

GOLFERS IN ACTION

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

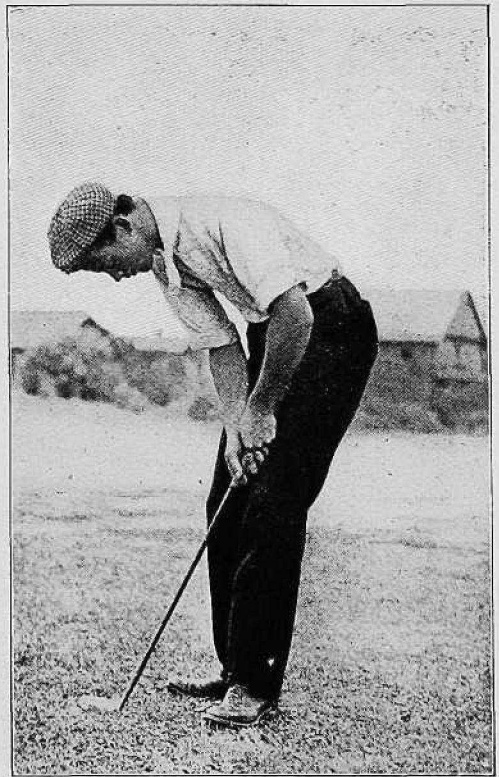
XIII.—MR. LOUIS N. JAMES

THOSE who play the game of golf are probably just as prone to gossip as the votaries of other sports. Indeed, one of the fascinations, not often noted, of games of skill is the constant talk about those whose prowess is great and acknowledged, or, it may be, disputed. The oarsman discusses the Courtney or Hanlan style, the cricketer the merits of Grace or Stoddart or Prince "Ranji," and the billiardist the style of Slosson or some young Napoleon of the cue; while golfers are certainly not above this weakness, as witness this series of discourses about "Golfers in Action," as consider also the innumerable talk of the countless golf clubs of golfdom about golfing heroes past and present and even future.

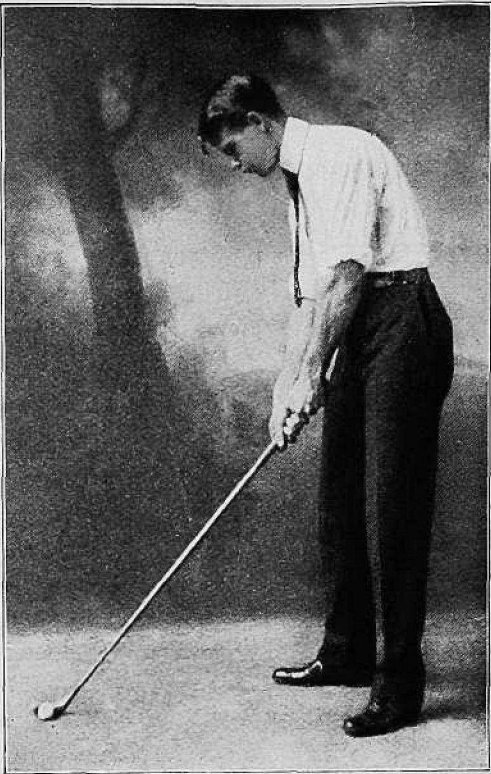
Mr. Louis N. James is a golfer who has been the subject of much genial discussion by reason of his sudden jump to the front in the almost sensational tournament for the Amateur championship at Glen View in 1902. While the great majority accepted the simple fact that here was a good golfer who golfed his best when put to it, and came legitimately by his reward, others, some there were, who talked of luck and flukes, and feigned incapacity to connect effect and cause in respect of the termination of that very memorable contest. It is perhaps worth while, therefore, to contemplate Mr. James for a little, and by means of the accompanying portraits and other aids endeavor to explain him to ourselves and others as best we may.

Mr. James is not of those who claim to have acquired the game by self-tuition

or intuition. As a matter of fact, no man, even he who never takes a lesson, can learn the game of golf or any game by himself. For one thing, he cannot but use his eyes, he cannot but observe how others do it, and even if the models are bad they serve him to no small extent in the manner suggested by the maxim *lucus a non lucendo*. Mr. James, as all the world knows, is, or was, a pupil of Laurence Auchterlonie, as sound a golfer as ever golfed, one not merely skilled in the mechanics or dynamics of the game, but saturated with its traditions, and with recollections of how the



MR. JAMES PUTTING.



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great men on transatlantic links brought off their strokes,—Rolland and Park and the Kirkaldys and his own famous brother Willie; with a fund of stories of their prowess and an inexhaustible knowledge of their methods. No small advantage is it, therefore, to sit at the feet, or, rather, to walk about the links with, one who, not once but often, saw, not Shelley, but Tom Morris, "plain," and all the greater gods or less who walk about the classic ground of St. Andrews, North Britain. Let it be said that Mr. James proved a pupil apt, intelligent, and industrious, with sufficient tenacity to keep himself to it when others would have cracked, and sufficient capacity for the proper application of the scientific methods he was taught to employ by his preceptor.

Although a Princetonian, Mr. James has not adopted the Princetonian style. That style, as so effectively exemplified by Mr. Reinhart, Mr. Conkling, and others, consists in standing very much in front of the ball, the latter being almost to the left of the left foot, and exhibits an unusual bending back of the body at the finish; this latter for the very good reason that a follow-on of the body in such a stance would ruin the stroke.

Mr. James, as we see, affects the open style, which is also that of his master Auchterlonie; his grip is quite orthodox, and while, owing to his unusual height, the circle of his swing is big, it suggests no exaggerated features. We like the free way in which the hands are pushed out from the body at the top of the swing under the dominance of the left arm. This ensures a big, if not to the eye a very full, swing. The follow-through is effective and complete, and a point not commonly noticed in criticism of stances is the position of the right foot at the finish. Often one sees the right foot resting, at the finish, on the right side, rather on the ball of the

big toe, on the left side as we see it in Mr. James's picture. This indicates, we think, that the body has come round by rather following the arms than by taking the initiative in the swing and certainly looks very much prettier. Our conceptions of the virtues of the "follow-on" often result in too much swaying forward, and we do well to remind ourselves, in the words of Sir Walter Simpson, that "swaying the whole body forward after the ball is as likely to cripple driving as swaying away from it when taking the club back." It will be seen that Mr. James does not commit the first of these faults, and assuredly the style of his fellow collegians offers him no temptations in that regard; and we are sure he does not commit the second fault else would he not drive so comfortably far.

It will be noticed that the stance is singularly upright—nay, more, comparing the stance at the address with that at the top of the swing, the head seems to have lifted itself somewhat. We are sure that this apparent defect does not characterize Mr. James's actual play, and are inclined to explain it as a defect in pose, or that the lens did not do its work at precisely the proper instant.

Mr. James putts and uses his irons as he drives by simple straightforward methods. At approaching he is, when on his game, most deadly, and prefers to pitch his balls to running them up. Having played almost exclusively upon inland links he has not perhaps felt compelled to practise the niceties of scientific slicing and pulling, which Mr. Low declares to be the most attractive feature of golf, but having taken up the game young, and there being no doubt as to the quality of his stamina or his skill, there is no side of the game he is not competent to master, and no honor on the links he is not competent to win.