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CLASSIFICATION OF CLUBS

THE FIRST THING THAT STRIKES THE NOVICE WITH wonder is the variety and number of clubs used by the more expert players in the game of Golf. Unacquainted as the tyro necessarily must be with its mysteries, and having only a very vague idea how it is played, their number strikes him as being useless,—at all events unnecessary, and their variety as the result of whim. Nevertheless, they have each of them a shade of use different from that of the others; and this fact will show the novice inferentially to what a degree of nicety the game has been brought;—how every possible mishap is countermet by a skilfully adapted tool; and, in a word, that at Golf on the lengthening plain, as on the miniature ‘green’ of the billiard table, a degree of perfection is attainable, astonishing to the uninitiated, and at once rebutting the ultra-philosophical view which sneers at the sport as childish and unmeaning.

A complete set of Golfing Clubs may be divided into four classes, contra-distinguished by technical names, viz:

DRIVERS;
SPOONS;
IRONS; and
PUTTERS.

These kinds again, each embrace several clubs, having slight specific differences.

DRIVERS: Drivers, so called from being the clubs used to 'drive,' 'swipe,' or propel the ball a long distance, are distinguished by their long, tapering, and flexible shafts, their small raking heads, and the powerful *feel* they have when handled. There are two members of this class; the play club, and the grassed* driver. The first is employed, as a rule, to play over safe ground where no hazards lie exposed to the stroke; as the play club, from the peculiarity of its make, explained at length in a succeeding chapter, does not *sky* the ball much, which would only have the effect of spending its velocity in the air while it shortened the actual distance accomplished. This, as the reader will at once perceive, is therefore the best club to drive those tremendous strokes which make the striker an hero of oral tradition amongst golfers for many an after year. The grassed driver is also used to effect distance when the ball happens to lie in one of three situations; when it is among soft grass; or on the downward slope of a hillock; or when a hazard looms dangerously in front of the stroke. The peculiarity of this club is, that in addition to sending the ball well away, it raises it considerably in the air. Were the play-club used in any of the three predicaments we have enumerated, the ball would, in the first case, be propelled through the grass and instantly stopped; in the second, would not be elevated above the inequalities of the course; and in the last, would, in all probability, be comfortably lodged in the hazard ahead.

SPOONS: Spoons derive their very suggestive name from the great slope in the face of the club head, which gives them the power of skying the ball to almost any height, being the same property, only in a much greater degree,

* For this and all other golfing terms not explained in the text, *vide* Glossary.

which is the characteristic of the grassed driver. They are most useful fellows, doing much of the sapper and miner work of the game, are four in number, and, as their names impart, are of various lengths, viz:

LONG SPOON;
MIDDLE SPOON;
SHORT SPOON; and
BAFFING SPOON;

which last is also the least of all.

The long and middle spoons are often pressed into doing duty for a grassed driver, from their ability to 'loft' the ball; but besides this, from their tougher build, they are admirably fitted to jerk it out of a grassy rut—or a yielding whin—or, indeed, out of the thousand and one bad *lies* which the best directed stroke will get into, and which would very likely shiver the more slender shaft of the grassed play-club. The short spoon, besides assisting in the rougher work of its elder brethren, is used for those beautiful and difficult half strokes on to the putting green over a hazard, when the ball lies sufficiently clear for the stroke. The Baffing Spoon, although the smallest in stature, is by no means the least in usefulness of this family. Why it is called by either this soubriquet, or by its other title 'the cutty,' we leave speculative readers to determine; although its more common appellation 'baffing' is most probably descriptive of the *thump* produced in making the stroke. It is employed only for skying a ball over a hazard on to the putting ground, when the stroke is too short for any of the other spoons. As will be seen, in an after chapter, on Points of the Game, the Iron (a club we have not yet come to describe) is employed by many players for effecting the same stroke, thus superseding the use of this spoon altogether.

Before quitting the subject of spoons, we shall notice an antiquated connection of the family, now seldom to be met with, unless as a supernumerary in the pack of an oldster. It is called a *NIBLICK*; has a tough yet effective driving shaft; and an exceedingly small head well-spooned back. Its use is, or rather *was*, to drive a ball out of a rut or cap large enough to admit the 'diminished' head—and very effective strokes we have seen made with it. But it is exceedingly difficult to play with; and the precise *lie* it is intended for so seldom occurs, that even an experienced hand is rather nervous at using it, the chances being in favour of a total miss. Besides, either a spoon or an iron answers the same purpose well enough.

IRONS: Irons, so named from their heads being formed from that metal, are obviously intended to achieve the roughest of the golfing in trying ground. They are three in number—the bunker iron; the driving iron; and the cleek or click. The first of these clubs is especially at home in a bunker—in a thicket whin—amongst the stones of a road—or, in fact, in any scrape where a wooden-headed tool would be useless. Its iron head cleaves through every obstacle, and jerks the ball out of grief where every other club would fail. The driving-iron nearly resembles him of the bunker, in everything but weight; it is used amongst difficulties also, but only when the ball is intended to be, and admits of being, sent some distance. There are also finer uses to which this club is occasionally put; which however, will be more fittingly treated of in our Chapter on Points of the Game. The cleek or click, deriving its name either from an old Scotch word signifying 'hook,' or from the sharp clicking sound produced in making the stroke, is also an iron club, but lighter than either of the others. It is used chiefly for driving the ball out of rough ground when

elevation is not so much an object, and when no impediments surround and obstruct the *lie* which would demand an heavier club. Sometimes again, it takes the sterner duties of the iron off its shoulders, and drives the ball out of a desperate hazard, when it happens to lie favourably for the stroke.

PUTTERS: Our last genus is that of putters, the most important clubs perhaps in the set, but concerning which little may be said in this chapter. They are two in number; the green-putter, and the driving-putter. The first is used on the putting-green, when the player is near enough to calculate with some certainty on the resistance of the grass, the length of the stroke, and the *lie* of the ground he intends his ball to pass over. Sometimes an iron-headed putter is used for the short game, instead of the more common kind; but, as will be readily seen, when we come to describe its nature, does not prove at all a desirable substitute. Driving-putters are most frequently used in the place of short or baffing spoons, to drive the ball up to the putting-green, when no hazard or awkward inequality of ground intervenes to prevent the roll of the ball. They are also used occasionally in very boisterous weather to drive a ball in the wind's eye over safe ground, and often answer this somewhat illegitimate use, even better than a play club.

We have now gone through a complete set of clubs, and have classed and distinguished them by their different uses. There are many players who carry particular clubs in duplicate, and others who have some fashioned with slight deviations from the usual make; but these peculiarities do not, of course, affect in any wise our classification.

The few remarks we have to make on the subject of balls will come more appositely in another part of this work.