

GOLFERS IN ACTION

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

XI.—STEWART GARDNER

Photographs by T. C. Turner

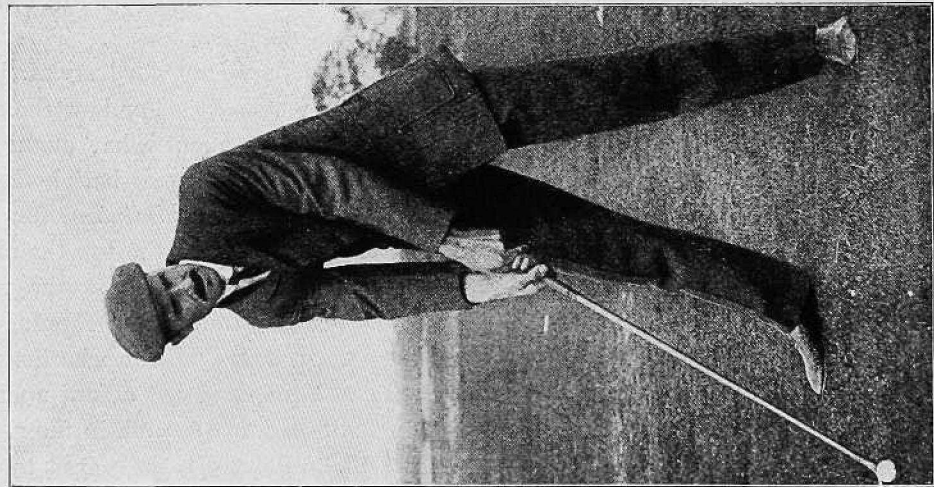
THE well-known professional of the Garden City Golf Club is essentially deserving of wall-space in any gallery of golfing experts. Fourth place in the Open championship of 1901, second place with Mr. Travis in 1902, and again second (following Anderson and Brown, who tied for first) in 1903,—such a record proves no ordinary golfer, and a study of his method should certainly be worth while.

Stewart Gardner uses the Vardon interlocking grip, except in putting, when he adopts a curious variation upon the original, the left forefinger covering the right little finger. Ordinarily, as we know, it is the right little finger that rides the left forefinger. Gardner believes that this modification is an advantage in putting, as it enables the power to be more evenly divided and secures greater delicacy of touch. It is an interesting point, upon which golfers may experiment and decide for themselves. As to stance, the play is off the right, and the feet are wide apart. The arms are well extended from the body at the address, although not too rigidly so, and quite in accordance with the opinion of Sir Walter Simpson, who remarks in his *Art of Golf* that a very large percentage of players live and play and die with their knuckles pointing too much towards the ground, and their club at too obtuse an angle with their arms, and consequently without the possibility of ever having a perfect swing.

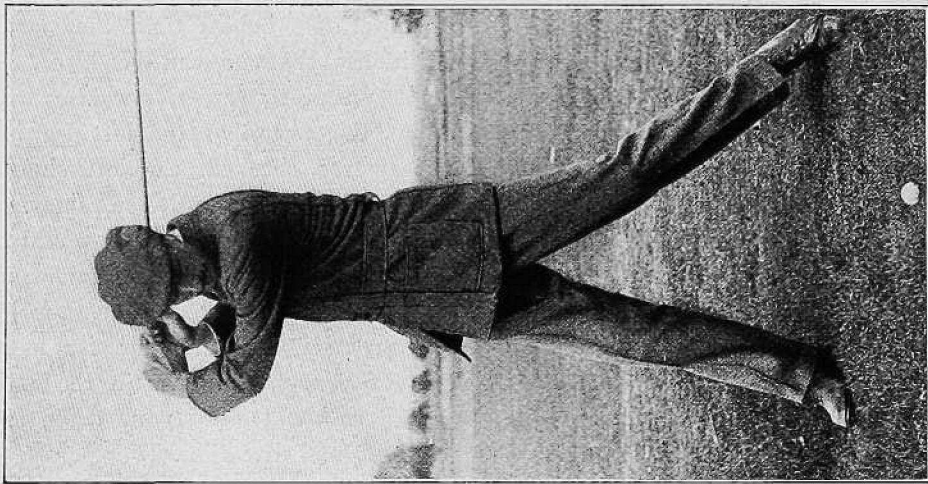
There are several things worth noticing

as we regard our hero at the top of his swing. The main features are a well-asserted left arm, a rather restrained bending of the left knee and raising of left heel, and a moderate dip of the club. Gardner's is not the crouching sitting-down style that would perhaps better suit a man of less height than the six feet odd inches that he can boast of. He stands up pretty erect, straddles wide, and as the action of the left leg is to some degree checked, the left shoulder does not come round quite so far as, possibly, Mr. Horace Hutchinson would like to see it, but judged by the sufficiently long balls that Gardner can propel, it comes round quite enough; for as the proof of your pudding is in the eating thereof, so the test of your drive is in its length and direction.

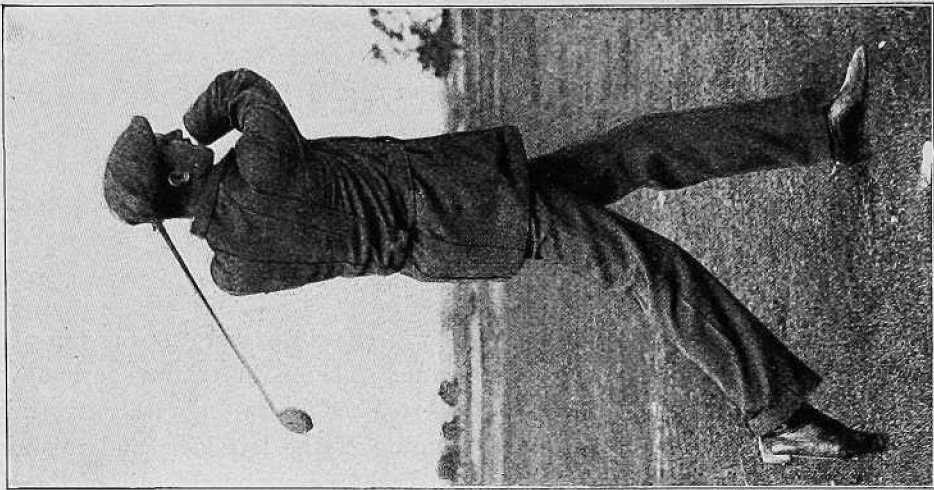
It is interesting to observe in our second picture that the right palm, and probably the left as well, opens out somewhat as the club goes back. This we think is common to all good styles, but thereby hangs a puzzle. For how the authorities do differ about what ought to take place as the club goes back! Here is the wise editor of *Badminton*, for instance, who says that at the top the club should be allowed to fall into the web between the right thumb and forefinger; and here again is Mr. Hilton who insists, to the bewilderment of not a few, upon a certain "sliding" of the club in the right hand, which allows it, he says, to be taken well round the neck, but without in any way altering the original grip of



THE ADDRESS.



TOP OF SWING.



THE FINISH.

the hand. This swing and sliding, according to Mr. Hilton, constitute *the* art of the game, and the pictures of him at the top of his swing show the club delicately held by the thumb and fingers, the palm being well open. But the club, in his case, does not fall into the web, so that Mr. Hilton does not quite agree with *Badminton*. Mr. Hilton, moreover, instances Messrs. Hutchings, Fry, and Travis as having acquired this correct touch with the right hand. Now, as a matter of fact, Mr. Travis plays with a fairly sturdy grip,—almost a cricketer's grip, and certainly does not practise any sliding touch such as Mr. Hilton refers to; the club is well home in the web of the right hand at the start, and there remains till the finish. The truth seems to be that orthodox grippers require some such turning of the club as *Badminton* and Mr. Hilton variously describe, in order to secure proper wrist action, but Mr. Travis and other eminent golfers secure this without allowing the club to shift in the grasp. Experiment with a cricketer's grip, knuckles however not turned down, will demonstrate how easily the wrists are turned. Neither Vardon nor Taylor have commented upon this sliding or turning of the club so far as we know, and it certainly would be interesting if they were to give their opinions upon Mr. Hilton's dictum.

But we have left Stewart Gardner unconscionably long time at the top of his swing. Let us observe him as he brings his club down. There is a very free working of the shoulders, a proper transfer of weight, and a most effective follow-through. The follow-on of the body is not particularly noticeable, indicating a reserve of power and a maintenance of balance; it also indicates that the actual *centre* of the circle or ellipse described

is not too greatly shifted, and this latter point we take to be of immense importance. Speaking of the centre of the circle reminds us that Gardner plays with clubs of moderate length. He has not gone in for the "fishing-rods" in vogue among some British golfers, preferring accuracy to distance. If Gardner were to wield, as doubtless he could with his great reach, a club of forty-eight or forty-nine inches long, what an enormous periphery he would describe! The rest of us would be tempted to try stilts so as to elevate the centre of our swinging!

On the whole we take Stewart Gardner to be a very valuable model for students and aspirants, and as he seems to be able to do exactly what he pleases with clubs and balls, and to know exactly what to do, there are doubtless many other laurels awaiting him. It is a fine thing indeed to have equal skill and judgment in such a game as golf, and these possessions seem to be Gardner's in particularly liberal measure in the big events. If he were not quite so good a fellow he might, possibly, do a shade better in the opinion of some who think that a certain measure of aggressiveness and grim determination is essential for premier golf. Per contra, we have the remark attributed to Vardon that it is best to play the game in the love of it, and to smite the balls, incidentally winning as many holes as possible, in the spirit of charity. A little vindictiveness, however, is not out of place when your ball is bunkered. It seems to supply the necessary vim and pith to the stroke, and in playing out of bad bunkers on the few occasions he gets into them Stewart Gardner has few equals. He then hits the ball as if he were hitting a snake, which is the proper way to do it.