of the body which is turned nearly sideways to the net, left foot foremost, the eyes being fixed on the ball, which is almost at the top of the bounce. Fig. 3 shows the position of the racket, as it should appear at the finish of the stroke. The ball is now travelling across the net, into the far corner of the opposite court.

Advice to beginners.—Stand in front of a cheval-glass, holding the illustration in your left hand, so that you see the reflection of it in the glass. (This enables you to see the figure facing the same way as yourself.) First put yourself into the position of Fig. 1, afterwards into the position of Fig. 2, and remember that the one is up-to-date, and the other is out of date.

The Fore-Hand Stroke.—Again take up your position in front of a long glass, standing in the attitude of Fig. 2. Describe a semi-circle (slightly behind) with the racket, so as to get a swing, at the same time bringing the weight of the body on to the front foot at the moment the racket touches the (imaginary) ball, bending the front knee a little, and carrying on the racket now until it is in the position of Fig. 3.

After the stroke is finished, bring the feet back level with each other, and stand straight facing the net, weight equally divided upon both feet, the body leaning slightly forward, the racket horizontal, supported near the head with the left hand.

The Back-Hand Stroke.—Fig. 4 shows the old style of a back-hand stroke. Notice the ball has already past the striker, consequently



FIG. 2.



FIG. 3.

all power over it has been lost. The head of the racket is very much below the level of the wrist, the left (instead of the right) foot being in front.

It will be found that this stroke requires a superhuman amount of strength, and even then seldom reaches the top of the net. Fig. 5 shows the correct back-hand stroke—the weight of the body well on the front foot; right foot foremost, knee slightly bent, the head of the racket slightly above the level of the wrist, which is rigid as soon as it comes in contact with the ball.

The Volley.—This is a most difficult stroke for the average girl-player. The chief features to remember are, to always strike the ball when it is in front of you, and in the case of an over-head volley, reach well up to the ball (as if you were anxious to hit it as soon as possible). Turn a little to the side the ball is coming, whether right or left. The pace depends much on the swing of the body. Point the toe of the front foot, and bend the knee slightly, bringing the weight of the body from the back foot on to the front, as the racket meets the ball.

It is curious to note how many men break down at an overhead volley, if they have to step back for it. It is so much easier to move forward a step than to move back one. Anyone who can carry out all these instructions has become a good player. It is easier said than done, and, as previously stated, it is much simpler to have the positions shown you than to acquire them from printed instructions.

General Instructions.—1. Every ball must be hit when in front of the striker.

2. Always rest on your toes, and stand where you think the ball would fall at the second bounce.

3. Every stroke should be deliberate. The racket should meet the ball (never jerk it). The pace is regulated by the correct body-swing in conjunction with the arm.

4. Keep your eyes always fixed on the ball.

5. The racket (when not in action) should be held in a horizontal position, supported by the left hand. Never head downwards.

6. Cultivate independence, always remembering your own handicap; score in games and points. Umpires are not immaculate!

The Service.—It is important to cultivate a

good service. Whether it is an over-hand or an under-hand stroke, the chief object in view should be to impart the maximum of strength, expending only the minimum of force.

The over-hand service is undoubtedly the best style, and all should try to acquire it, but it is well also to cultivate an under-hand stroke, as variation has many advantages. For instance in a mixed double, the man is often puzzled by a cut, low-bouncing, under-hand service. On the other hand the girl often fails to make a good return from an over-hand stroke. Therefore suit your service to your opponent, and try to place it as much as possible.

Many girls have no idea where to stand to receive a service. The rule, as previously stated, is quite simple. Always stand where you think the ball would fall at the second bounce. Example. When waiting to receive a man's really hard service, your position should be about three feet outside the back line; but if it should be a screwed or twisted service, it will sometimes be necessary to stand almost parallel with the ball as it bounces, as if prepared to take it back-handed, but in



FIG. 4.

reality it will bound right over to your fore-hand. It must be a very twisted service, however, that bounces at right angles instead of straight ahead. If you carefully watch your opponent's racket, you can always see whether it will be a cut or straight service.

Cutting the ball.—This is a very usual fault with girls, and is a most difficult habit to get out of. Some say it is incurable when every ball is cut. This, of course, is not the case, but patience and perseverance will be required in considerable quantities before the fault can be eradicated. It is caused by the wrist being turned back at the moment the ball is hit; this again turns the face of the racket slightly upwards, and the ball is sliced rather than hit. The great disadvantage of this stroke is that it takes the pace off the ball and allows your opponent plenty of time to get to it, however well placed. On occasions, of course, it is useful to be able to cut a ball "short" over the net, but as a rule the habit is to be discouraged.

Imitation is the highest form of flattery.—The next suggestion for the struggling amateur is to go as a spectator to a large

"Open Tournament." Select a court where a first-class player (with notably good style) is in action. Set yourself to watch *not the game* but his positions, attitudes, on what strokes he succeeds best, where he fails, and the reason why. I am assuming that a man is taken for the model, because a girl's dress and other loose draperies tend to distract the eye. Now keep your eyes fixed on the model, watch closely how high he throws the ball before serving, the swing of the racket preparatory to striking the ball; then again watch the fore-hand stroke off the ground, where the model stands, the position of the feet, the angle and swing of the body, the position of the racket when the stroke is finished, likewise the back-hand, the volley, and in fact all the different strokes. This will provide you a much more instructive afternoon than commenting on the personal attractions and beauty of the players. *Handsome is as handsome does!*

Having made mental notes of all these positions, retire to a private court, get some charitable friend to send you easy balls, and see how far you can carry out the lessons you have learnt.

I remember at a tournament watching a model for two days, and at the end being called upon to play a single myself. A bystander in the crowd was heard to remark to his friend, "Dear me, how much that girl's style is like Mr. —!" This is proof that the suggestion is a practical one.

Health and Training.—Health and strength are undoubtedly the backbone of all sport. Without it none can ever hope to succeed; therefore it is a most important item in the career of a tennis player. Those who already possess these necessary and excellent attributes are to be envied, but the usual cry is, "*I am not strong enough.*" To which my reply is, "*Then make yourself strong enough,*" providing you have not a weak heart or infirmities of that nature.

People are very much what they make themselves. It is sad to see the individual who is content to believe that she is strong enough for all her requirements; one cannot help feeling that this contented person would be a better person in every way by remembering the fact that there is room for improvement in everyone, and that by developing the muscles of the body there



FIG. 5.

would ensue consequent enlargement of the mind. It is a well-known fact that physical development not only endows the individual with health and strength, but improves the character and disposition. A well-known authority says, "It is one of the pleasantest features of to-day to see so many girls and women realise, and are encouraged to participate in, what was once regarded only as man's domain, viz., the world of sport." Some of the leading physicians now state that bicycling has cured half of the nervous and imaginary ailments due to inactivity of the mind and body. May it be said in future years that sport and honest work have cured the other half.

This training, however, will require patience, for people cannot be made "Samsons" in a week. Regular and consistent practice, night and morning, with dumb-bells, etc., even if only for ten minutes, will soon show a good result. A book entitled *Strength and How to Obtain It*, by Sandow, is most useful in showing the amateur how to go to work.

Fencing and gymnastics of all kinds are very beneficial for all those who have time and inclination to indulge in them. Hockey is also to be recommended for teaching a girl to turn quickly, and run well.

Nerves are also a great source of trouble to many. Those suffering from this malady are much to be pitied; but pity without relief is like mustard without beef. Any speedy cure for this evil will be welcomed as a blessing to many.

Drugs and other strong remedies are sometimes resorted to, but as a rule they are to be avoided.

Singles.—The game of singles soon shows a girl the real necessity of training, good lasting powers being of decidedly more value than short-lived brilliancy. The great point of weakness, however, in this game lies in the back-hand stroke, scarcely one girl in six possessing even a moderate back-hand, and consequently adopting the most fatal mistake of running round all balls placed to her left side, endeavouring to take every ball fore-handed.

The disadvantages of this plan will be seen at a glance and, moreover, will be forcibly impressed on the memory, when a girl employing these tactics comes against a first-class

player, who never hesitates to take full advantage of this weakness.

The correct position to stand for a single is somewhere on an imaginary line drawn straight down the centre of the court (except, of course, when serving or receiving a service). It therefore stands to reason that if a ball is placed to your left side, and you run round and take it fore-handed, you find yourself either tucked up in a corner, or considerably beyond the side-line. This is exactly what your opponent wants, for she has now the whole court vacant to place the ball where she pleases. If the beginner will adopt this suicidal plan, she simply kills herself by madly rushing from side to side of the court, instead of remaining more or less stationary. The best players, when they find themselves out of position, invariably lob the ball. This gains time and enables them to get back into position before the ball is returned.

Advice.—It is well to determine, "come what may," never to run round a ball. At first, be content with passing it carefully but gently back, placing it as near as possible to your opponent's back line, as good length is indispensable in singles.

When the beginner has succeeded so far, it will be time enough to increase the pace. The player who can volley has a great advantage, being able to run in and kill any short balls.

Ladies' Doubles.—The definition of a ladies' double has been given as follows: "A court with four ladies, viz., one at each corner, all having an unswerving devotion for the back line, and who are all much too tender-hearted to kill a ball."

This is the unkind criticism of a cynic. It is not to be disputed, however, that this event in a tournament is seldom wildly exciting for the on-lookers. Neither is it renowned for great head-work and punishing strokes, but nevertheless the ladies enjoy it; this in the meantime is a very good reason for supporting the ladies' doubles.

A committee of wicked men occasionally try to deprive the ladies of their doubles, on account of the great length of time they take; but every girl should take up the cudgels against the perpetrators of such wilful injustice. They cannot do without the support of the "fair sex," therefore why treat them so badly? Page 305 shows a good study in positions.

Notice the lady champion in the far corner has no intention of losing her balance, the racket is held horizontally and she is standing well on her toes. Note also the exaggerated body-swing of the player administering justice upon the ball. Apparently she is a heartless young woman, trying to prove herself an exception to the rule by killing a ball!

Mixed Doubles.—The players who are most successful in mixed doubles are those who can hit hard (not necessarily always into court, for the opposing man will usually try to volley any ball not going more than a few feet out). This, combined with some consistent lobbing, makes an ideal mixed player.

What to do with a bad partner is a question much disputed. A new idea is to ask a really weak girl player to remain stationary near the side line and only about three feet from the net, with instructions only to take balls within easy reach. This plan has proved successful on several occasions, but means that the man must do the majority of the work. If the lady is new to this position, it causes much confusion and irritation to the opposite side, as she invariably hit the balls all round the wood of the racket, which consequently fall where least expected.

Others will say a weak partner is best from five to fifty yards outside the court, only coming near the line to serve. Some men even boast of winning in this way, against indifferent opponents, but "weak woman" will not always be down-trodden, and now often asserts her right to a portion of the court. The "lords of creation," however, do not as a rule like their partners to come up to the net and volley. It is a comparatively recent innovation, but time will prove whether it makes a successful combination. At present no doubt it often leads to confusion even among the best players.

"Gallant man" is always most profuse in his praise, often applauding very bad strokes, so long as they go over the net, but at the same time often complains that his good strokes pass unnoticed. Possibly a little more equal division of praise would be better.

"Women have many faults,
Men have but two,
Nothing right they say,
And nothing right they do."

MR. AND MRS. SWEET AND THEIR SLAVE.

By MAY CROMMELIN.

CHAPTER III.

A FORTNIGHT of sunny spring weather had passed away since the Sweet couple ended house-building. The nest itself had only taken some two days of loving labour, thanks to the excellent supply of materials with which the slave had supplied her owners.

"Yah! Yah! Lazybodies!" jeered the sparrows that used to hop on the window-sill and stare in with vulgar curiosity. "We are free! We fly about and search for our straws and stuff in the streets and squares; we pillage and rob these giant humans. They never lock us up in prisons as they do you. No! Our armies are too mighty. They dare not ill-treat any of us or we should descend in a horde upon them and peck all the oppressors to death. Your children will never be hatched in that stuffy cavern, you'll see. Or if they are, they will be all kinds of horrid colours—blue and green and red, like so many parrots."

"Wretches! Beggars! Robbers!" shrieked Mr. Sweet in a rage. "You are all no better than so many vagrants. How dare you prate

of your nests to us—you who steal straws from each other, and quarrel and scold all day long in the most shocking manner! Listen to me! I and my wife are a king and queen of small birds. These men and women are our loyal subjects, and they serve us in our palace and bring us humbly all we want. Search for our own moss and wool indeed! What an idea! No, no, no! Golden birds like us are too rare and precious. The humans obey us, but they scorn your brown brood. We have subdued them by our song. You, who are of no use at all, they only suffer as scavengers; but when your houses choke their rain-pipes, how they sweep them down into the street—young ones and eggs and homes. Ha! I know. I have heard your hoarse outcries and gibbering rage. Such an outrage would have stirred me to a song that would thrill the hearts of my foes. . . . Oh, our nestlings will be ugly, will they?"

All the while he had never paused for breath, but poured out his wrath and scorn in a burst of melody.

"How those squeaking sparrows do excite him," remarked Violet Jenkins, pausing an

instant from her never-ending sewing to listen.

"Tweet! tweet! Let them say what they please, dear," chirped Mrs. Sweet languidly from where she sat patiently on her nest, that was guarded by a curtain from prying eyes. "I have been dozing a little until this row woke me up. Please give me some food. I am rather hungry."

"Certainly, my love! I beg your pardon for neglecting you. These common birds are so annoying, they made me almost forget my duty for a little while. . . . Have some hard-boiled hen-meat? I have kept you the biggest and best piece, really!" And Mr. Sweet, who was saying the strict truth—and thought himself a very noble fellow for being so unselfish—nimble hopped down to search the larder for the best tit-bits to bring his spouse.

"Well, you are good to me," said Mrs. Sweet. And, being a dear little soul, she forgot how her lord used to tyrannise over her at other times.

"I am, I am," twittered Mr. Sweet. "In our exalted position we have to set a good example, you see, to the outside world, my