

# Golf, and How to Play It.

A CHAT WITH THE "OPEN" CHAMPION.

[The Photographs here reproduced represent successive strokes in an actual game played by the Champion, and were specially taken for this article by Henry W. Salmon, of Winchester.]



DRIVING OFF.



OLF of recent years has made immense strides in public favour. Originally brought from Scotland, and, naturally, played by Scotchmen, the game was looked at askance

by English lovers of matters athletic. But before long its place became secure. Season after season rolled on. New links were opened in various parts of the country, bringing work and prosperity in their wake, until at the present time it would be difficult to discover a city or town of any pretensions to importance that does not possess one or, in some cases, two and three golf clubs.

A visit to the links at Winchester was the sequence of a conversation I had respecting the "open" champion, who is engaged as a professional at the cathedral city. There I was fortunate enough to discover Taylor as he came off, after playing a game with one of the visitors, clubs under arm, and cap pushed far back from the forehead. I found him a pleasant mannered young fellow, of medium height, but sturdily built, with a face bronzed and tanned by almost constant exposure to the sun and rain, and with the west country "burr" distinct in all he said. A chat upon the game followed, as a matter of course.

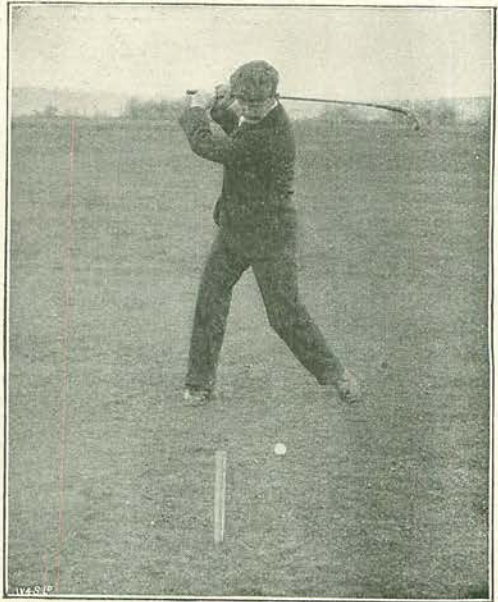
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"What do you think of golf?" was my first query.

"What do I think of it!" was his reply, with a quiet smile. "I can tell you that in a very few words. I consider it to be one of the finest, if not *the* best, games that could be played. Why? Well, there are many advantages. Some of them are these: In playing golf you get considerable exercise. In walking from hole to hole on the ordinary links, you would cover about three miles; that is, taking a direct course. But when you have to follow your ball, no matter where it may drop, you must add another four or six miles to the number I have just mentioned. Of course, this distance varies. A good player ought to be able to put his ball within a few feet of the spot he aims at. But a beginner—he never knows where it will pitch. The least pull on the club will bring the ball round to the right or left, just as the case may be. Everything depends upon the manner in which a player stands when playing, and how he grips his shaft."

"How should you suggest the game should be learnt, then?"

"If anyone placed themselves under my tuition, I should teach them by taking them right round the whole series of holes. I



THE SWING.

should accustom them to the use of each club as the occasion might arise. A man could never learn to play a really good game of golf by simply taking a driver, or one of the other clubs, and slaving away at that one until he might consider himself perfect, and then going on to another. How I should proceed would be this. The clubs generally used are a driver, brassie, driving iron, or cleek, lofting iron, putter, and, in some cases, a niblick. The first-named would be brought into use when driving off from the tee, or in very short grass; the brassie would come in when the ball was resting on grass of ordinary length, and many men play an approach shot with the iron. The lofting iron is for raising the ball over an obstacle, such as when you are several yards away from a clump of bushes or bulrushes, and the putter is necessary to everyone when upon the 'green' and preparing to strike your ball so as to get it into the hole."



A CLEEK SHOT—PREPARING.

"And the niblick?"

"The niblick is a short but heavy iron club. Its use is to take the ball out of a bunker or a drain. There are occasions when, say you are playing at Westward Ho! your ball drops into what I can only say resembles a sand-pit. The face of this pit is perpendicular, perhaps 2ft., perhaps 4ft., in length, and the ball rests upon the loose sand at the base. If it is clear of any obstruction, the chances are that you would be able to use your iron; but if you are placed

almost below the face I have referred to, the niblick is a necessity. Taking it firmly by the head of the shaft, you must strike down sharply about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. behind the ball into the sand. If this stroke is played properly, the ball will go up into the air in a sharp curve, sufficient to carry it over the obstruction. When your ball drops into a drain or gully a similar stroke is played, attended with equal success if you strike down upon the ground at the correct angle."



AN APPROACH SHOT.



TEEING THE BALL.

"Supposing the stroke is not played properly? What then?"

"You probably break your shaft, and lose your temper and a stroke."

"What position should a person assume when playing the game correctly?" was my next query.

"Well," was Taylor's reply, cautiously given, "no two persons, even if they are trained by the same man, play exactly alike. The height of a player, of course, makes a difference to his swing. The general rule, however, should be to grip the shaft not too tightly, but still firmly enough to prevent its slipping when playing the ball. In driving, the club should be brought back smartly over the shoulders. A player, in coming back at this kind of stroke, should turn on the ball of the left foot, keeping the knees loose, but not moving the feet. That is where a great many persons spoil their strokes. Their knees are kept rigid and cramped, and the feet are not fixed firmly upon the ground. But unless a man 'lets himself go,' as I may express myself, he does not secure the necessary freedom in his play.

"To learn how to drive a ball is a comparatively easy task: it is learning how to get upon the green that is the most difficult. There are plenty of men who can play a good game when starting from each hole, but who are lost when holing out. The brassie is very much like the driver, but considerable practice is necessary in hand-



THE PREPARATORY SWING.

ling the putter. To play a good game with the latter is simply a matter of eye and touch. A player may be taught how to hold the clubs, but there is no royal road to success. There is nothing but practice that will make him proficient in their use. It is a curious thing, however, that the 'short' game of some of the finest players of the day is very poor in comparison with their driving.

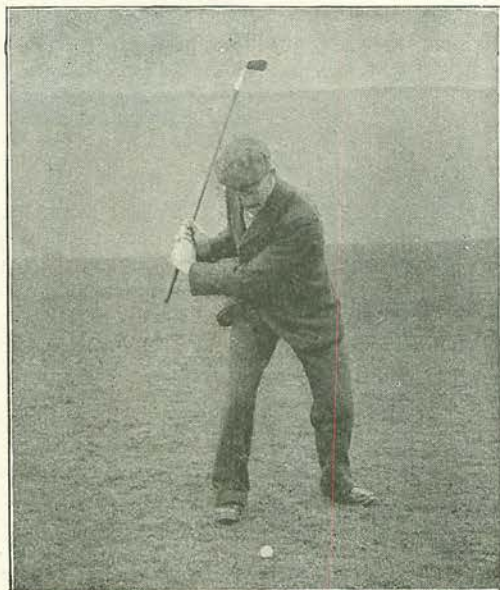
"To play golf properly a man should commence as young as possible — the

sooner the better. If a lad were taught as soon as he left school he would in all probability become a much more powerful and finished player than one who left it until he was between twenty and thirty.

"Why is that? Because he would be able to put more 'swing' into the game, his muscles would not have had time to harden, and there would be more freedom found in his play. Other games? Yes, there are a few that tend to make a man unfitted for

golf. There is cricket, for instance. In handling the bat the great aim of the player is to keep the ball down, and so out of the fieldsmen's hands. But in golf it is all the other way. You have to get under the ball and lift it into the air.

"There are, however, several good cricketers who are also good golfers. Mr. S. M. J. Woods, the Somersetshire man, for instance, was taught by me. He plays a capital game, and is a very powerful driver. Then there is Mr.



THE DRIVING IRON.



THE LOFTING IRON.

E. H. Buckland, the old Oxonian cricketer. He did not commence learning golf until almost thirty years of age, but is able to fairly hold his own now.

"Amongst other games, football, in my opinion, makes no difference to a man's play. A rowing man is generally a good driver, handling the sculls having brought up the muscles of his arms and shoulders. A tennis or racquet player is also apt to get stiff in the shoulders, this meaning he will be



THE CLEEK—IN SHORT GRASS.

unable to swing the driver or brassie with the requisite degree of ease. As regards the length of the clubs, there is really no rule. Different players favour different conditions. Bernard Sayers, for instance, although a short man, plays with a very long one. I myself should incline to the use of one about 3ft. 6in. in length."

Following this came a brief chat upon the degrees of excellence of various of the better known players.

"Amongst the professionals," remarked Taylor, "there is not much difference between the leaders. I should place Douglas Rolland, A. Herd, A. Kirkcaldy, W. Fernie, Bernard Sayers, and W. Auchterlonie upon an equality. Rolland is, no doubt, the longest all-round



A BRASSIE SHOT.

driver of the whole. I remember his play in this respect was quite a revelation in a tournament at Westward Ho! although he also won the tie by a capital 'putt.' When playing against a powerful driver like Rolland, a player is apt to become nervous, and in over-straining himself to give the game to his opponent. That is a fault everyone should beware of. It is well to remember that a match can be won upon the green, although a good drive is by no means to be despised.

"Who are the leading amateurs? Mr. John Ball, certainly; although Mr. Laidley, Mr. Horace Hutchinson, Mr. Tait, Mr. Balfour-Melville, and Mr. H. H. Hilton are to be reckoned with. The first-named, however, is the best, in my opinion. I may say,

though, I have played him twice and defeated him on each occasion. Of the professionals I should say Herd has been my most dangerous opponent. He is one of the steadiest wielders of a club you could possibly meet. Nothing under ordinary conditions appears to upset him or throw him off his game. Of course, you remember the hard fight he made in the Open Championship of last year. Yes, Herd is, I should say, the most dangerous man to have as an opponent.

"I should like to say, however, that I have nothing but admiration for Mr. Horace Hutchinson. He is a grand player, and when at his best no other could approach him for all-round excellence in the game."

Taylor had by this time apparently exhausted the theme of players, so I at once touched upon other, but kindred, subjects.

"Is golf possible upon frozen or wet ground?" he queried in partial answer to one of my questions. "Certainly it is, although, of course, skill is at a discount then. Supposing you are playing during a severe frost, with the surface of the ground as hard as rock. You drive off all right, but how are you to know where your ball will rebound when it drops? The least inequality, and it is deflected at an acute angle, and will naturally travel a considerable distance. If I had my choice of ground, I should certainly select a wet one in preference to one that was frozen. There would be no 'life' in the turf if saturated with water, but your ball would not 'glance,' and there would be a greater opportunity of exhibiting skill in reaching the hole.

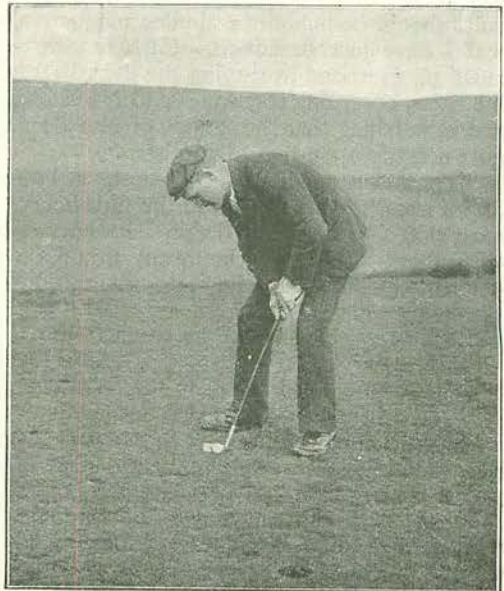
"Which do I consider the better links? Well, that is rather a difficult question to answer, there are so many good ones. I should be inclined, however, to place Westward Ho! first. Of course, I played there as a lad, and learnt my golf there, but no one can question the great natural advantages it possesses. Prestwick, St. Andrews, and Sandwich are good links, while, if you go

into Wales, there is Aberdoverly. Golf, however, is not played much in the Principality, and there are very few links there. As regards the driest links in England, I should award the palm to Westward Ho! and Great Yarmouth, and in Scotland to Prestwick and St. Andrews. Position has everything to do with this. If the links are upon the sea-board they are generally dry, but if inland, unless carefully drained, the surface water makes the turf very dead. I should not care to particularize any spot, but there are a couple of links near London that would take considerable beating in the latter respect.

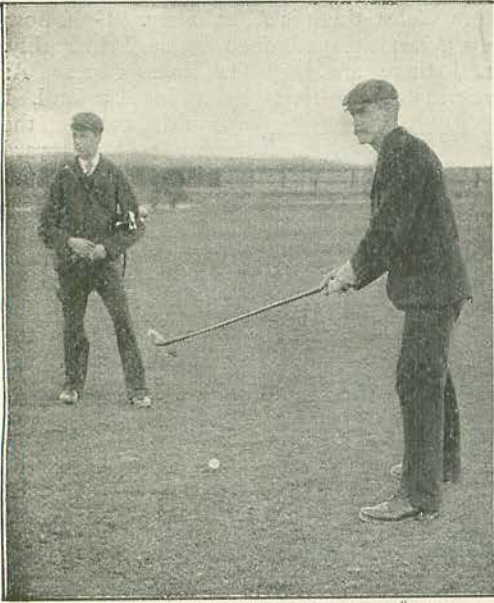
"And now for the formation of a links. In the first place you have to consider the character of the ground and the amount of space at your disposal. Some grounds are natural golf links. Others have to be made, tooth and nail. The first thing to do is to decide upon a starting point. Here you



ON THE EDGE OF THE GREEN.



PREPARING TO PUTT.



CONSIDERATION—WHERE SHALL I PLAY?

should be as near your club-house or public entrance as possible, in order to give the least possible trouble to the players in commencing the game. Next, you have to select the spot for the first tee and then another for the first putting green. In doing this, of course, it is necessary to work in all the 'hazards' possible, such as hedges, ditches, etc., in the best possible way. About the best distances for the holes to be apart are 160yds. to 170yds. and 320yds. and 500yds., and so on. The second and succeeding holes should be made in a similar manner to that I have just described. Care, however, must be exercised in varying the lengths of the holes, according to ground and obstacles, and in watching that the course of one does not encroach upon that of another.

"To make my meaning clearer, a line drawn from, say, the fourth to the fifth holes, must not approach one drawn between any two others. If it did the result would be one party would be driving into the middle of another; and a blow from a swiftly flying golf ball is by no means to be laughed at.

"When the links are formed roughly, the holes have to be cleanly cut to the regulation size, and a band of steel or iron is sometimes inserted near the top in order to prevent the edge crumbling away during the progress of play. Then, flags, red or white for preference, to mark the outward and homeward rounds, have to be provided and fixed upon short posts in each hole, while upon competition days these flags are generally replaced

by larger squares of bunting. The putting greens meanwhile have had considerable trouble expended upon them. They have been rolled, carefully levelled, and the grass has been closely cropped or mowed.

"These greens, when finished, should be as smooth and as level as a billiard table. After they are once got into order, however, an occasional rolling will keep them so. The position for the tees at each hole is generally marked by two round iron or steel plates, painted white, and fixed to the ground; the balls being driven from a line drawn between them. A small box of sand or very fine mould should also be placed close at hand for the purpose of making the tee. This should be formed in the shape of a cone, but the height varies with different players."

A glance over the links following these remarks showed small, fluttering objects dotted about the vivid green background. Only a close acquaintance with the *personnel* of the game would imply to the spectator that they were flags marking the spots where lay the various holes. Quick eyesight was presumably a necessary adjunct to being able to play the game properly. But a surprise was in store.

"No," was Taylor's reply to my question whether a keen sight was a necessity to a good player; "I don't think I should say that is invariably the case. My eyesight, for instance, is not too good by any means. Before I determined upon taking up golf as



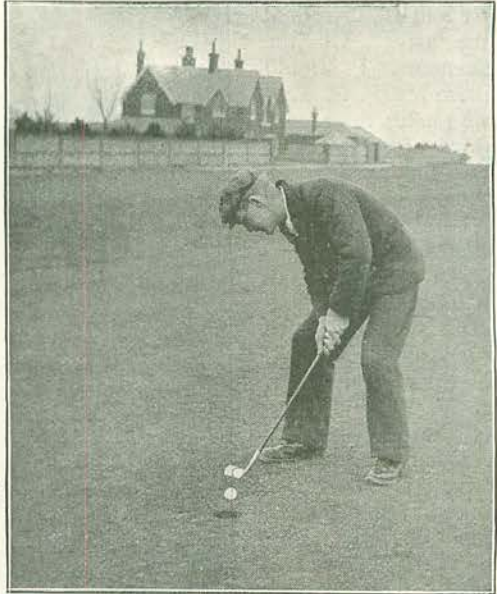
AN IRON SHOT.

a profession, I made five or six attempts to enter the Army. My height and chest measurements were satisfactory; but the sight of my left eye was returned as defective. Under these circumstances I think I am justified in considering good sight is not essential for the successful pursuit of the game. Of course, a man with a poor sight would be handicapped in his play, but what I think is required is a 'quick' sight, one that can follow the course of the ball, and mark the positions of the hazards. This latter reason is, I think, why so many good cricketers make good golf-players. Their training upon the pitch stands them in good stead when upon the links.

"Which is the best club for general use, you ask? I should favour the cleek my-



GETTING UNDER THE BALL.



A DIFFICULT PUTT.

good player can generally recover his position when upon the green.

"As regards the longest driver of the present day, that is a difficult question to answer. It does not follow the most powerful men in this department are to be found in the ranks of the first-class professionals or amateurs. Amongst the former, however, Douglas Rolland has long enjoyed the reputation of being one of the longest, if not

self, although opinions may differ upon that head. In playing with it you get the 'drive' of the wooden club with the 'approach' stroke of the iron. A man can secure practice in both by this means, and I have known several amateurs who only use the club named in ordinary play.

"No, I cannot say I think a long driver would secure any material advantage over a man who can send his ball an ordinary distance. Both, however, must be able to play the shorter game equally well. Our axiom is that 'the man who makes the fewest mistakes wins in the long run.' This is generally found to be the case, for although a few yards may be lost upon the drive, a

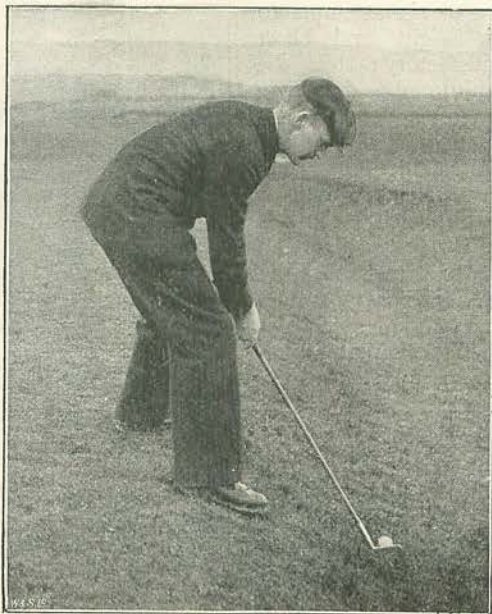


THE DRIVER—IN GRASS.

the longest, drivers of the day. Of the amateurs, I should place Mr. F. G. Tait, who holds the record drive of 395yds., in the first place, although he is closely pressed by Mr. E. H. Blackwell.

"The same argument respecting first-class men applies to the leading 'putters.' Of the amateurs, Mr. A. F. MacFie; and of the professionals, Andrew Kirkcaldy, have long been admired in this department of the game."

Then followed a chat upon various features of the pastime. Golf, I was told, was played at both Oxford and Cambridge, there being more than ordinarily good players at either University. Several public schools also possessed links of their own, Winchester and Eton amongst the number. By this means the scholars are rapidly brought to a fair degree of proficiency, for although cricket claims the major part of their attention during the summer months, golf is generally played in the spring and autumn, and in many cases throughout the winter as well. "The result of this," remarked the cham-



A BAD LIE.

and the brilliancy of youth is sacrificed to the safety of advancing years." Golf, however, does not expose its disciple to much wear and tear. It is a game of mild, invigorating excitement. Wielders of the driver and the cleek may play on up to

pion, "will be the addition of excellent players to the amateur ranks in years to come."

Questioned upon the different ages of players he had met during the course of his career, Taylor admitted there were many men who did not commence learning until they had approached middle age, and yet became fairly good players. "But to be successful," was his closing remark, "an intending player should commence as early as possible. But age brings steadiness in its wake, perhaps,

and the brilliancy of youth is sacrificed to the safety of advancing years." Golf, however, does not expose its disciple to much wear and tear. It is a game of mild, invigorating excitement. Wielders of the driver and the cleek may play on up to and, in some cases, over sixty years of age, and discover nothing but renewed youth in its pursuit. "Onething, however," says the champion, "is necessary. That is, secure a good coach at the start. A bad habit once assumed can never be perfectly eradicated."

W.



HOLING OUT.