

A CAUSERIE AT KANAWAKI

By Robert Stanley Weir, K.C., Montreal

SATURDAY, the second of November last, was rather a disappointing day at Kanawaki. There had been quite a good crowd of players by the 1.30 N. Y. Central, but just as the train pulled in, the rain, pitiless and copious, began to fall, with clear intentions of making an afternoon of it, and there was nothing for the enthusiasts but bridge or talk. A few dauntless ones, it is true, braving the elements, disappeared in the mist with umbrellas and bags, but their return several hours afterwards awoke general pity. They were given such hot internal remedies as the limited resources of an Indian Reserve commanded, provided also with hot showers and were then carefully put to bed, where they soon reduced themselves to slumber with their own customary music. The wiser and drier heads devoted themselves to bridge or poker or talk. I shall not attempt to report the occasional prattle of the card men—the talk between Big Shaw, Robinson, Baylis and others interested me more. At one time Albert Murray, the professional, was sent for to illustrate a point. What follows is a fair, though much abbreviated account of what was said.

"I see, said Big Shaw, "that there has been some writing about Hilton's Secret and they seem to think they have rediscovered the mystery of golf.

"What is Hilton's Secret?" queried Baylis.

"Well, I'm blessed if I understand it," returned Big Shaw. "It seems to me to be utter nonsense. He claims that there is, or ought to be, some sort of sliding of the handle in the fingers of the right hand at the top of the swing, and failing that, you are no golfer. Now I plump for Harry Vardon, who tells us to grip hard with finger and thumb all the way through."

"Hilton has done a bit of writing in his time, and I must say has never struck me as being the least bit of a romancer," remarked Robinson, our scratch man and general oracle. "I don't know any man whose word I

would prefer to his on any question of theory. I have always been grateful to him for exposing that nonsense about top-spin. He certainly did it well."

"What was that?" asked Baylis.

"Well, there used to be a lot of silly talk about top-spin and that sort of thing, but Hilton says that under-spin is always a feature of the flight of golf balls, and that top-spin is an impossibility in the game. In every stroke, he says, with the exception of a putt, an under-spin is imparted to the ball, and it is simply a question of degree of spin."

"Is there not top-spin in a good drive?" asked Big Shaw.

"Not until the ball begins to roll along the ground. Professor Tait, father of Freddie Tait, who was killed in the Boer War, proved that conclusively long ago."

"Well, but what does Hilton mean about this sliding at the top of the swing?" queried Putnam, who now intervened.

"He means," said Robinson, "that the grip is an ever-changing grasp of the club; that the moment you draw back you begin to open the palms; that at the top of the swing you allow the right fingers to "give" or "yield" a little bit, and that if you fail in this your swing lacks pith and vim; and I am quite sure he is perfectly right."

"Then you don't agree with the great Harry Vardon or J. H. Taylor or Jimmy Braid?" remarked Putnam.

"I don't agree with Vardon's way of putting the matter in his book English, although I think he is quite right in advocating a finger and thumb grip, but I am strongly though humbly of the opinion that Vardon errs in not drawing attention to the necessity of a little "give" for the handle in the fingers at the top. And let me tell you this John Henry's photograph shows this little give most unmistakably. The handle slides from the the first joint to the second of the right forefinger quite distinctly. If it doesn't, you are lifting the club, not swinging it, and

quite miss the whole Art of Golf. Hilton is quite right," he concluded.

"I wonder how Albert swings?" said Baylis. "Let's have him in."

Albert was sent for—Albert, who drives to perfection and can do anything in golf except putt. A space was cleared. A few preliminary swings, with their delightful, magical swish, were heard rather than seen. Then he was bid hold his driver at the top, and lo, an identical reproduction of Taylor's give, with opened palms and the club held against the second joint!

"Yes, sir," said Albert, "I believe in a little give at the top. Not too much, sir; but nothing stiff, sir. We all do it sir. You remember how Braid suddenly became a long driver, sir? He was holding his club too tight at the top. Somehow he relaxed one day and outdrove everybody. He never knew how it came about. But I know, sir. At least that is my theory, sir."

"What style of grip do you prefer, Albert?" asked Baylis.

"Vardon grip, sir. But the grip changes all through the swing, sir. Most players forget that sir. Must get back to the shop now, if you don't mind. Good day, sir."

"Well you certainly seem to have Albert with you," said Big Shaw, "and I remember Davie Black, who was pro. at Outremont and is now at Rivermead, Ottawa. But he used to allow the club handle to slide all the way down into the right hand web when driving. What do you make of that?"

"It's the same principle illustrated to the maximum," said Robinson. "Alex. Herd, Alec Smith, Horace G. Hutchinson, John Ball and probably the majority of leading players, if not those who happen to be at the very top in Britain, perpetrate that slide. I was surprised to see by genuine photographs that Jerome D. Travers and Francis Ouimet do the same. I don't know about Chick Evans. I am much more interested, accordingly, about grips at the top of the swing than grips at the address; they are by far more instructive. Hilton's Secret is simply the old saw about "right hand loose." You can either go the whole hog by

letting the handle slide into the right hand web or adopt the minimum method by sliding from the first to the second joint. This is not only the secret of long driving, but the secret of proper wrist action and crisp, effective golf. It is quite as important, too, with irons as with woods. And I will let you into another little tip. Those who grip with the little fingers like Aleck Herd, Jerome D. Travers and Francis Ouimet, perpetrate the maximum slide; while those who grip with the big fingers like Braid and Vardon, practice the minimum slide. But slide there must be, and there you have the secret of the swing, practically impossible for the eye to detect, but all-important."

"I have noticed," said Putnam, "that some fellows when waggling allow the club to move back freely between the right finger and thumb. Is that correct or should we keep pinching the club tight with finger and thumb?"

"Allow me to say, my dear Putnam," said our Oracle, "that your observation shows considerable acuteness."

"Here, here! Bravo!" said Big Shaw.

"You make quite a new point never before noted in the literature of the game," continued Robinson, "but I have no doubt that the free movement during the waggle, as you describe it, is exactly what should take place at the top of the swing."

And then the talk turned on the war. And though not much was said, there was many a glance at the eight photographs, on the mantel shelf above the blazing logs, of Kanawaki members who had made the supreme sacrifice at bloody Ypres and Langemark and Neuve Chapelle in those terrible early days. Let us record their names here: Guy Drummond and Gerald Lees, who fell in the first ghastly gas attacks at Ypres; Allan Shaw and Donald Cameron, gallant and stalwart lads both, who lie in unknown graves—these and the heroic Blackader, Dale, Murdoch Laing and Roy Hastings.—"*Golf Illustrated*, New York.