

INLAND GOLF

*Some Expert Views of the Difference
Between Inland and Seaside Courses*

By R. STANLEY WEIR

JAMES BRAID, J. H. Taylor, Harry Vardon, Arnold Massey and George Duncan have each written his book or books on golf and all have been cordially welcomed by the growing crowd of those who love to read about golf. It was only right and proper, therefore, that Edward Ray should follow suit as the Open Champion for 1912 by writing his book. This he has done, and "Inland Golf," published by J. Pott & Co., New York, is before us. Modestly enough the personal reminiscences of the author are given in the final chapter, but the book having been written before Ray's visit to America, there is no mention of the famous tussle at Brookline in which Francis Ouimet sprang into fame. In this country Edward Ray is probably better known as the man who with Harry Vardon was beaten by Francis Ouimet than as one of the Open Champions of Britain. Edward Ray, however, is famous among the cognoscenti as a very long swifter from the tee—probably the longest driver in the professional ranks today. For example, in a driving competition at Sandy Lodge in which he, with Braid and Vardon competed, Ray's "best of two" shots measured 251 yards with Braid exactly a foot behind; but in a special competition for the longest carry, a feature to which Vardon attached great value, Ray won with 242 yards as against 217 yards for Vardon and 202 for Braid.

Ray is also noted for his special addiction to the niblick as an approaching club. In fact, it may be said that he has rescued that club from its rather ignominious status as a mere bludgeon to be used *in extremis* and has promoted it to a position of honor as a club which may be most effectively employed 100 or 120 yards from the green. The niblick now divides the exclusive honors long paid to the mashie and to the example of Edward Ray more than of anyone else this division of respect is due. Finally, Ray is known not only to be addicted to the what used to be accounted one of the seven deadly sins, the vice of swaying, but to glory in his iniquity; and, as in the book before us, to justify his evil ways. He is strongly of opinion that the slight sway away from the direction in which he is about to drive introduced a new and very important force. He considers that this feature contributes unmistakable power. At the same time, he has this to say:

"I should like to warn any players, who may have it in their minds to imitate me in this matter, that the use of sway belongs to the advanced player of golf, and should certainly never be attempted by anyone who has not completely mastered the other branches of the art of driving. Sway, if used at all, should only be adopted as a sort of crowning ornament to an already reliable and finished style."

Ray is convinced that his unorthodox methods in the drive and the approach with the niblick have had a great deal to do with his success; and although he will not suggest that every budding or aspiring player should imitate him, he does think that many might find in his methods, or in some modi-

fication of them the road to quite a considerable improvement.

In giving the title "Inland Golf" to his book, Edward Ray points out first that the greater part of the world's golf is now played on inland courses and second that golf is not the same thing as seaside article. Seaside golf, he admits, is perhaps a *pleasanter* game. The balls sit up on the turf more invitingly, the good lies are better and the bad lies are not so bad. Again, it is only on simon-pure links that one can take turf in the true sense of taking turf. The "divot" or cleanly cut lump of turf which can be replaced as neatly as one could replace a section of a turnip is practically unknown on your tough clayey inland courses where you scrape or gash the surface instead. Ray's observation leads him to remark that the inland golfer plays a great deal better on a seaside course than the seaside golfer does when the positions are reversed; which reminds one of a remark of James Braid when he visited James Sherlock at Stöge Pogis, where the turf is of a very muddy sort. "Take it from me," said the big man to his more diminutive fellow-professional, "the man who can play golf here can play golf anywhere."

St. Andrews' and other seaside golfers accordingly do not take kindly to inland golf, and when the stalwart Edward Blackwell who learned his game on the east coast of Scotland was asked to give a tip that might be useful to inland golfers replied, "The best tip I can give to an inland golfer is to play on a seaside course whenever he can."

J. H. Taylor is convinced that inland golf is considerably more difficult than the seaside variety where the ball sits up so much better. Iron play is certainly more difficult inland and for that reason he prefers to use deep-faced clubs. The brassy, too, should have rather more loft for inland uses.

Ray has provided a very entertaining chapter called "Straight Tips," which he who plays may read. These tips are furnished by a variety of big names, amateur and professional. J. Sherlock rather declines to classify golf courses as "inland" and "seaside," maintaining that inland courses often differ from each other. The same Sherlock has no tip to give save that of clean hitting. "Practice true hitting," he says, "and you are well on the way to becoming a golfer, and not merely one who plays golf"—which is a nice distinction to make.

As against J. H. Taylor's preference for deep-faced irons is cited the opinion of R. H. de Montmorency, an amateur, it is true, but a most capable golfer, who says: "A club with narrow face makes one take infinite care in addressing the ball and in striking it exactly. Accuracy thus becomes a matter of course."

Ray draws attention to the undoubted fact that after all the great majority of golfers are inland players. The great cities are all inland for the most part, except Venice where the water hazards are unfair and Naples where the big bunker is Vesuvius.