

Mr. Travers' Second Book

THE WINNING SHOT is the title of a new book on golf from the joint-pens of Jerome Travers and Grantland Rice, the publishers being Doubleday, Page & Co. The "Winning Shot" is, of course, the putt which decides every hole and every match. The playing value of the putter our authors put at 45 per cent; which is their irreducible minimum. Alec Smith is quoted as having established by actual count that at the Brookline Open Championship, where Francis Ouimet became one of the Immortals, seventy-five out of every hundred shots played were on the putting greens. This heightened way of extolling putting nobody will quarrel with. It assumes of course that first and second shots are perfect, which is a large assumption. Putting, no doubt, is a game by itself. The man who can putt is a match for anybody says the old golfing saw—provided, of course, that he can also drive and approach. All of which means that the golfer must not only have power but delicacy—all grades of digital skill.

In the absence of testimony to the contrary we must suppose, seeing the double authorship of *The Winning Shot* and the considerable quantity of parodic verse that besprinkles its pages, that Mr. Travers finds time to give attention, not merely to the practical psychology of golf but to the technics of poetry as well. We must therefore felicitate the Open Champion upon his versatility. So good a golfer is he that we should prefer to give him credit for the original verses in Scottish and other dialects, while attributing, with our censure, the parodies of Coleridge, Stevenson, Kipling and others to his associate. Parodies like puns are to be eschewed unless they are very good. "Apologies," in the hackneyed way, to great writers can hardly make amends, in the judgment of the majority of golfers, for a misuse of masterpieces. Nor are golfers as a class the slangy, mendacious individuals these carollings make them out to be.

The Winning Shot, taking its name from the first chapter, proceeds to deal with such topics as *Getting Back on your Game*, *Wonder Shots*, *The Secret of Steady Golf*, *Heroes of Wood and Iron*,—twelve in all. A perusal of these highly entertaining pages suggests that the book might, perhaps, have been more appropriately entitled "The Psychology of Golf," for, certainly, the mental obsessions that determine victory or defeat, the part the nerves play in the game, the necessity for complete concentration, the mischief caused by other occupations or pre-occupations are discussed upon almost every page. To get back on your game, for example, you must not merely seek competent instruction; you must "practice concentration and practice thoroughly the art of thinking how the stroke should be played"; you must also "practice control of temper and judgment and keep a clear head, working with patience and calmness." Again, the secret of steady golf is "to play each shot by itself—to forget what has gone before and think only of the shot immediately before you." Mr. Travers, for doubtless the pedagogic parts of the book are from his pen, is generous with excellent hints as to the best methods for playing this stroke or that, but it is clear that he regards the great battles of golf as by no means contests in physical skill alone but as mental combats as well; and he adduces a hundred instances of collapse from mental strain, of brave snatching of victory when defeat seemed certain, of fear and trembling over decisive strokes, of a quiet confidence that feels itself predestined to success.

As a chronicle of contemporary golf, with frequent references to his fellow-golfers, amateurs and professionals, *The Winning Shot* is unique. It stands alone in this respect among books that deal with American golf. And the references to those with whom Mr. Travers has contested the laurels of the game are invariably conceived and expressed in the finest spirit.

Mr. Travers devotes a chapter to Vardon whom he describes as the greatest golfer of our own or any time. But I think that from Mr. Travers' own appreciation it could be shown that

what he really means is that if Vardon were a better putter he would be the greatest golfer. It may be perfectly true that *if* Vardon had been a better putter he would have won twelve championships as Mr. Travers says; but, of course, one cannot overlook the great significance of that "*if*." Personally, I think a stronger case could be made out for J. H. Taylor as the greatest golfer of them all; but such comparisons, if not odious, are little useful.

The Winning Shot is a book that your true golfer will want to read at a sitting, and afterwards take up frequently, open at random and peruse with unfailing interest. In my own case my zest was much quickened by coming across frequently the word "*alibi*" both in the verse and the prose. An *alibi* I have always taken to be a legal plea that the person accused of a crime was somewhere else when the crime was done; which could not therefore have been done by him. In these pages an "*alibi*" is used to mean an excuse for making a bad shot. In the verses the meaning is not quite so clear.

He held me with his glittering eye

I had to get that alibi.

It is altogether likely that I am lagging and lacking in my knowledge of the latest vernacular; but I really think the word "*alibi*" ought only to be used in two ways; one, as I have roughly defined it above; the other, as Mr. Weller used it in *Pickwick*.

R. STANLEY WEIR.