

THE ART OF GOLF

By Sir Walter Simpson, Bart.

ANNOTATED BY THE HON. MR. RECORDER WEIR.

PART II.

CHAPTER VI.

OF PLAYING THROUGH THE GREEN.

AFTER an accurate tee shot, the second has usually (a grumbler would say, sometimes) to be played from a light lie on soft sward, and is but a repetition of the first. Some people, however, maintain that you should hit as hard as possible from the tee, and take it easy through the green. The wisdom of this is doubtful. It seems to me to be better to hit boldly and with a will in both cases. To attempt to strike harder than hard is, for most men, to top, whilst softer than hard causes a heel or a draw. What club should be used through the green—driver, brassy, or spoon—may be left to individual sentiment. It is common to hear it said, "I cannot use my play club through the green." The answer to such nonsense is, "Learn, then." But if a man says, "I prefer my brassy," then brassy let it be. He is probably the owner of one which happens to suit him well. It is very likely that, in six months, the favorite will be broken, three or four rejected copies will be lying in his box, a pet driver reigning in their stead. Between a driver and a brassy, or a long spoon, the difference is practically fanciful. It is another matter if a short spoon or a cleek is constantly used for full shots from clean lies. You may be sure you have to do with

a poor player if he cannot use the proper club, and does not try to learn.

But, alas! the ball does not always lie well. Then brassy, cleek, iron, and niblick sprawl themselves fanshaped, derisively, before the mental vision, with a mark of interrogation after each. On the border-land, between good and bad lies, is the hanging ball. One of these with a face a yard or two in front of it, is a bad ball, which can only either be dunched along the ground a short distance with a brassy, or popped equally far with an iron. When there is no face in front, a hanging ball ought to go as far or further than another. Why it baffles many golfers is that they try to raise it instead of playing it downhill, leaving nature to raise it. A caddy will say, "Turn in the face." This is good advice if taken to mean that the club is to lie naturally towards the slope it is to drive down. If it is placed hopelessly, in accordance with the general lie of the green, a shot similar to what results from turning up the face when the lie is normal must follow. A good general maxim for a bad lie is, when in doubt between two clubs, take the meaner. The violent do not take the hole by force. It is the patient who are rewarded. With a bad lie there is more need than ever of a firm grip and an exact aim. These are the means by which the ball can be forced. A violent swing and a terrific blow may

force a clean ball; but a cupped one derides such treatment. There are bad lies and bad lies. Even a thick tuft of legitimate grass is not so bad as it looks. It will scarcely do more than leave a green mark on the club face. But these little sandy patches, half-bred between a bunker and a putting-green, are treacherous indeed. One little teaspoonful of sand taken with the ball, and your adversary gains half a shot. Beware of a cup, however small. If you expect to demolish it by means of a little extra powder, you are mistaken. If the higher side of this innocent little inch of slope is in front of you, the chances of a clean drive are very small—much less than if there is only a lump behind. A careful aim will slip you in between the latter and the ball. Clean balls, lying to you or from you ever so little, must be allowed for, if you are to go straight. These are very deceptive. Sometimes the declivity is not even noticed, and something else is blamed when we fly away off the line. The worst of bad lies are caused by a few sparse shoots of long, wiry grass. I do not know the botanical name of that diabolical stuff; most likely it is christened in a way which it would be impolite to write. These grasses, like cholera, are more virulent in autumn. I say, beware of a few of them. If there are many, the bad lie is self-evident, and we humbly take a niblick. But a few are just as fatal. They whip themselves round the shaft and arrest its progress, like the toasted cheese which clings to your feet in a nightmare, when you are within a hundred yards of the city of refuge, and the avenger at your heels. But bad lies have their bright side. Sometimes, by taking thought, one makes a shot, even with a niblick, which rejoices and surprises. They, moreover, make one

grateful for a clean-lying ball. Best of all, the adversary may be the unfortunate. There are few more restful, hopeful, happy moments at golf than those in which he is hesitating about which club to use, cursing his luck, consulting his caddy, changing his stand. It is better even than to see him in a bunker or up against a fence. You know that it is any odds to one that he will take the wrong club, and that the loss of the hole will be due to his own fault. Up against a fence, one's joy is tempered by an uncomfortable feeling that Providence is interfering too much.

CHAPTER VII.

OF BUNKER PLAY.

BEFORE leaving that part of the game in which sending the ball as far as possible is desirable, it is necessary to consider for a moment a very painful subject—Bunker Play.

The mere appearance of a niblick suggests doubts and fear. Other clubs are graceful, smiling, elegant things. The niblick is an angry-looking little cad, coarse, bullet-headed, underbred. Its face looks up as if to say, "I will raise the ball into the air." Its smile is treacherous. It does fulfil its promise sometimes; but just as often it smothers its laughter in the sand, leaving you and the ball nonplussed.

No one is ever proud of his bunker play. Some men of strong shoulders are more successful with the niblick than others; but they do not glory in their strength. There are men who give up the hole when they find themselves in sand, preferring to pretend that they seldom get into any to more substantial advantages. So little is force exerted in a bunker regarded, that men who act thus are not credited with weak physique.

There is at the best little pleasure in niblick play. When you are compelled to ask for that implement, it is under a sense of humiliation at having put yourself into sand. Even if you get out, you are an unprofitable servant, not quite so far on with your work in two shots as you ought to have been in one. Perhaps the feeling nearest akin to pleasure derivable from a niblick shot is a partner's sense of relief when you get the ball out. This the player does not share. With the hopefulness inherent in the true golfer, he expected to succeed. Besides, the twenty yards or so the ball has travelled seem a small result, considering the extent to which his withers are wrung.

If there is small joy to be got from bunker play there may be great sorrow. The ball may not be got out in one shot. Indeed, after six it may be worse in than at first. This may entail nothing more than the giving up of the hole. But supposing your adversary to have played two or three more before you got in, how sickening! In medal play or a stroke match, in which you have backed your score against others, can anything be more awful than to feel a sovereign vanishing at each blow? It is a providential arrangement that a niblick is so coarse an implement. If it were a club that could scarcely be replaced, men would often add shame to woe by breaking it. But a shaft which can infallibly be replaced for a few shillings is useless as a safety-valve. On the other hand, a niblick is a formidable weapon of offense, and I have seen the life of an adversary, who counted the oft-repeated shots aloud, in serious danger.

It is worthy of observation that bad players are *ceteris* (i.e., muscles) *paribus* as effective in a bunker as the best. This is because nobody has any theory about his swing or his stand, or this

or that, when addressing himself to a common, ordinary bunkered ball. Every one simply thuds at it. Men who, on the green, must needs shuffle, bob, and writhe, each in their own manner, as much as if coming into the presence of the Llama of Tibet, the ball waiting for them as calm and stolid as he, will hit freely and naturally with the niblick. Another reason why one man is as good from an ordinary sand cup as another, is that the ball is best dislodged by a jerk. A lot of sand must be forced away with the ball, so that it is really a heavy object for the nonce. As we have seen, it is because it is not always so—because it is so light—because hard thudding will smother it—that skill in driving is an art, and not a mere question of strength.

Most bunkered balls, then, are best dislodged by a good coarse jerk. It is usual to take a full swing with a niblick; but my own opinion is that a half one is more effective, particularly if you use a light club. Whether a heavy or a light one should be carried may be left to individual fancy. The weight of the former makes up for any loss of applicable force.

Sometimes a bunkered ball presents peculiarities which make it inadvisable to apply the common thud. If there is a high face to loft, or if there is a mound of sand close in front of the ball, the shot to be described at page 153 ? is advisable. That miniature face in front is particularly apt to cause disappointment. If there is one behind as well, the player grasps at once the horror of the situation, but not if all is clear in that direction. Yet if the ball be struck in the ordinary way, when there is a face only in front, it is as unlikely to be treated successfully as when entirely surrounded. A mound behind, with flat sand in front,

is not nearly so serious. By getting in front, and chopping down close to the ball, or simply by driving mound and ball together, satisfactory results may be expected. The above shot is also the only one that will do in a hard, deep, clay-bottomed bunker. If there is no face to get up, it is different. The ball lies then as well as if on the green, except (and it is a considerable exception) that the club cannot be placed behind it. Be cautious with a tee'd ball in a shallow sand bunker, however. It is very nearly a mad thing to take a wooden club. Even a cleek or an iron must be selected with much solemnity. But if there is a face to rise over!

CHAPTER VIII. OF APPROACHING.

WHEN the player's ball is within less than a driver shot of the hole, approaching commences, and new qualities—the sense of weight, how to weigh it, appreciation of distance, etc.—are called into requisition. The least amount of difference between driving and approaching exists when the distance is still so great that a full shot from a cleek or an iron is advisable. Some players find it easier to drive with wood than with iron; but this is not because the latter should be wielded in a different way. The difficulty is either sentimental, or due to some false attitude of mind. A feeling that an iron club will sink into the ground, or the opposite view, that it is more capable of cutting through it, may incline a man on the one hand to top, on the other to puff the ball. A man's iron shots may go too high because he lays the club unnaturally back, or because, looking upon it as more powerful than a wooden club, he, intending to hit

harder, swings too quickly, therefore too straight up and down, therefore lofts too high. These results are not due to the clubs, but to the player's treatment of them. There is one real difference, however, between wood and iron. A golfer who is inclined to cut the ball will find his tendency to swerve to the left greater with the latter, probably because of the more polished face. Long driving with iron clubs is the result of clean hitting, as with wood, except sometimes in the case of beginners, many of whom congratulate themselves on what should be a cause of regret and a hint that something is wrong—namely, that they drive as far with a cleek as with a play club. This something is the possibility of treating the ball as a heavy object with a cleek, and so treating it effectively. A jerk with iron endows it with something of the elasticity of wood. But a jerker can never reach a first-class standard of steadiness. This will dawn on the beginner as he improves, and his jerks will be reserved for cupped balls.

The nomenclature of true approach shots—those requiring less than a full swing—is somewhat indefinite. Half, three-quarter, quarter, wrist shot, etc., mean each something to players who employ the terms, but they have no generally recognized manner nor status. It cannot be laid down that if a full shot goes a hundred yards, a quarter shot goes twenty-five, etc. Nor is there even an approximate law regarding the number of inches the club ought to be drawn back in order to propel the ball an equivalent distance in yards. All that can be done is to give a few general hints as to how to do it, and how not to do it. The sense of weight must be exercised and cultivated by each player for himself.

(To be continued.)