

Driving ~
Approaching
~ Putting



EDWARD RAY

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**DRIVING, APPROACHING,
PUTTING**

DRIVING APPROACHING PUTTING

BY
EDWARD RAY

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DRIVING, APPROACHING, PUTTING

CHAPTER I

IRON PLAY

TO many, iron play is one of the most attractive features of golf, and in commencing a chapter on this theme I would advocate a fairly open position for the feet, a stance rather closer to the ball than when employing wooden clubs, something short of a full swing, a firm grip, an avoidance of too much looseness of the legs, not too much force, and keeping in mind that more important than distance is straightness. The iron shot demands an open position of the feet, and the arms must not be allowed to drift too far away from the body. Again, if the feet are allowed to go "all over the shop," or are kept too closely together, the balance is affected adversely, and inevitably the swing will not be correct, for the simple reason that it cannot be correct. Whatever weight the golfer has should be divided equally between the two feet in iron play, and in this department of the game I am convinced that steadiness on the feet is something to be aimed at in the novitiate stage and achieved in later days. Perhaps it is that in mentioning steadiness on the feet at a given stroke

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in golf I am courting criticism, for no one in the professional ranks has been more good naturedly jibed at than myself concerning the feet when playing, say, the tee shot, and, in fact, one gentleman remarked to me recently that had I not taken up golf as a profession, my footwork would have assured me of success as a pugilist.

When I say that a firm grip should be taken of the iron club, I do not for a moment mean to convey that the club should be grasped much in a style as if the player were afraid that the total membership of his club were going to come out on the course *en masse* and endeavour to wrest it from him, but at the same time I would point out that loose gripping in iron play is an unpardonable sin, and one which will bring about the disaster for which it silently asks. Remember that when the head of the iron club comes in contact with the ground, which is one of its functions, it will do so with such force as to necessitate a good and healthy grip, and if that said good and healthy grip be non-existent, then so will the good points in your stroke.

I have already said that something short of a full swing is requisite for the playing of the iron shot, and if I were asked specifically to say the exact nature and dimensions of the swing which I have found most profitable in iron club play, I would say just about the three-quarter swing. A full swing in this case will certainly gain height, but one thing it will not obtain to any normal extent is distance. An item to be kept in mind in this matter is that in playing the iron there is little or no latitude for error, for the reason that the iron shot is useful in getting up to

the green, but what is of no use to you is the arrival of your ball in a yawning bunker.

Whilst it is erroneous to press when using the iron club, it is advisable to let the club go well through without too much hindrance and check, as checking will have the effect of shortening your distance. In the up-swing the right leg should be steady, while the left ought to move inwards a trifle. In the down-swing I generally contrive to make the club head meet the ball just before the club has reached its lowest point, so that the effect is that the club, more or less, swoops down on the ball, though, at the same time, I always endeavour to get a certain amount of pith into the stroke. Once the ball has flown away from the iron, the left leg should bear your weight.

If you are confronted by a bunker, there is no necessity to make your ball, in a measure, emulate an aeroplane, and here I would suggest taking the stance rather in front of the ball, or by a more acute swing.

TEE SHOTS WITH IRON CLUBS

Occasionally an iron club will be found useful in the playing of the tee shot, and personally I believe in the use of a very small sand tee, even when playing an iron club, in such a position on inland courses, though such a proceeding is not so valuable at the seaside, if for no other reason than that a teeing ground on an inland course does not stand the same amount of abrasion as will the teeing ground on a seaside course. At the same time you can get the ball away in a more clean manner from a sand tee than you can without a tee, and naturally you will get a greater degree of accuracy.

CHAPTER II

APPROACH PLAY

NO need for me to stir up the old controversy as to the respective merits of the pitch shot and the run up, but it will suffice if I at once say that out and out I am for the pitch. My old friend J. H. Taylor, many years ago, brought this stroke to a point as near to perfection as I am sure it ever will be, and something close upon thirty years ago he proved when he was the first English professional to win the Open Championship, that there was more than a little to be said for the pitch up to the green. Probably one of the finest efforts I ever saw on the golf course in the way of a pitch was at Roehampton, in the closing stages of a professional tournament in 1921, which was won by Taylor. His ball lay in a sand bunker only a matter of feet from the pin, and it may safely be said that that was the most important moment throughout the tournament. The majority of the lookers-on were in a quandary as to how Taylor was going to play the stroke, but, to the consternation of those who watched, he thrashed his club head into the sand quite four inches behind the ball, which he proceeded to lay within two inches of the hole. Of course, there was no question of a run up there, but it went to prove how successfully Taylor had studied the intricacies of a stroke from within short distance of the flag. Had J. H. Taylor not given the most

careful attention to his approach play for years and years, he would never thought of playing such a stroke as I have just described. Therefore, I say that at least one of the most valuable items in golf is the essay from within a short distance of the pin.

Incidentally, the pitch to the green is one of the most perplexing of all the strokes in golf from the point of view of the beginner, and, if only for that reason, I would recommend the golfing student to give it most constant and thorough attention. It is not so much the success of a well played approach that I have in mind, but rather the fiendish consequences which follow a faultily played pitch.

CHAPTER III

THE MASHIE

IN employing the mashie, a firm grip again is essential, for, as in the case of other iron clubs, it will strike the ground with a violence which may well cause it to twist in the hands. As for the feet they may be a little more apart than is usual, while the left foot should be about fifteen inches in advance of the right, and the weight of the body on the right foot more than on the left. There should be a slight bending of the knees, and the blade of the club should be turned out a little, so that, as it comes in contact with the ball, it cuts across it. All the time the right elbow should be kept fairly well into the side so as to avoid pushing the club out.

Neglect to ease the left knee in taking the club back may bring about a terrible error in direction, as the club cannot be brought across the front of the body, the left elbow flying out. As a matter of fact, one of the most important things in the playing of the mashie is this bending of the left knee.

In the event of an exceptionally short stroke being requisite, the necessity to move the knees or to raise the left heel is not incumbent, and one item of advice which I would proffer, is to observe the stationary element so far as both heels may be concerned. I know well that the idea of both feet well implanted on the ground may raise a laugh here and there, but

the problem of immovable feet is an essential one, and, I might remark, so is the advice of stillness of the head. I am quite aware of the number of players who will insist on a shuffle of the feet, and who find the temptation to let the head follow the club, but to all the myriads who will indulge in this weakness I can commend no more golden rule than to watch an expert such as J. H. Taylor in the execution of this stroke. As a matter of fact, when it comes to approach play there is no weakness which can be indulged in with such disastrous effects. A movement of the head is a huge temptation, and one which apparently cannot be denied the beginner. Lifting the head seems to be utterly imperative in the case of many golfers, and yet I would call attention to the play, not of J. H. Taylor this time, but to that of Mr. Thomas D. Armour, who beat Cyril J. H. Tolley in the final of the Amateur Championship of France in 1920. Whilst on this topic, I would particularly point out that Mr. Armour, despite his lack of success in the post-war period, 1919-1920, appealed to me as being one of the finest exponents of the "still head" theory whom I have seen. One item on which I am in entire agreement with J. H. Taylor is the theory of stillness of the head, and, what is more important, stillness of the gaze. Let the ball go, but at the same time let your gaze be rivetted on the spot which the ball occupied for as much time as you may consider necessary—and do not fear of compelling your gaze to remain rooted for too long. It is obvious that once you have propelled the ball no amount of following the sphere with your optics will guide it towards the destination which you

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desired, and the more concentration you can place upon the ball before you strike it the more likely are you to get to the point which you aim at.

I can conceive of no better exemplification of this idea than the case of the small boy throwing a ball into mid-air and catching it in his hand. He does not direct the pupils of his eyes upon the direction which his hands may or may not take ; rather does he watch the india-rubber ball, which gives him so much amusement and interest. Surely, therefore, the same theory must apply in the case of the golfer who, in a much more advanced way, seeks to indulge in accuracy of direction of a ball. Remember, that the said small boy has made up his mind upon truth of propulsion of the ball, and also remember that, in comparison with the direction of the golf ball, your problems are tenfold. Likewise, keep in mind that the same small boy in a short distance has allowed himself a margin of error extending to mere fractions of an inch, and also do not forget that in the golf stroke you are going to discover that an error of a fraction of an inch in a stroke is going to mean not a fraction of an inch when the shot has been completed, but a fraction of a mile.

In 1921 I had the opportunity of witnessing a number of golfing feats by J. H. Kirkwood, holder of the Australian and New Zealand Open Championships, at the London Country Club, Hendon, and among those who witnessed performances which appealed to the average spectator as being concomitants of wizardry was my old friend James B. Batley. Almost as great a believer in the steadfast gaze as Taylor himself, has been for years, Batley

and we had to confess a certain amount of astonishment at one trick which Kirkwood performed. It consisted of his laying seven balls in a direct line. I admit that the Antipodean juggling-golfer rather brought the face of his club across each ball as he struck it, but he never removed his gaze from the teeing ground of each ball. He kept his eye firmly fixed on the ground and did not lift his head once. Yet with a polo post as his avowed object from a distance of about one hundred and fifty yards, he got tolerably near to his target on many occasions, and once actually hit the top of the post which he had voluntarily said was his aiming point. Perhaps Kirkwood rather bordered on the trick shot which would have been more in keeping with happenings on a music-hall stage; but one incontrovertible point has to be kept in mind, and that is that he kept his dark blue eyes in a position which focussed the resting place of each ball, and never once did he raise his gaze from the ground. I myself tried the stroke, or rather the series of strokes, and I am bound to admit that before I had got half way through the problem which had been set me, I was at a loss. I also admit that I was using Kirkwood's clubs, which contain more whippiness than the ordinary first class golfer is used to, and even if I beat him in one or two trick shots, there is this to his credit, that he proved that by keeping the eye focussed in a downward direction, and not letting it go shiftily to his left, the ball could be hit truly and in as straight a direction as the average golfer could wish to get. Furthermore, in his exhibition of playing a right-handed iron with his left hand, and

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so hitting the ball a goodly distance and with goodly direction, he proved one thing, if nothing else, and that was the theory of keeping the eye on the ball.

One trick which he showed to us at Hendon was his ability to use a niblick with a tremendous backspin effect, and he showed that the feats with which he had been credited in Chicago were much more than empty talk. The secret of his success in this department lay in the fact that he got the focus of his sight imprisoned in a narrow grove, and he kept it within those limits—and to such an extent that by stretching his hand out he was able to grasp the ball as it descended from the air. It may seem that I have dealt at undue length with Kirkwood's achievements, but I quote them not so much as a contradiction to the incredulity with which the reports of them were received in this country, as a proof that one great secret in golf is the keeping of the eye on the ball. It has been asserted that of late years there has been a fetish among certain of we professional golfers in the matter of keeping the eye on the ball, but when all is said and done, from whatever point of view the thorough golfer may look at the matter, a strong gaze and a long gaze at the ball when it is stationary is not unprofitable, and, moreover, the longer you can gaze at the place that the ball occupied after its contact with your club in approach play, the better for the progress of your game. I hold no brief for J. H. Kirkwood or J. H. Taylor, but in either of the cases of these two men one does find a startling example of the truth of head still and gaze still.

I well remember a caddie in the West of Scotland

who had the power of emulating the approach play of any golfer of note whom you might mention to him, and it did not require a great deal of golfing analysis to ascertain the particular individual whom he was imitating. This lad had the knack of impersonating almost anyone whom he had seen in his life in the half-iron stroke which, as is well known, even if not by my own remarks, is one of the most crucial strokes in the game.

In approach play one finds character almost more than in any other department of golf, and the mannerisms of players who hail from the north, the south, the east, and the west are much too numerous for me to mention in this book.

If anyone would desire approach play *in excelsis*, I would commend him to the play of the late James Douglas Edgar, who in 1919 and 1920 won the Canadian Open Championship, and who some years before that won the professional championship of Northumberland and Durham. Many times have I heard the question asked as to how Edgar attained so deadly a game in his approach play, and one explanation I can proffer is that in his boyhood in the North of England he aimed sometimes over and sometimes under racecourse rails. For days and weeks and months, Edgar kept on at this somewhat trying process, but he never tired, so great was his enthusiasm; and if all else be lacking in the golfing students' repertoire of experiments I can recommend no more profitable self-imposed lesson than the experimental iron shot in all its vagaries, its simplicities, and its tantalizing elements.

CHAPTER IV

FOR SCOFFING BEGINNERS

IT may seem that I am contradicting the theory previously expressed in this book that driving is one of the most important things in golf as against J. H. Taylor's theory of approach play; but my point is that among novices and long handicap players there is a tremendous tendency to waste strokes in approach play as compared with play from the tee. I have known of golfers in the novitiate period who settled themselves down to learn how to drive—a very admirable thing. Similarly I have known golfers in relatively the same position to acquire the art of putting as well as it could be acquired in a given time, but the number of cases in which I have known of beginners and moderate players wherein approach play has been studied almost from alpha to omega are by percentage very few. After all, putting does look simple, and I have in mind a famous exponent of a very ancient ball-game. He was Charles Dawson, the former billiards champion who, on looking at a game of golf on the East Coast of Scotland, was singularly struck by the apparent weakness in putting. He asked how many hours were spent per day by the particular players in practising, and, on his being informed that they worked by years and not by hours, he suggested that putting in perfection could be mastered within a

couple of months—and working four hours per day. He admitted that he would have to master the art of manipulation of the club in the first case, and that would be a more or less tedious affair. Then, he said, he would go in for a course of actually playing a ball, and he opined that in something like half a year the golfing student would be in a fit position to go on with the game of golf. Well, that is a theory, and I have heard many theories, original and otherwise, on the same score concerning driving. There have been inventions to help the long handicap man in putting, as for instance a machine which I saw some time ago, the object of which was to cultivate a correct putting swing. Similarly I have seen a contrivance which measured the golfer's drive, and, not only that, but, on reference to a map, told him how many yards, dozens of yards or, if you like, how many hundred yards he might be off the line. But never have I seen a mechanism of any kind to help the fellow who was unable to play his approach strokes to his satisfaction.

Probably the most popular fault—if a fault can be popular—among long handicap men is the idea of getting loft. There is an impression that the player governs the ultimate destiny of the ball, and without a doubt I have observed a man striving after loft drop the right shoulder as the club head came towards the ball. Indeed, I have observed the right side almost bend to a preventive extent and, of course, what has happened has been that the club has descended much too soon. The result of so doing has been a bad miss and an utter forgetfulness of the fact that the mashie is constructed in the way it is

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so that its loft will raise the ball if the swing be properly played. As in all other golfing strokes, the swing is the thing to look after. Given that the swing is correct, or approximately correct, you will not fail.

With the mashie you are required in the very first case to focus your glance on the place at which your ball may land. Of course, according to the nature of the ground, you must take into account which may or may not be the proper place for your ball to pitch. I mean to say that on a hard baked ground your ball must come in contact with terra firma a moderately decent length from the pin, whereas, if you have had a fairish quantity of rain, or the course on which you play happens to have a damp soil, you want to get much nearer to the hole than you otherwise would.

At something less than a hundred yards the player of some little experience ought to be able at any rate to get sufficient of the "dead" element on the ball to make it become stationary within a dozen yards of where it lands, and for this stroke the stance must be watched. The player ought to stand slightly behind the ball and keep his right foot advanced, the effect being that the body rather faces towards the hole. A movement outwards is advantageous to the extent that the club as it descends rather crosses the body, and when it comes in contact with the ball, does so in a rather glancing fashion. It will at once be apparent to the player that there is a crispness in the ball as it leaves the club, and there will be a twist on it which will stop its going madly beyond the far edge of the green. The left arm must not be checked, and by its being allowed to go free,

the club will go nicely through. Do not fall into the popular error of imagining that your ball will go too far. The flag is the thing to aim for, and you must aim to a point as near to the pin as can be attained.

If you find a tendency to socket you can depend upon it that in nine cases out of ten the club in its backward swing has been brought into too close a proximity to the right leg. That being so, you do not stand a sporting chance afterwards, and there is too much of the outward push to allow you to do good. You will find in a case such as I have indicated that the club head has gone away to the off-side instead of to the left, and therefore the heel of the club head finds the ball. A position involving your standing closely to the ball to an extent brings about the same effect, but in most of the cases I have seen I have been forced to the idea that socketing was brought about by a bad swing such as I have indicated.

CHAPTER V

THE PUSH SHOT

DESPITE the fact that it has been stated that there is no such thing as the push shot, I am convinced that such a shot is in existence, and if anyone wants to see the push *in excelsis* I can only recommend him to watch such a player as J. H. Taylor. Almost with every stroke one finds an element of the push in Taylor's play, if one excepts his mashie play. As a matter of fact, it is questionable if difference of opinion has raged round any other stroke so much as it has around the topic of the push. In short, I may explain that the head of the club comes into contact with the ball before the club has reached the deepest part of its swing. The arms are kept moderately rigid, and as the head of the club goes forward so does the weight of the body to an extent, the net result being that a goodly length is obtained without the ball soaring too much into the air. It may be said that the push stroke is the favourite stroke of cricketers, and I will admit that one of the finest exponents of it whom I have seen is the Hon. F. S. Jackson, the winner of the Parliamentary Handicap in 1920. Of all the amateurs I have seen I consider that Mr. Jackson plays the push shot best of all.

When I want to attain this stroke there is an element of the advanced about my stance, and my

feet are slightly closed in on the ball. My grip goes a little before the club head, and the effect of that is that at the commencement the club loft is appreciably lessened. I endeavour to get a slight rigidity into the wrists, and the elbow of my right arm I seek to keep fairly well in. A dropping of the club across the shoulder must not be tolerated on any account, and there is no getting away from the fact that the right arm, if anything, predominates in the operation of this stroke. As the club descends the body should come forward, and that is where one comes to the most essential part of the manœuvre. The club should come down with the lower part of the arms, and the wrists not containing too much flexibility, and that is the idea which brings about contact between the club head and the ball before the club head has reached its lowest point—always provided that the forward motion of the body is observed, and at the correct moment. Just at the instant when the club head strikes the ball the right wrist should operate to a very small extent, and likewise the club head should make a slight acquaintance with the turf just before it reaches the ball.

I would emphasize that the push stroke is not an essay to be undertaken by the veriest novice, for not until the player has thoroughly gone through all the intricacies of the correct swing should he make the slightest attempt to master it.

There seems to be an idea that the cleek is the one club with which one should attempt to play the push shot, but with that idea I scarcely concur. In fact, there is no logical reason why the iron, or even the

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mashie, should not be employed in playing the push shot, and I have on occasion used the mashie and the iron to get push—and I have attained it. Indeed, I am convinced that push can be got more or less with any club used by a player through the green.

CHAPTER VI

HAZARDS

JUST about the time I am writing this book, I have observed an account of how a parliamentary golfer engaged in a tournament at Harewood Downs had to play out of a motor car, as the result of a mis-directed stroke, and though I must generally confine myself to the matter of getting out of difficulties in the more orthodox hazard, I hope that as the result of what I write here the golfing student will be enabled to get out of most difficulties. It is too much to hope that each and every piece of trouble will at once be got out of by the golfer who reads this book, but what I will aim at is to give one or two hints which may prove of value in the conventional sand-bunker, or even in the problem of the hedge. On the ordinary course, as the average golfer knows it in England, if the shot out of a sand-bunker is played in the way in which it should be played, then not only should the ball be got clear of its troublous situation, but length should be got almost to the same extent as if the ball were lying on the fairway. To get nicely down to the ball is a most excellent theory, but it must be borne in mind that this idea, like many others, may very easily be overdone. Every good piece of advice may be carried to extremes, and I do not wish the student to follow my advice and then go further than I advise, in the hope that he will carry

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the improvement in his game to a point beyond that which I had in mind. No need to smash the niblick into the sand—far better to let the club meet the ball in a clean sort of way, and attain a delicacy without too high a percentage of brute force.

Now we come to the player who finds himself with tree-branches occupying the line between his ball and the green. No one with a modicum of golfing common sense thought at any time of hacking his ball through tree branches. In the very first place, it has to be remembered that the more force there is behind the ball the more risk there is of your stroke meeting ill fate in the event of its even grazing something which is in its way. Again, it is utter idleness to endeavour to get beneath tree branches unless the ball happens to be fairly near them. On the other hand, should the ball be in close proximity to the body of a tree, it will be found to be advantageous to go round the obstacle.

With other hazards such as the wall and the hedge a great number of people endeavour to overcome the difficulty by getting in the rear of the ball to an inordinate extent, and with the face of the club lying back, but that I contend brings about a position of the arms and the wrists which is entirely foreign to golfing nature. In this operation there is little or no margin left for error, and if error be committed, then the punishment is well nigh beyond measure. The correct way to play in the circumstances which I have endeavoured to conjure up before you, is to allow the club head to meet the ball before the head has reached the lowest level in its swing, and a necessary item in this little scheme is to have the

wrists rather beyond the ball just at the second when you hit it. There is thus an inclination to belittle the lofting of the club, and when I wish to increase the loft to some extent I let the toe of the club go out to a very slight distance. It may be that a little time will have to be spent in getting the stance which will avoid a tendency to slice, but time and trouble devoted to such a study will well repay the student.

If the hedge is rather near to the ball, it will be found to be advisable to try and go through its poorest parts, while if one is confronted by a wall it is well within the bounds of possibility that the wall may be used for ricochet purposes. In this connexion I have in mind the performance of Mr. "Bobby" Jones in the British Amateur Championship of 1921, at Hoylake. He had pulled so severely that his ball lay so close to a stone wall that there was not room for his body between the ball and the wall, and correspondingly there was not room for him to swing in the direction of the hole without his club fouling the wall. He straightway made up his mind that he would bang the ball against the wall, and so well did he calculate the effect that his ball rebounded from the wall and got to a position on the green within holing distance.

CHAPTER VII

THE WATER HAZARD

I CANNOT for a very long time see the small land non-floating ball going out of public favour, despite recent legislation, so that the problem of getting the ball out of the water hazard is likely to be as interesting as ever. In the first place, the water hazard is a more or less common institution on inland courses, though, as a matter of fact, one cannot say that on first class seaside courses the water hazard is absent—take, for instance, the Swilcan Burn at St. Andrews. Apropos of that hazard, I think I saw one of the finest essays that has ever been made in golf there. It was by Charles H. Mayo, in an event in 1919, which was at the time termed the unofficial Open Championship, and before Mayo went to America. Mayo's ball found the bottom of the burn, and, without the slightest hesitation, he waded into the water, pitched obliquely into the air, and down came his ball within holing distance. That was a glorious example of the heroic in golf. Many players hold that it is best to bring the club down behind the ball a matter of an inch from the sphere, which, of course, savours very much of the "explosion" stroke from a sand bunker. Still, I never could see that anything like reasonable distance could be got by playing out of a water hazard in this way. If the ball is not too much submerged it will

be found advisable to allow the club to dive into the water, say, two and a half inches from the ball, for, by that manœuvre I have always found that a part of the concussion caused by the club meeting the water reaches the ball and partially disturbs it. Obviously, by doing as I suggest, you will get a much cleaner stroke, and at the same time you will get more carry on your ball. Of course, as in many other golfing strokes, one has to keep in mind the peculiar circumstances, and if any student is so keen on the water hazard stroke as to desire to practise, it to any ordinary extent, I should advise him first of all to adorn himself in a costume resembling the sou'westers worn by the man seen in an advertisement for a certain tinned fish.

CHAPTER VIII

PLAYING IN THE WIND

WHILE on the subject of hazards, it is perhaps meet that I should deal with the troubles which perplex the golfer on a course which is wind-swept, and I must confess that there is an element of the interesting on a windy course which is absent from the course that one very often finds in the vicinity of an industrial centre. Perhaps it is that many of our best amateurs and professionals of to-day have reached their standard of excellence on account of the fact that they have trained themselves in boyhood on courses such as St. Andrews and Westward Ho. For instance, no one who has seen Braid can ever forget his long, low, and raking drive in the wind. Then, again, one cannot help but admire the beautifully delicate iron play of Taylor; each of these references rather goes to prove that the golfer who has had his early years amidst gusty surroundings is likely to prove a better exponent of the Royal and Ancient Game than is the man whose apprenticeship at golf has been served on an inland course. I know that I am risking the displeasure of thousands of men who can only get in their golf at week ends, and then only within a very short distance of such centres as London, Birmingham and Manchester, and at the same time I am fully aware that quite a number of good golfers have come from the ranks of business men, who only

get to a seaside course about once in a year. Still, one can always tell the player who has had the benefit of experience on the coast, and it must generally be admitted that there is a judgment about his play which is absent from that of his inland bred brother.

Personally, I have rather a liking for a little wind, though, at the same time, I have no great affection for such weather conditions as were revelled in by Arnaud Massy at Hoylake some years ago when he won the Open Championship.

There never was a greater mistake than that made by the people who argue that a properly struck ball is only affected by wind to a very small extent, and in strict truth when there is wind there is utterly no reason why it should not be employed to aid the golfer. Naturally the golfer must be a man with a fairly keen sense to do this, and here I would point out that I do not agree with the tactics of such players as a very well known Midland amateur, who, in all sorts of tournaments, big and little, deliberates on each tee with a handkerchief flying from his hand. It does not require a great deal of calculation to estimate the direction of the wind, and similarly the gauging of the strength of the wind should not be fraught with any undue difficulties.

Take the drive in a head wind. Naturally one must get a drive of the low and raking order, much after the fashion of Braid's famous tee shot, and here it is as well to employ a fairly low tee. Now comes the question of the employment of the body—for assuredly the body plays a large part in the proper manipulation of the drive against the wind. It is quite correct to assume that the operation rather

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resembles that in the push stroke, for here, again, the club head must come in contact with the ball before the club has reached the lowest point in its swing. Let the body go forward in such a way as to help in preventing the ball from rising unduly, and let the hands go nicely forward. Despite the fact that many golfers will jump to the conclusion that the plan which I have here advocated must result in a bad stroke, I seriously put this argument forth, and with practice it will be found that what might have been taken as being the sure road to disaster will be found to be the correct way to play against the wind from the tee.

As for the position of the feet, it is as well to have them in front of that which would ordinarily be assumed in the playing of the orthodox drive. The ball ought to be in closer relationship to the right foot, and at the same time it is as well not to be too lengthy in the back swing.

Now we come to the question of driving in a following wind, and here the obvious thing to do is to get the ball up instead of keeping it down. Another thing is that it has got to be raised fairly smartly. The body should not be allowed to operate in the downward swing, so that the club may have a decent chance to get to the ball, and, more than that, the club should have gone just a fraction past the lowest part of its swing before it touches the ball. The right leg should bear more weight than the left, and before the ball is struck it should be pretty well in a line with the left heel. The ordinary swing need not be departed from too much, and it should be kept in mind that the fuller it is the better.

Then comes the point of the cross wind. Say the

wind is blowing from left to right. You must more or less play into the wind, and at the same time employ a slight cut so that sometime after the ball has travelled from the club head it is being assisted by the wind. The left foot must not be allowed to go forward so that the necessary cut may be secured and security of stance will be found to be most beneficial in this stroke. The club face must not on any account turn out, and it will be found advantageous if it is kept in a trifle. Thus you will find that the club will descend rather across the line of flight, while the turning of the club obviates the risk of a slice. Correspondingly the swing across renders a pull impossible.

As may be imagined, the playing into a wind which is blowing from right to left is, to an extent, a reversal of the procedure I have just described. In this case one must play with a little pull, and, at that, the toe of the club may be turned out. The effect of this is that as your club descends your right hand may come over your left, and the result of that is that at the moment the club head strikes the ball the toe will come over. The club must not be allowed to come across the ball, and with that in mind I always aim to play as if for a pull. I aim to the right and with the toe turned out, and the right hand coming over causes the ball to circle in after having travelled some little way.

In playing to the green I have a preference for slicing or pulling into the wind, and here I may be compared with the zebra anent whom the question was asked as to whether he was a white horse with black stripes or whether he was a black horse with

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white stripes. But I feel bound to lay it down that in wind the drive is essentially one matter, while playing up to the green is entirely another. With the iron, the cleek, or the brassy, I endeavour to play in a side wind, if it is from the right to left, with a suspicion of cut so that when the ball is nearing the green it is to a degree reliant upon the wind for its direction. In such a stroke you cannot afford to throw away any help which the wind may give you, and, in common sense, why should you throw away physical energy when all the time nature is yearning to help you ?

The club I most favour, in playing through the green, is the cleek, and after the player has become moderately proficient at golf he will find that it is a much more simple thing to keep the ball from rising by means of the cleek than it is to do so when using a wooden club. If it is found necessary to use the brassy, and if the wind be from the left, it may be found that a pull is necessary, and in such circumstances it will be found advantageous to play slightly to the right. The feet may be kept as if for an ordinary shot, and the hand should come over about the time that the club head comes into contact with the ball. Of course, this remark is just as easily applicable to the cleek.

In case the reader may be tempted after what I have said, to take into account windage at all conceivable moments, I would point out that when playing from a distance of about a hundred yards the ball should be hit true, and if that is done in a proper manner, it will not be affected by the wind on such a short mission.

CHAPTER IX

PUTTING QUESTIONS

WHO of all golfers in the United Kingdom and elsewhere has not looked at things in the most despairing light, following failure on the putting green? And, mark you, occasional weakness in putting is not by a very long stretch of imagination confined to the average player, or long handicap man, for all golfers know that the most proficient can miss short putts. Really, this is a phase of the game which I do not suppose will ever be surmounted.

However, one argument I cannot agree with, and that is that the putter should be held much in the manner of a pendulum swinging from the wrists, and that the club should be made to move forward and backward in a straight line, with the head of the putter at right angles to the ball at all points of its motion. That I say cannot be done for the reason that the shaft is not constructed exactly at right angles to the club head, or if it is, then there is something wrong with the implement as a golf club. At any time, the hands must not be above the ball in putting, but rather nearer the body, with the shaft of the club inclined from a point corresponding to the position of the ball towards the body, and thus it is obvious that a slight curve will be present in the playing of the stroke. As a matter of fact, when the swing is a short one, the curve is almost imperceptible, though, when the player is negotiating a putt of six,

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nine, or more feet, the arc will be more evident ; and if a man tries to maintain a straight line as indicated, then he will of a surety pull the ball to the left. At the moment of the putter striking the ball, the toe of the club must be at right angles to the ball, and after the contact between the club head and the ball, the toe should to a small degree turn inwards. Perhaps it is that one does not by this method get exactly the amount of back-spin or drag, as you will, on the ball by this method as is got by exponents of other methods of putting ; but I myself like to see the ball moving along in a natural sort of way from the moment that I strike it, and I like to see that natural motion continue until the ball has reached the very lip of the hole. For one thing, you cannot depend upon it that there will not be small obstructions in the way of various growths of grass on a putting green, or even a small weed here and there, and that is just where I contend that back spin or drag in the putt is worse than useless. It is then a cause of mischief. With a forward rolling of the ball, small obstructions are not so apt to cause ill effects, though I have proved on occasions that even with forward rolling the ball may meet with something which will deflect it, but not nearly so often, or to the same extent, as in the case of drag or back spin. Granted that now and then a little drag is advisable, for instance, as when playing a downhill putt, yet the golfer will not leave himself with a downhill putt if he can possibly get an uphill one, all other things being equal.

Now, in putting, it is a pronounced weakness if the body is allowed to sway, for I have never yet

seen a man who could keep good direction if he allowed his body to heave in the act of putting. Once allow the body to move, and there is at once the deadly risk that the hands will go forward with too much speed, and here I would mention that the wrists should be allowed to do the necessary work, though an element of the rigid may be imparted to them in the case of simple, short putts. In putting, the left hand should come well through. The club should be brought forward with the right hand, the while the left acts, more or less, as a steadying influence.

As most golfers know, there is sometimes a bit of ground on the putting green to be "borrowed," that is to say, the undulation on the green may cause a man to play so much to the right or left of the hole, as the case may be. Study the line you intend to take to the hole, and study it thoroughly. Then glue your gaze on the ball, and do not allow it to come away from that ball until you have sent the ball on its mission, for in putting, as in any other department of golf, an unsteady eye on the ball is disastrous.

Despite what has been said by experts, I cannot get away from the conviction that the middle of the club head is the point which should come in contact with the ball, and, personally, I feel that something has gone wrong if the ball goes off any other point than the dead centre of the club head in putting.

Many times I have been asked questions anent the stymie, and pretty well invariably I have replied that if a man has got a dead stymie laid him and he is within one yard of the hole, sooner than play for curve to get round his opponent's ball, it is much easier for him to loft his own ball by means of a niblick. The great consideration here is that in

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playing the curve you have only the lip of the hole to play at, and the margin for error is such as to make the operation exceedingly risky. If, on the other hand, you have a long putt, with your opponent's ball lying up near the hole, you may find that lofting is entirely out of the question. Then you may be compelled to play to the right of the other ball, and whenever I am faced with such a situation I find it beneficial to adopt a fairly upright stance. Even though the player is using a flat putter, he can adopt this stance and hit the ball with the toe of the putter, so that there is a healthy tendency to pull, or, in other words, get an inward swerve.

One thing I have found, and that is that I prefer to play spin shots on putting greens boasting a fairly liberal grass growth, as the said spin seems to get more of a grip than it does on the keen and almost grassless green.

As for the lie of the grass, I maintain that this question is one for general observation and keen eyesight. I have played on a putting green with three different growths of grass, and on this score I hold that there is nothing like common sense.

No matter what the growth of the grass may be, the man faced with the putt of a yard and a half should hit the ball firmly to the back of the hole, and the moderately upright stance already alluded to will come in useful, especially if, as I consider, half the short putts should be hit to the right of the hole. A possible mistake is slackness of the wrists, and, to correct that, I stiffen my wrists, which I find enables me to go for the back of the hole. Apart from the wrist work itself, I find that I push out to the right of the hole if I crouch too much.

CHAPTER X

ADVICE AT RANDOM

IT must not be assumed that the golfer has only to read, learn, and inwardly digest what I have written in this book and the preceding one to enable him straightway to proceed to one of the big courses and there in open competition win fame for himself. I have in mind a friend of mine who is most insistent upon mentioning when he confesses that he is a handicap twenty man, that theoretically, he is plus four. That is just the sort of spirit which will prevent the golfing student from advancing one whit, and it is a stupid notion. All the literature in the world is of no avail if the reader does not back it up with good, hard practice, and on the obverse side of the picture we, of course, find that there is a grave risk in a player going on practising in his own way in solitude if he has not read golfing advice, or if he has not watched some famous golfer or golfers. It seems to me similarly to be a bad plan for the enthusiastic golfer to soak himself through and through with golfing literature, and all the while neglect to attend to the practical side of the business. No man ever took a prominent place in golf, or any other game, who did not devote as much time as he possibly could to sheer downright hard practice. No matter what anyone says, even among the best golfers in the world, each has some little weakness in

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his game for a number of years, and, believe me, he does not overcome that weakness excepting by hard and prosaic practice. It would astonish some people if they only knew how much time is spent by some of our golfing giants in little experiments at various times in their lives. I well remember the late Tom Ball once informing me how he came to be such a good putter. He confided to me that for many years his putting, or his lack of ability to putt caused him many sleepless nights. He lay in bed, he said, and thought out theories, many and varied, but the one thing which he found to be beneficial was practice. I also remember many years ago when James Douglas Edgar was a mere youth. Edgar, it may be recalled, afterwards became Canadian Open Champion, but at the time which I have in mind he was a mere stripling, though very much intent on obtaining perfection, or something near it, in his approach play. He used to go out to a piece of ground adjacent to a racecourse, and he spent hours and hours—yes, weeks in the aggregate—practising approaches. He had as his stock-in-trade a few dozen balls, three or four iron clubs, and the white rails of the racecourse. He aimed at approaching over the rails, going under the rails, striking the rails, and even at bringing the ball to rest against the uprights. The effect of all that was clearly seen in 1921, when Edgar returned to England on a mission which combined business with pleasure; and when he arrived in this country it was generally conceded that he was one of the finest approach players in the world. To go back to putting, Mr. Bernard Darwin, the old university player who ousted the last of the

American "invaders" from the recent British Amateur Championship at Hoylake, has recorded that in his undergraduate days his putting concerned him so much that he spent nights and nights practising on the carpet in his private room. Indeed, he said, so assiduous was he in his practising to putt at the four legs of his table in turn, that he wore grooves in the said carpet. Surely, then, if players such as those whom I have mentioned have found good, hard practice to be beneficial, it can do no harm to the more moderate golfer.

A point which is sometimes neglected by many famous players, is that of local rules; and I would emphasize the wisdom of the player making himself acquainted with such local rules as early as he conveniently can when he goes away to a strange course. There comes to my mind a player who has held the British Amateur Championship, and who, incidentally, holds the weird advantage of being able to play a game of snooker pool and simultaneously play half dozen men at chess. That player is so earnest on local rules that practically as soon as he sets his foot upon a foreign course he makes it his business to find out what the local rules are. Many a time have I known cases of players unthinkingly neglect to become conversant with the peculiar rules of the club which they are visiting, and the result in many cases has been loss of strokes in important competitions. I have even known of a famous amateur championship competitor, who took part in the St. George's Cup competition some years ago, and the effect of his misinterpretion of the rules at Sandwich was so serious that it had a very impor-

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tant bearing on the matter of who won the Cup that year.

One little matter has been brought to my notice scores and scores of times, and that is the complaint of the man who plays more on inland courses than on seaside courses. The trouble of such a man, according to what he has told me, is that in the winter he finds that he cannot get the length that he can in the summer. Indeed, more than one golfer has come to me, and in the most mystified way gone to great pains to tell me that his game had somehow shortened. Never was there such an absolute fallacy. The fact of the matter is that a golfer who can reach a given green in the summer with a wooden club and an iron club must not expect to do the same in the winter time. It is quite obvious in the very first place that a man's tee shot on a nice dry course is going to have almost yards of run in the summer time for the inches it will have in the winter time. Therefore, there is no need to worry about your having to take two wooden clubs to a green in the winter—just take them.

Still another query has been addressed to me on occasion, and it concerns holing out from the tee. "How is this sort of thing done, and why is it that one hears of so many holes in one being done by amateurs of moderate golfing ability, and so very seldom by first class golfers?" I well remember the story a few years ago of the very enthusiastic member of a club not a hundred miles from London. This golfer showed a wonderful penchant for holing in one, and the representative of a well known London daily paper was dispatched to the course for the

purpose of getting a good " story " about the wonderful golfer. On the arrival of the journalist it was ascertained that as in the case of so many other clubs, there was an unwritten law that a member who did a hole in one should pay for drinks for all who happened to be in the club, and, in addition, he should provide his caddie with a bottle of whisky.

These facts were well known to a small circle of the caddies attached to the club, and that small circle, as things turned out, had formed themselves into a little school, one of the members of which stationed himself at a " blind " hole whenever this club member was on the course. The rest of the story may be left to the imagination.

I also have in mind the case of a motoring journalist who visited the Isle of Man to attend a motor race meeting. This young man was a golfer of such distinction that on the course he could give five bisques to one of his friends whose ideas of golf were very much advanced if his execution of the game was not up to the same standard. At any rate the motorist-golfer took his clubs with him to the island and at one hole he found the bottom of the tin from the tee. So great was his glee that he straightway rushed off to a telegraph office and wired the " story " to Britain's premier news agency.

It must be admitted that holing in one does seem to be a feat more often accomplished by the average player and the long handicap player than the scratch or plus man. I believe it is a fact that Harry Vardon has not once in his career holed out in one stroke, while, on the other hand, Alec Herd is credited with having done fifteen holes in one, which performance

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he has done on his own course at Coombe Hill on no fewer than eleven occasions. Still, Herd's case is the exception which proves the rule. I am afraid I can give no reliable advice on how to hole in one, and it seems to me marvellous how seldom this is accomplished, when one comes to reckon up the number of persons who play at a given short hole at a given course during a week end. Indeed, the only suggestion which I can offer is that the pin be stuck in the green a yard, or a couple of yards, to the right of the hole, or to the left. Then perhaps we may hear of more holes in one.

Before I conclude this chapter I should like to deal with the wonderful spread of golf within a comparatively short time, for now seems to be the least inappropriate time for dealing with it. A matter of thirty years ago golf was Scotland's game and, generally speaking, was unknown in England, but with Mr. John Ball, Mr. Hilton, and J. H. Taylor winning the Open Championship in the nineties a fillip was given to the game in England. The result was that whereas for nearly thirty years up until the time Mr. Ball first took the Open Championship out of Scotland, it had always gone to a Scottish professional, not once since then has it gone to a professional resident in Scotland. That, in itself, shows how assertive have been the tentacles of the Royal and Ancient Game in recent years, and I think it safe to say that no other game can lay claim to such wonderful strides as golf has made in such a short period. Golf is a game different from most others. A man may go alone to his course at any odd time, and he is sure to pick up a game, whereas with cricket,

football, and other pastimes all sorts of organization is necessary. I do not intend to go into the arguments as to the gentleness and the soothing nature of golf, as I for one have had many anxious moments on the course. Still, from the point of view of the amateur I have no doubt that golf is a shade in front of other games from the standpoint of convenience.

CHAPTER XI

BRITISH GOLF COURSES

THE very pertinent query may be put to me as to what I think of some of the courses of Britain, and, whilst on this topic, I should like to express the hope that within a few years we shall see more municipal courses throughout the kingdom than we now have. Logically there is no reason why a big municipality near to the coast should not own a course which would compare with any in the United Kingdom, and I am positive that a first class course is an asset to any town. That is a hint which I give free gratis and for nothing to any enterprising town near the sea. Incidentally, I should like to make a plea for the golf club when of a private nature to be more like the type of club I have come across in the United States where when a club is constructed it is built half on the hotel principle.

As for the courses in Great Britain, it must be admitted even by those who criticise St. Andrews in certain details that it almost seems as if it were laid out specifically for golf by nature. Strangely enough, a great number of years ago, St. Andrews was a narrow course, and it is also notable that now it is pretty well as wide an any. It has been said that to an extent the widening of the course has been brought about by continued playing in among the whins, but it is a stern fact that the length of the holes

remains approximately the same as in previous generations. One thing about St. Andrews is that to the casual visitor it appears to be very much easier than it really is, but he is quickly disillusioned when he goes out, for what with the undulating nature of the ground and those terrible breezes that sweep in from the North Sea sometimes, the golfer, should he be a little bit slack, will find trouble of the most acute description. The story is told of a well known American golfer who went to St. Andrews. Without any trepidation he set out, but his assurance had completely evaporated by the time he had finished his round, for he remarked, "They tell me there are over a hundred sand bunkers on this course, and I am sure I have been in every one." Generally the greens are true if they are on occasion hard and keen; though their size is something which is not equalled on any other course that I have visited. It almost seems a pity that some of the holes cannot be lengthened, for at the third, fourth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, sixteenth, and eighteenth, the drive may as likely as not find the green. Still, although I do refer to these elements of weakness, it must be admitted that to a large extent the weakness is due to the advance in the rubber ball. The story was entirely different in the old gutta ball days, for then quite a large number of the holes required a second shot with a wooden club, and then it had to be really straight if it were to avoid disaster. At that time the holes were well guarded on the left, whilst the whins lay on the left so that St. Andrews was a most testing course. Nevertheless, there is an atmosphere about St. Andrews

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which is all its own. The City is truly historic, and to those whose tastes include the antiquarian as well as the golfing, I can do no better than commend the ruins of the old cathedral.

Prestwick is another course on the championship rota with many traditions, and it resembles Sandwich more than it does St. Andrews. Prestwick naturally, being situated on the West Coast of Scotland, gets a fairly plentiful supply of rain, and that probably is the reason for its most excellent turf, but Prestwick, like St. Andrews, though it forms a most severe golfing test, is not the course it was in the old gutta ball days. Then the "Cardinal," the "Himalayas," and the "Alps" were most fearsome things, though truth to tell, the "Cardinal" is still a hazard to be dreaded. No one knows that better than does James Braid, for in the Open Championship there in 1908, Braid got into that bunker and required seven strokes to get out. However, as Braid won that Championship he is, perhaps, inclined to be forgiving. The "Cardinal" bunker is really one of the features of British golf. It is a great wide sweeping hazard, so deep that its face has to be shored up with railway sleepers, and as it is less than two hundred yards from the tee no great imagination is required to depict the awful trouble which it may mean.

The other championship course in Scotland, Muirfield, the property of the Honourable Company of Golfers, and nestling in on the coast of Haddingtonshire, has very often been criticized, though I, for one, have a sneaking regard for it since I won the Open Championship there. One does not get an inordinate amount of run at Muirfield and the fair-

ways, being on the narrow side, do not allow for any great margin of error, which probably accounts for the fact that the scores in championships there are rather higher than in the championship on other links.

I have a great regard for the Westward Ho course, which was added to the championship rota just a year or two before the outbreak of the war. The first and second holes, and the seventeenth and eighteenth are not of the undulating character, but the fairways are narrow, while on either side is a combination of thin grass growing to nearly a foot and small stout rushes. Should a player at Westward Ho get in among that stuff then of a truth he wants to have some ability with his niblick. The rushes at Westward Ho are a thing apart, as they grow in places much taller than a man. Incidentally, they are said to be poisonous at certain seasons of the year. Their strength is prodigious, as is evidenced by so many golf balls having been found impaled in those rushes. No wonder that a local rule permits of a player picking out of the rushes and dropping under the penalty of a stroke. These rushes are more prolific in the vicinity of the point about half way through the round. The Westward Ho course, which is situate in the historic quarter of Devonshire, round about Bideford, is noted for its fifth, eighth, fourteenth, and sixteenth holes. Each of these is a one shot hole, and many consider that the last mentioned is the best short hole in the world. The putting greens on the Royal North Devon Club's Course are in a class by themselves, and woe betide any player who does not use his brain when he is on the green at Westward Ho.

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A unique feature about Westward Ho is the wonderful Pebble Ridge. This is a ridge of pebbles varying in size and with some almost as big as a man's head. As a matter of fact, this Ridge has almost invariably saved the course from severe flooding from the Atlantic during the gales which abound on the West coast, though some people have fears that one day the ridge will give best to Neptune. It is estimated that in the last half century this Ridge has been forced inland over a quarter of a mile, and one of the features at Westward Ho is the noise made by the Atlantic throwing about the stones on the sea side of this barrier. Westward Ho, it may be noted, is the oldest of all the seaside courses south of the Tweed.

Another Championship Course, that of the Royal Liverpool Club at Hoylake, commenced with very small beginnings. Originally, play started from the side of the green adjoining the roadway opposite the present club house. Hoylake is a splendid test of accurate golf. The holes are of a very nice length, and the greens have good surfaces. The Royal Liverpool Club officials have emulated the authorities at St. Andrews in giving a name to each hole, and it is questionable if so many first class players have been contributed to golf by any other club.

The Championship Course at Sandwich is the property of the Royal St. George's Club, and golf was commenced there nearly forty years ago by a small number of London Scotsmen, headed by Dr. Laidlaw Purves. Everyone who goes to Sandwich is naturally desirous of seeing the famous "Maiden," and this hill hazard certainly is worth looking at.

The course itself has not too many drawbacks from the point of view of the strong driver, and the putting greens are spacious if not too closely guarded. As might be expected in this quarter of England, the wind is one of the chief hazards. A point about the Sandwich course is that its full length is not utilized at Championship meetings, but the course is played at its full length on the occasion of the annual competition for the St. George's Cup. Under the deed by which the St. George's Cup was presented, the competition for the trophy, which is the most magnificent in the world's golf, has to be from the back tee, and to this day the full available playing length of the Sandwich Course is utilized in the Cup Competition.

One of the last courses to be added to the Championship rota was that of the Royal Cinque Ports Club at Deal, and these links almost abut on the Sandwich course.

Too much land was not available when the Deal Course was laid out, and a great misfortune befel the authorities there when part of their links was taken over for military purposes during the war. Military exigencies demanded that trenches should be dug here and there, and the result was that to an extent the course had to be remodelled. An interesting feature at Deal is that practically the whole of the outward journey is in one direction and almost the whole of the last nine holes in the opposite direction, so that whichever way the wind blows the player almost inevitably has his work cut out to do a good round. The fairways are dotted by valleys and small hills, so that one cannot always depend on

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getting the best of lies. The "Sandy parlour," or fourth hole, has been criticized many a time and oft, but there is no gainsaying that good golf is required there. A big sand hill guards the green, and the hole is blind, but once the golfer learns the intricacies of the Deal Links, he will find it a most interesting course. Some of the two shot holes at Deal are most fascinating, and I, for one, think that the Royal Cinque Ports Course has been improved by the alterations which had to be made when the course was handed back to the club by the military, following the end of the war.

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