

THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

By Mr. Recorder Weir

ALTHOUGH no golfer is likely to deny the truth of the oracular dictum that "it takes a heid to play gowf," there are not a few who are inclined to scoff at attempts at analysis and theory on the part of those to whom golf does not come by nature. "Bother theories," says young Swiper, as he steps to the teeing-ground and sends a screamer two hundred yards away. "I never worry myself about my grip, or stance, or swing, but just let drive." Happy youth! Whom the gods love, learn their golf young. Those mortals less favored by supernal powers, however, can only hope to attain mastery by application of the necessary "heid." And notwithstanding young Swiper's present contempt of rules or science, it is probably but a question of time when he too will more or less consciously frame for himself a list of commandments and prohibitions upon the due observance of which he will rely to secure immunity from punishment. Besides, are not many, if not all, of our leading golfers theorists and analysts? Not to mention Sir Walter Simpson, Horace G. Hutchinson, Harold Hilton, Walter J. Travis, and other eminent amateurs who have put themselves in print, we venture the assertion that not a golfer of note but has his private code, which he fails not to consult when in doubt, whilst among the pros Willie Park, J. H. Taylor, Harry Vardon, and a score of others have given most lucid and particular explanations of the why and wherefore of their game. *Golferarius nascitur non fit* is a maxim heretical and mischievous. Now the intelligent golfer has not been in the enjoyment of his happi-

ness many moons before he discovers that golf naturally divides itself into two parts—the Long Game and the Short Game. The failure to recognize this simple distinction explains the many woes and grievous that afflict his less discerning companions. To some so-called golfers all strokes and all lies (of balls) are alike, and as a consequence calamities often visit them. It may be that not seldom they acquit themselves creditably from the tee, and even a good second with brasseys or cleeks may succeed the exhilarating grand stroke. But the third is the critical one. It is here that the well-meaning but unlearned golfer applying a but slightly modified drive or cleek stroke so often comes to grief. Less frequently it happens that a golfer, often a performer of some skill, is positively clever at the short game, but wofully weak from the tee. But at whatever end the weakness lies, it is, we repeat, essential to recognize early that the long game differs radically from the short one, if the task of attaining proficiency is to be abridged. Let us note, then, that the long game calls for power; the short, for delicacy. In the long game distance is the desideratum; in the short game it is accuracy. In the former the margin for aberration of flight is usually liberal; in the latter it is invariably small. In the one the strokes may be delivered with almost unrestrained speed and vigor; in the other, power and distance must be cautiously measured. A very beautiful *diminuendo* may be observed in the degree of strength which young Swiper employs in the five strokes which he usually takes to negotiate the

Long Hole at Bunkerville. First, there is his mighty swish and clean impact from the tee, in which every available pound of the powers of his lithe body participates. The second stroke is almost a repetition of the first in its freedom, dash, and *élan*. But at the third stroke young Swiper well knows that he has something else to do than sweep his ball grandly and indifferently forward. He must now pitch it so that it will rest upon the circumscribed area of the putting-green, avoiding the hazards between and beyond. Accordingly, note how carefully, if rapidly, he measures the distance with keen eye; and nicely estimating the requisite power, to the fraction of an ounce, sensitively poises and delivers the stroke, no longer full and unrestrained, but accurately calculated, and lo, the ball lies on the green. With ever-diminishing force and ever-increasing delicacy, not unlike a *rallentando* in music, he gently plays four and five, and the hole is won.

Now, without attempting to work out the details of these two parts of the golfer's art (for are they not all written in the Book of Badminton and other chronicles of golf?), let us refer to the prime importance of an economical use of power to secure the maximum of distance in the long game. Many pounds of power, representing many yards in distance, are wasted by industrious golfers who persist in baffing and scuffling terra firma behind or immediately under the ball. The fear of topping usually begets this fault. Strive, therefore, to hit or sweep the ball clean, say we.

It often happens that in his graceful rehearsals upon the fair green, without ball, the quadragenarian is able to make his downward sweep exactly tangent thereto, which is what perfect form demands, but the sight of the ball some-

how unnerves, even blinds him, and to the mingled pity and amusement of young Swiper standing by, he ploughs the sod that he should barely have touched. Here, then, is a suggestion for that grievous malady scufflingness, or, more grievous still, baffiness, by which so much good force is wasted. Resolutely repeat upon the tee, O quadragenarian, those admirable performances of yours upon the adjacent turf when the ball was not there! Even risk topping in your efforts to hit clean, and it is odds if arms and shoulders are working smoothly, especially the shoulders, you'll not top, thus adding fifteen or twenty yards to your long game.

One remark upon the short game. After you have mastered the mysteries of running and pitching the fickle sphere as explained by many precepts in the books, remember constantly that you have always to reckon with mother-earth. The good golfer is something of a good geographer. He takes count of how the land lies, of its slopes and curves. He notes, too, the quality of the turf, and how its consistency sometimes differs from one hole to another. He therefore takes *cum grano salis* such empirical maxims as, Always play your approaches to the left of the hole. It depends, he says, upon the lie and quality of the green. Young Swiper seems to know these things intuitively, for, going to the Elm Hole in Bunkerville aforesaid, where the turf is soft and velvety, he pitches his deadly approaches, while at the next hole, where it is thinner and harder, he runs them up.

And yet if you ask him which method he prefers, and why he uses one and then the other, he says he doesn't know! It is fortunate indeed, for some of us, that golfers are made as well as born.