

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION IN GOLF

By Hon. R. Stanley Weir

TO those who are pent up in wintry golfless latitudes the advent of a new book on golf is like a breath of spring. Our compliments and thanks, then, to Launcelot Cressy Servos who, in his "Practical Instruction in Golf" has given us this pleasure. The book is replete with illustrations, as it ought to be, and the author has given us a highly interesting exposition of the game from his own point of view. He informs us that there are no less than nine different ways of making a perfect swing; but it is perhaps fortunate for his readers that he has only attempted to describe one: the temptation to try the other eight might easily have disastrous results. We are not sure, however, that Mr. Servos' analysis of the swing selected by him from the nine, will commend itself to a majority of students or players. We have no doubt that Mr. Servos' practical exposition of the swing is excellent; but are inclined to cavil at his literary injunctions and advice. What, for instance, is the significance of the second advent in his description of the backward swing? "Continue your swing backward, outward and upward." It is surely dangerous advice to recommend an outward swing. Not even Badminton goes as far as this. And why are we told to "rise on the left toe" when all that is meant is, of course, to raise the left heel to accommodate the descending left shoulder as the body-turn is made in the backward swing? To *rise* on the left toe is the worst possible advice to give a golfer. Elsewhere, however, we think Mr. Servos gives a valuable hint

that many players may find serviceable. "The common and easy way to get a golf club to a horizontal position over the shoulder is to bend the elbows and draw the hands in toward the body. This is wrong. With the left arm well out from the body bend the wrists back to their fullest extent, and only allow the elbows to bend sufficiently to enable the club to get to a horizontal position over the shoulder, being careful on no account to raise the hands above the level of the right ear and at the same time keep the right elbow down." This is most valuable advice and indicates capacity to perceive the fine points of the game. Equally cogent and valuable we take to be his caution (p. 29) not to transfer the weight of the body from the one foot to the other until "*after* the ball is struck." Whether this caution is scientifically exact or not, it is certainly a good working rule. It is a capital mistake to put what is called "the body" into any stroke too soon. In a properly executed stroke the body or trunk swings round after the arms and supplies the latter with their necessary leverage. The body is the *fulcrum* of the stroke and merely accommodates itself to the power which the arms chiefly supply. This is the doctrine that Vardon, Taylor and Servos all teach although we have stated it in terms of our own. "Whenever I am driving badly," says Taylor in a recent article, "I find it is because too much body is entering into the stroke." It is unfortunate that our author inconsistently (p. 24) urges putting "the whole body into the

stroke;" elsewhere, as above quoted, his advice is sounder.

With regard to the use of irons our author is less orthodox. He very strongly insists that all iron clubs should be gripped more tightly with the right hand than with the left. Here Servos certainly has Taylor against him; as the latter constantly preaches against the "over-dominant right." The only stroke in which Vardon allows a tighter right grip is in the running up approach; otherwise holding for equal pressure with the hands and and this we take to be the safe doctrine as compared with our author's.

Our author has an acute remark in the saying that many players have their minds concentrated on the ball, when they should be thinking of the swing. "The result is," he says, "the muscles of the arms become set, and instead of going through at full speed, they check too soon." There are a

few empirical maxims in the work before us, such as the advice to putt off the toe of the putter, to turn the face of iron clubs a little to the left, and to push out with the left hand at the impact. These, the wise golfer will rather interpret as idiosyncracies of the author's own style than as points for imitation. Cross-hand and left-hand players will find full encouragement in the pages of this book to play their game as Nature seems to suggest. "A ball can be driven as far cross-handed as otherwise," says Mr. Servos emphatically.

In conclusion let us say that we have greatly enjoyed reading this cheerful and instructive manual; none the less, perhaps, that we do not wholly agree with the terms in which some features of the play are expounded. But no golfer can read this book without both pleasure and profit.

