

GOLFERS IN ACTION

By Mr. Recorder Weir, D.C.L.

VI.—BERNARD NICHOLLS

BERNARD NICHOLLS'S style impresses us by its compactness, its moderation, and its grace. It also strikes one as an easy style, but it is quite safe to parody a high poetical authority, and declare that

True ease in golfing comes by art, not chance,
As they move easiest who have learned to dance.

So many styles there are, indeed, that are so strenuous and ungraceful, that it is refreshing to contemplate one that is convincing by its simplicity and restraint. Bernard Nicholls is one of our most effective players, drives a long ball, putts, and approaches well. Indeed, it takes no ordinary player to interrupt the victorious career of such a champion as Harry Vardon, but this is what Nicholls did at Ormonde, Florida, and at the Brae Burn Club, West Newton, Massachusetts, in 1900. It is all the more instructive, therefore, to note what economy of movement and energy are indicated by him as he wields his clubs. There is nothing wild or extravagant about his pose or action, and yet as we regard the figure at the top of the swing, it is evident that the player has a very comfortable sense of command over himself, his club, and his ball. Many golfers are so contorted and strained at the top of swing, that the looker-on stands in fear and trembling of some awful fizzle, but Nicholls, as we have said, convinces us of the merits of his style by the perfections of its form.

Let us consider some of its special fea-

tures. It is not a full swing. The club-head does not dip. The hands do not rise much, if at all, above the right shoulder. It is therefore clear, we think, that the left arm must strongly assert itself, and that the club must describe the arc of a very big circle, as it is not taken up very straight. The hands are well out from the right shoulder in the Taylor style, consequently it is easy to prevent any undue dip with the loss of control that often accompanies such a practice. The swing is wide rather than high, and although the club seems in one photograph to touch the neck, we are sure it is not allowed to do so in actual play.

The follow-through is very complete, but is not exaggerated. After all, the special merit of a good follow-through is that it is an inseparable adjunct or sequence of a good swing. In itself it is nothing, but as a test and proof it is everything. Perhaps a good follow-on is even more important to think about, for it indicates that the weight of the body has been well transferred from the right leg to the left. The two things are not absolutely identical. Some players such as Mr. F. S. Douglas have an excellent follow-through without much follow-on. Others again, such as the majority of British players (conspicuously the late Lieutenant Tait), have a great follow-on with a seemingly moderate follow-through. Bernard Nicholls, we may see, combines both without undue stress or strain, and is an excellent exemplar of the golden mean.

Nicholls plays with the orthodox



THE WAGGLE.



TOP OF SWING.



THE FINISH.

grip, thumbs well round the shaft, with a firm left and looser right. He is of opinion that too tight gripping is apt to produce stiffened muscles in the forearm and wrist, with consequent disasters. Grip firmly with the left, less firmly but none the less carefully with the right. Let the left arm suggest the extent and direction of the rearward course of the club, and let the flexible, well-controlled, but unstiffened sinews of the right forearm and wrist guide it in its downward career, the whole in unison with the necessary contributory movements of the body,—such are some of the maxims which our present hero's style admirably illustrates.

Other instructive points shown in our pictures are the excellent pivotal action of the shoulders and the moderate turning on the left toe. These together with the "knuckling" of the knees cannot be too carefully studied by the aspiring golfer. The unconscious mental conceptions of golfers are the causes of their failures. For instance, how many there are who imagine, in their subconsciousness, that the raising of the left heel and the turning on the left toe must elevate the left shoulder in some important

way, and contribute to something like a see-saw movement of the shoulders! What really happens, of course, in every good swing, is that the shoulders preserve the same plane throughout the swing, that they turn upon a centre located somewhere in the interior of the upper thorax, that the foot and knee action of the left leg really serves to *shorten* that useful member as the left shoulder comes down and around. The raising of the left heel and bending of the left knee are an accommodation to the descending left shoulder, which, as it descends, requires an ever-shortening support. In other words the raising of the left heel is synchronous with a *lowering* rather than a raising of the left shoulder, and this lowering is pivotal in character, being downward and forward, and by no means a mere dropping movement.

As a synopsis of Mr. Nicholls's golfing achievements appeared recently in *GOLF*, it is not necessary to repeat them. In concluding our appreciation of his form, we very sincerely record our conviction that any one desirous of acquiring an effective, scientific, and pretty style, can scarcely do better than ponder the portraits which accompany our text.

THE GOLFER'S TOAST

(NOT METHUSELAH'S)

HERE'S to the girl at a hundred and four,
 To the maid with the card twice as weighty;
 Here's to the tyro who can't add her score,
 And here's to the champion at eighty.