

GOLFERS IN ACTION

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

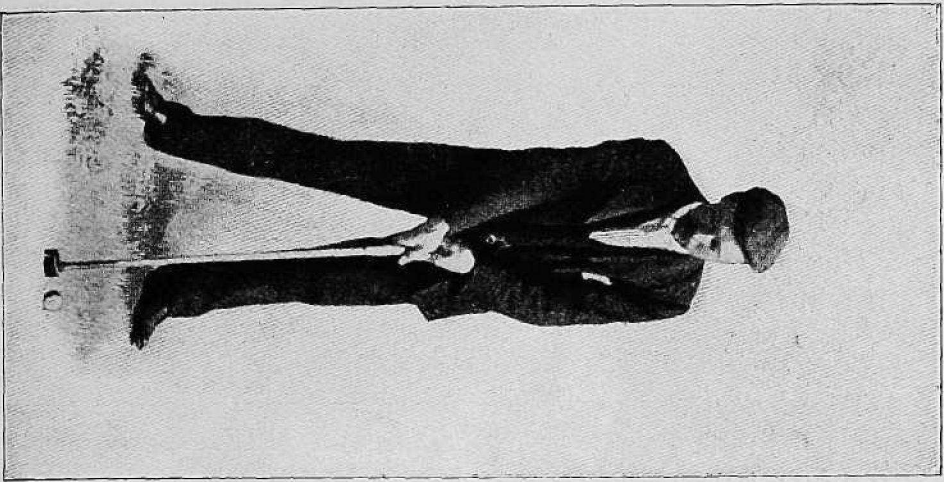
XII.—LAURENCE AUCHTERLONIE

Photographs by T. C. Turner

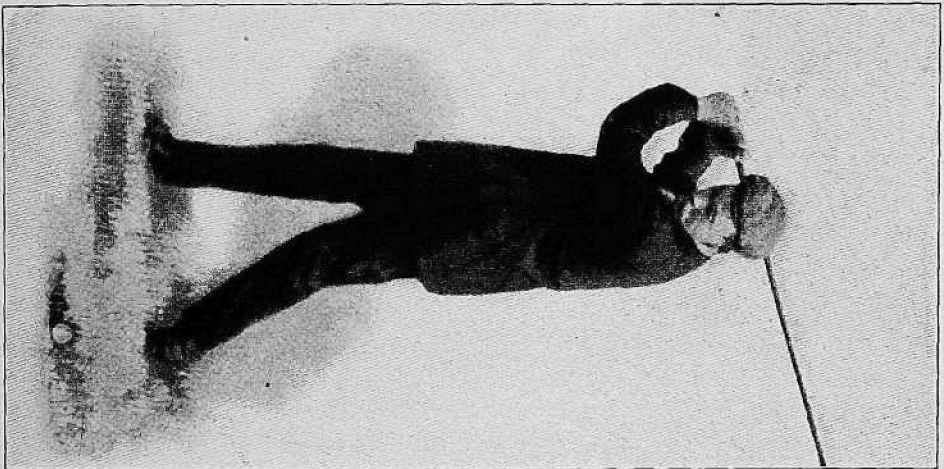
FEW names are better known in the world of golf than that of Auchterlonie, and none more deserve or more worthily bear the nimbus of renown. "Auchterlonie clubs" have their patrons, who swear by them, and the "Auchterlonie swing" has its loyal votaries, for was not William of that ilk Open champion of Britain, no less, in the year of grace 1893, and his brother Laurence, better known than his brother in America, Open champion at Garden City in 1902, and Western champion as well? Both, indeed, have won their full share of golfing honors, having proved their ability to keep company with the very best. As might be expected from their training at St. Andrews, the Auchterlonies wield their clubs in easy, unaffected, and graceful style. Those who have seen Laurence play cannot but have admired the beautiful art he consistently displays. His methods certainly were justified last season, at least, when not only he himself won the premier honors, but his pupil, Mr. Louis N. James, carried off the Amateur championship at Glen View. Here, indeed, wisdom was justified of her children. Laurence Auchterlonie, it ought to be stated, just missed winning the Amateur championship of Britain in 1895, losing to Mr. Leslie Balfour-Melville. The story of the final round has been often told, and is the classic illustration of the value of pertinacity in match play; and although the hero of it is not our hero, the margin by which he lost shows his rare quality. It seems that

at the crisis the players were all even, with 3 to play. Auchterlonie, as Mr. Everard tells us, had two rasping drives, the second of which landed him well on the green, not more than six yards from the hole; his adversary, meanwhile, more or less in difficulties all the way, had by far the worst of the long game, not having reached the green in 2, and after his third shot had to play 2 more from rather an awkward place; in 4 he was but a yard or two nearer than Auchterlonie was in 2; the latter laid himself apparently dead, eighteen inches from the hole; the other holed out unexpectedly a five-yard putt; playing too quickly and nervously, Auchterlonie missed, and the hole was halved. At the next, Mr. Balfour-Melville, in his turn, missed a very short putt, and again the match appeared over, for he lost the hole and was 1 down; but once more the pendulum swung the other way, for he laid a magnificent drive absolutely dead at the eighteenth hole, holing out in the unusual figure of 3. The match had now to proceed until one or the other had won a hole; the result soon declared itself, for Auchterlonie had the misfortune to visit the Swilcan Burn, and his redoubtable opponent thus became the winner of the trophy.

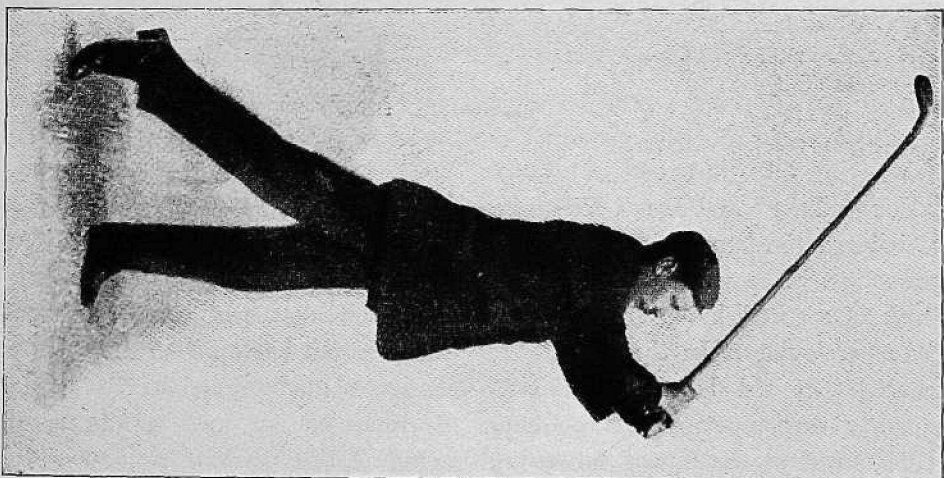
Our hero's full swing, although of the St. Andrews order, is not so full as one might suppose from a casual glance at his actual play. The club does not dip down behind in the typical style so well illustrated, if portraits be true, by the



THE ADDRESS.



TOP OF SWING.



THE FINISH.

AUCHTERLONIE DRIVING.



AUCHTERLONIE PUTTING.

late "Young Tom" and Hugh Kirkaldy. But it is none the less a big swing, and most effective. The wrist action is perfect, and is secured by attention to at least two particulars. In the first place, the knuckles of the left hand quickly but steadily turn upwards as the club goes back, until at the top of the swing the back of the hand is easily and naturally parallel with the line of flight; it

results from this that the club-face as quickly and steadily changes from its vertical position at the address to the horizontal when half-way to the shoulder-line—the whole club-head thus constantly changing the position of its face by a divergent motion, until at the top of the swing it lies pendent as a pear, if we may give an alliterative touch to Mr. Everard's simile, with sole skyward and

face once more vertical. In the second place, Auchterlonie is master of that snap of the wrists which puzzles everybody who is not master of it, which is so difficult to describe and yet without which there is really no driving worth the name. Mr. Horace Hutchinson refers to it when he says that as the club meets the ball the wrists must turn towards the left, under pain of great loss of distance. It is singular that neither Taylor, in his book, nor Vardon nor Braid, in their reported deliverances, say anything about this vital point. Mr. Travis touches upon it in his *Practical Golf*, but does not attempt any close analysis. Its analysis, indeed, seems to elude the power of both the camera and language. It is commonly called a "snap"; but others liken it to a single "shake" of the wrists; others, again, say that it is distinguished by a throwing forward of the wrists at the impact. Mr. Everard, perhaps, leads us nearer to a mastery of it in his analysis of the swing than any other theorist, but, like all others, is very reticent about the special features of this supreme moment in the game. It really would seem that this great "secret," discoverable only after much searching of heart and experiment, easily persuades those to whom it finally reveals itself to preserve the mystery unrevealed. At all events, Laurence Auchterlonie is one of the possessors of the "secret," and employs it to the winning of matches and games galore. A close observer of his tee-shots will notice at the impact a sudden yet smooth assertion of the wrists, not unlike the action of a catapultist—some young David, let us say, as he speeds with supple sinews one of the smooth stones of the brook towards the doomed Goliath.

It is a great treat to observe Auchter-

lonie's manipulation of his irons and cleeks. He plays them with marked decision, and yet with great reserve; that is to say, he plays quite in accordance with Mr. J. E. Laidlay's dictum that the moment you begin to swing your irons you go wrong. You have to content yourself with a moderate drawback, and rather clip or hit the ball, modifying the stroke according as you want the ball to pitch or run. Auchterlonie preaches and practises all this in very illuminating fashion, and fortunate are the aspiring golfers who are privileged to profit by his example and precept.

Our putting picture shows a characteristic leaning of the body towards the hole; the bent left elbow, the play off the right foot are methods of proved orthodoxy, and provided there is no knuckling holewards by the knees—a prerogative of genius only—is a safe model for imitation. Auchterlonie, like every other famous golfer, has missed some short putts when they would have done much good, and, like Braid, is inclined to blame the slight movement of the body holewards that was so fashionable at St. Andrews a decade ago. Keep the body very still and hit very true are now the rules of practice for proficiency in the putt.

Golf, we are told by eminent authority, may be divided, like all Gaul in Cæsar's time, into three parts, of which driving is an art, approaching a science, and putting an inspiration. As to the last part of this pretty apothegm, we think it time to enter a caveat. Putting an inspiration! There is no stroke more deliberate, more nicely calculated, more cautiously delivered than your putt. Driving may be an art, and approaching a science, indeed, but putting is assuredly both an art and a science.