

THE ART OF GOLF

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ANNOTATED BY THE HON. MR. RECORDER WEIR.

PART II.

CHAPTER V.

OF CADDIES.

Caddies are persons employed to carry golfers' clubs. Some people call them 'caudies,' others try to do without them; but experience teaches that a bad one is better than none.

On the older greens, where carrying is established as a free trade, there is a very miscellaneous selection of caddies—boys, ragamuffins just out of prison, workmen out of a job, and professional carriers. All but the last ought to be avoided.

A good boy to carry is not a bad thing in its way. From him too much must not be expected. If the tees he makes are not over two inches in diameter, if each time a club is required he is not further than three minutes' walk from his master, if he knows the names of the clubs, he is a good boy. But on free greens, where there are professionals, the boys do not come up to this standard. They are, however, cheaper than professionals. The workman out of a job is not cheaper, besides being more inefficient than a boy.

From men who have adopted carrying as a trade, the golfer is entitled to expect the highest standard of efficiency. If he carries for you regularly, the professional ought to

know what club you intend to take, and to give it without being asked. When you are in doubt about how to play your shot, he ought to confirm you in the opinion you have formed regarding it. He must never show the just contempt he has for your game.

Carrying clubs is one of the most agreeable trades open to the lower orders. In it an amount of drunkenness is tolerated which in any other would land the men in the workhouse. A very low standard of efficiency and very little work will secure a man a decent livelihood. If he is civil, willing to carry for three or four hours a day, and not apt to drink to excess before his work is done, he will earn a fair wage, and yet be able to lie abed till nine in the morning like a lord. If he does not drink (this is a hard condition, as he has little else to do), he is positively well-off; if he makes balls, and can play a good game himself, he may become rich. A caddy who, in addition, employs his leisure (of which there will still remain a great deal) in acquiring the elements of an education, may rise to be a green-keeper or a club-master, and after his death be better known to fame than many a defunct statesman or orator.

As a rule, however, the professional

caddy is a contented being, spending what he gets as soon as he gets it, a Conservative in politics, a heathen in religion. He is a Conservative because he likes and admires gentlemen, who, according to his idea, are the class which plays golf and overpays him. He is a heathen, churches being to his mind as sacred to gentlemen as clubs.

A caddy's occupation being connected with a sport, he hates anything which would tend to make it a steady, regular wage-earning business. Accordingly badges, tariffs, and benefit societies he abominates. Clubs or eating-houses got up for his advantage he will have nothing to do with, if conditioned with the payment of a periodical sum, however small. A coffee-house erected for him unconditionally is well enough. It can do no more harm than the gift of a suit of old clothes too ragged to wear. A caddy is always grateful for, and solicitous of, suits of old tweeds. If you offer him a frock-coat, he suspects you of quizzing. The sumptuary laws in his set make the wearing of frock-coats or knickerbockers impossible. Nor is a gift of shirts appreciated by caddies. Our shirts are too light in color for their fashion of wearing one till it is only fit to send to the papermaker.

On free greens the question of paying caddies is a troublesome one. There is usually an understood tariff. But as ragged children, miners out of work, discharged coachmen and butlers, drunkards who have spent their all, and ex-criminals are entitled to be paid on this scale for very inferior work, the professional carriers naturally expect more. What this more ought to be no man knows. It is useless to ask a friend what he pays, for

he will not tell the truth. He will understate the amount. He dare not admit to having overpaid his caddy. Since John Stuart Mill and others made the law of supply and demand popular, the morality of stinginess, except where your name is to appear in a subscription list, has been fully admitted. Therefore to pay a caddy as much as will be accepted without grumbling, and to announce it, will lead you into an argument. Here is a specimen of the kind of thing I myself have gone through:—

'How much did you give your caddy?'

(Rather ashamed) 'Four shillings' (having given five).

'What nonsense! Three shillings are more than enough.'

'Perhaps' (rather mildly, but feeling right).

'Just spoiling the market. Three shillings for three hours' work!—more than any skilled workman can earn. Besides, it does no good—they just spend it.'

I submit, but alone in the evening I have it out with my hard-headed friend. I say:—

'Sir, when you accuse me of spoiling the market you are merely degrading free-trade principles to the position of handmaids of your selfish avarice. Free trade can live alongside of charity. If not, I go for charity. You seem to have heard of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, but not of his treatise on the *Moral Sentiments*. You have evidently read neither; or, if you will argue on the selfish principle, it is politic to overpay caddies. Cheapening golf is debasing golf. I wish it were compulsory to pay a sovereign a round. These school-boys and mechanics, and pot-hat golfers with a club and

either be more than humanly firm, or else be diplomatic, asserting, for instance, that he has a sprained wrist and does not intend to play, or before he has got to his lodgings he will find himself the thrall of perhaps the same being who poisoned his last visit. It might seem that the simplest course was to employ a boy so small that the weakest of men could dismiss him if unsatisfactory. But somehow there are none such at St. Andrews. There are carrying persons with the outward semblance of boys, but these chew, smoke, and drink. It seems as if education or something bridged the space between childhood and manhood.

Should the player escape to his lodgings unpledged, his best plan is to get down to the club as unobtrusively as possible, and make a selection from the window with an opera-glass. A caddy once engaged, most men make the best of him. Should he disappear for a day or two, having gone on the spree, you are not necessarily free from him. You have probably furnished the means for the debauch by paying some days' wages in advance, and it seems hard to sacrifice the money entirely, more especially as the miscreant will return humble and apologetic. Yet it is not so difficult as it seems, even for a man of average will, to dismiss a caddy who is not to his taste. The best plan is to pay him at the end of the day, and say nothing about it, making some

excuse for taking your set into the club-house, instead of leaving them in his charge. Next day you take on a fresh caddy by simply handing the clubs to him, and it is astonishing how little demur the old one will make. Caddies are a race as proud as they are improvident, and, however sycophantic under ordinary circumstances, they will take no other revenge for this insulting sort of dismissal than to assert that they left because underpaid, and because it is too wearisome to carry for such a bad golfer.

To summarize my advice in regard to caddies on greens to which the golfer is a temporary visitor, I advise him, where there is a corps of badged and licensed caddies, to choose the smallest boy who seems capable of getting round, and to keep him, if he stands still during play, and is generally within earshot when a club is required. It is necessary that he should not leave the ball in the hole, nor lose clubs on the way round. On free greens, persons having the outward semblance of boys are to be avoided, and a professional chosen if a good one be known to the player. If, however, he is a complete stranger to the green, his safest course is to select a decrepit old man. His age proves him not to be an inconveniently excessive drinker, while being steady and still a carrier of clubs further proves that he is a meek, mild, mindless creature, who will trudge round without interfering.

(To be continued.)

