

SUCCESS AT GOLF

Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1914

A REVIEW

This, the latest of books on golf, is a compilation of articles by six masters of the game, with an introduction by Mr. John G. Anderson of Boston. It is a pleasant book to read as are all books on golf that are written in good temper, and, although it does not present the minute or detailed instructions nor the exposition of any special secret or theory that the title might seem to suggest, it offers solid and sound explanation of the success achieved by notable players of the game.

Harry Vardon here discourses on the Art of Driving; Alexander Herd on Spoon and Iron Shots; the "Push Shot" is well explained by George Duncan and the Use of the Mashie by Wilfrid Reid; the Art of Bunker Play is treated by Lawrence Ayton, and there is a closing chapter with Suggestions for Putting by Francis Ouimet. Here is certainly interesting matter for either casual or attentive perusal. It would be too much, of course, to expect that masters of golf should also be masters of literary style; and while the reader may think that Mr. Francis Ouimet might have let us more fully into the secrets of his successful putting, one cannot but admire his success at writing parables even although the characters are no more picturesque than our old friends A and B. A, according to the Open Champion of America, was a mighty man who could deal a prodigious blow that would send the ball a great distance. B was of more delicate mould. To A's taunts over B's feeble efforts to obtain distance B replied: "True, I admit I cannot hit so lustily as you; but I wager I can roll this ball along the ground and have it stay nearer that brown patch than can you"—but it would not be fair to tell the rest of the story,

Harry Vardon's exposition of the art of driving is clear and convincing, but contains one curious little bit of counsel which is to be found also in his "Complete Golfer." Describing the downward course of the club in the drive he says: "In the first stage of the downward going—a stage which lasts for only a brief instant, but is of vast importance—let the left hip go forward a trifle." Now, why should the left hip go forward a little? Vardon does not explain; nor does any other authority I know of give this advice. The experimenter may form his own provisional theory till Vardon further enlightens us—either that it corrects a slight sway to the right or, more likely, that it helps to keep the head down and the whole body in the same plane of action. But it would be interesting to read Vardon's justification for this unique counsel of his.

Vardon is strong for the overlapping grip which, he says, he adopted after much and studious experi-

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ment; but the reader will find a different grip recommended by Herd in his chapter on the Spoon. Herd prefers the old-fashioned palm grip, holding tightest with the second, third and fourth ringers. One can get such a firm hold with these members, he declares, that there is less danger of the club slipping. The undiscerning neophyte who peruses "Success at Golf" may wonder at this differing doctrine. He may comfort himself with the reflection that he may successfully grip *a la Vardon* or *a la Herd*. The main merit of the overlapping grip is not so much the unifying of the power of the hands (which is essential in any grip) but in its securing an open right-hand palm without which an easy, unrestricted swing is impossible. As the club goes back there must be an accommodating easing in the grip—particularly in the right hand. The trouble with most players is that they grip too tightly throughout. The Vardon grip with its artificially opened palm and the Herd grip with its use of the right hand web of the hand both secure the necessary preventive against error.

George Duncan writes brightly about the Push Shot. His word or motto for this is "Forward"—hands, weight and body forward of rather than behind the ball. The stroke is a downward stroke: which reminds us that the distinction between Ascending and Descending blows in golf is nowhere explained in the book before us; although it is a vital distinction that greatly simplifies the game when fully grasped; the next great man who writes a book should devote an early chapter to it.

There is another omission in the book before us in the absence of any mention of the differences in conception and action between the perpendicular and the horizontal swing. Vardon and Duncan and Braid are exemplars of the perpendicular swing. No less great a player, Taylor, illustrates the horizontal style. Most golfers adopt the one style or the other without knowing it; but the player who has adopted the one will find himself arrested in the improvement of his game if he attempts to incorporate into his style the methods of the other. Vardon and Taylor do *not* play the game in the same way. The intelligent golfer will not therefore adopt his model for imitation without due caution. The differences between the two styles should form an interesting chapter. Let us hope it will be found in the next authoritative book on golf.

R. STANLEY WEIR

(The Hon. R. Stanley Weir will review all new books on golf. He has perhaps the most complete knowledge of any writer in America of the various theories of play that have been advanced in the past and consequently is in a unique position to act as a critic. The distinction he makes between the perpendicular and horizontal swings in the above review of "Success at Golf" shows him to have a broad and deep insight into a question that presents so much complexity to the average golfer.—The Editor.)