

"THAT DELIGHTFUL SNAP OF THE WRISTS"

By Mr. Recorder Weir

THE more recent golf theorists certainly extol to a greater degree than their forebears the function of the wrists in the various strokes of the game. This is one result of the keener analysis that students of golf engage in to-day; but the language of many writers, both ancient and modern, still tends to beshroud the topic in more or less of mystery and ambiguity. And yet its importance cannot be gainsaid, seeing that the authorities unanimously declare that upon a proper use of the wrists a distance of anywhere from fifteen to twenty yards depends. Those who discuss the subject are very fond, as must have been observed by the thoughtful golfer, of referring to a certain "snap" of the wrists, which snap they variously describe as "peculiar," "indefinable," "essential to distance," "delightful." The question very naturally rises, therefore, what is this much-vaunted snap of the wrists that is not only so delightful as a physical sensation, but materially adds to the flight of even the rubber-filled ball? And indeed, if confessions were general and genuine, how many a tale of assiduous swinging, of wistful regarding of wrists, in the hope of discovering this mysterious device of snapping wrists, might be told! What, then, we ask, can this "snap" be that is so delightful, so valuable, and therefore so much to be desired?

Let not the credulous golfer be too much shocked if, using the idiom of Mrs. Betsy Prigg, we boldly proclaim our conviction that "*there ain't no sich thing!*" No, gentle golfer, your wrists in the best-

delivered stroke, and even in the worst, do not snap at all; and a good thing for you and all of us that it is so. Your sinewy forearms, your flexible wrists, and your sensitive guiding hands may turn indeed, and turn they ought to, but your wrists, fortunately, do not snap. What, then, is the true meaning of the expression that is so current?—for we must not be mysterious in trying to remove mystery. The truth is, we humbly submit, that the expression is chiefly rhetorical—who would have suspected it of such practical folk as golfers?—of the kind called metonymous. The snap, after all, is merely a clean and clear and perfect impact between club and ball—a sweet, unscuffed, untopped, unfoozled stroke, delivered after a certain manner to be described. It is that single momentary click which every golfer recognizes at once, no matter how rarely he may make it, but it is certainly not any audible or even perceptibly independent movement of his serviceable wrists. The snap of the wrists, then, is largely a figure of speech. The writer experienced a world of relief when, after much zealous experimentation in endeavoring to acquire the undefinable but so effective snap, after much reproachful inspection of his unoffending and —happily—unsnapped wrists, he hit upon the explanation of the trick that golfing rhetoricians had played him. Just as at school he has learned that, e. g., "*Lorenzo drank the fatal cup,*" was a correct and vivid way of indicating that Lorenzo had imbibed certain deleterious liquids, while presumably leaving intact the vessel con-

taining the same, so our graphic golfers by the snap of the wrists refer to a happy snap of club on ball, the wrists all the while remaining unfractured.

Now, it is no part of our purpose to quarrel with the current coin of golfing speech, much less to supplant it with anything from our own mint. We are quite willing to accept the "snap of the wrists," delightful as it is, as a very convenient and picturesque expression, but we insist on the importance of understanding its highly figurative form, and that, in truth, it comprises the two following primary factors, which, it must not be forgotten, are simultaneously operated. First, then, there is the ball cleanly struck, or rather swept away. The importance of this is obvious. There is no delightful snap when balls are scuffed or topped. We are tempted here to digress into a discussion about tees. What, for instance, is the proper height at which to tee a ball? A mere pinch of sand, says most "pros." But most "pros." have the happy faculty of detecting slight but important inequalities on the teeing-ground that the tyro never perceives; and the pinch of sand is, by your "pro.," artfully deposited to augment a natural tee invisible to the ordinary eye. The untutored golfer, it is true, is woefully prone to tee his ball upon enormous pyramids, which he constructs with great facility and much to his own approval, but in so far as he feels that he must avoid friction with terra firma at the critical point of contact, his instinct is sound. The power of rapidly surveying a teeing-ground and selecting the proper spot for action is not the least of a golfer's desirable accomplishments.

The second factor is that turning and action of hand and forearm which, reversed in the downward swing, produce the maximum of speed and power of which the performer is capable. As the entire forearm, including of course the wrist, is brought into play, we prefer to lay the emphasis upon it. It would therefore be more accurate to talk of the snap of the forearm than the snap of the wrists. The important thing to accomplish, however, is a rhythmical turning of hands, wrists, and forearms, in smooth and free and energetic conjunction with the rest of one's anatomy; the thing to avoid is all semblance of a rigid baseball drawback. Let us put it in another way. As one addresses the ball, the thumbs and *radii* of the forearms are uppermost, of course. In a stiff drawback they retain that position more or less. But if a free turning of the forearms, concluding with a certain bending of them over the right shoulder, has been accomplished, the thumbs and *radii* will be found undermost, and the *ulnæ* or under parts of forearms uppermost. Now, then, as the club comes down the turning is reversed, and here is where the snap should come off. If properly done, the turning continues till the end of the follow-through, when the *ulnæ* are again uppermost; over the left shoulder this time.

Finally, if the club is grasped with knuckles very much under, the wrists, hands, and forearms will be seen to be *already turned*. Consequently there will be a minimum of momentum, and a proportionate loss in power and speed. In other words, there will be no delightful snap of the wrists.