



4

#### GOLFING MANNERISMS

REGARDING THE PRACTICE OF NO OTHER SPORT perhaps on the face of the earth is there so much difference of opinion as in that of Golf. The confusion and multiplicity of styles that prevail amongst players are proof enough of this; each no doubt thinking his own, not only the more correct, but by far the superior, way of manipulating. The same independence of opinion is observable in their selection of clubs. One prefers a certain stiffness of shaft—considers heavy heads decidedly the thing—swears by short tools—and looks down on his neighbour as a 'Giaour' to the true Golfing creed, because, it may happen, he is diametrically opposed to one and all of these views. Were it not that Golfers are in a manner at the mercy of club-makers, we doubt not that the profession of those gentlemen would be as fluctuating a business as that of a fashionable milliner. This being the case, the question naturally arises, whether the art of Golf may not be equally well acquired in a variety of ways? We answer, by no means. We never yet saw really good scientific players differ materially in style; and those Golfers who are conspicuous for mannerisms, are in fact authors of some new system of play followed only by themselves; and rarely do such ever become stars even of the lesser magnitude in the Golfing firmament.

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We account for this want of unanimity in the general practice of the game by the careless way in which almost invariably beginners set out to acquire their rudiments. The novice having purchased unto himself some clubs and a brace of balls, commenceth his golfing career, as a rule, with another beginner for his adversary. In fact he rather shies the ordeal of making his *debut* in the awe-inspiring company of an old hand. Away then, the two aspirants to golfing laurels blunder, in the most awful style, over the turf;—hacking and tearing as fancy dictates. This goes on day after day. They seldom receive proper instruction from the 'professionals' who carry their clubs, who know full well how hard and thankless a task it is to impart even the first maxims of the science, in the brief period of their service. Consequently the verbal law occasionally promulgated by these club-carrying satellites for the benefit of their respective masters, is generally couched in the following edifying though perhaps ambiguous strain;—'Noo, sir, just tak' yer play-club, an' pit plenty o' strength intil't;' or 'Ye'd jest better tak yer iron, ye can drive graun' wi' it, an' he's playin' twa mair;' and so on; whilst shortcomings in the putting only elicit the palliating remarks from the philosophic caddie, 'just wants legs to be in;' 'owre muckle poother, but awfu' straucht, raaly a graun' direction.' Should the novice, however, make a chance approximation to a good stroke, Irish hyperbole vanishes into common-place compared with the gratulations it is hailed with on the golfing links: 'There she wanders,' cries the delighted bearer of clubs, 'a bonnie lick as ever was played; ye did it that time, sir.' Now, considering this only happens once a round the laudations are excusable; but it may be reasonably doubted whether this running fire of commendation and advice, whatever effect

it may have on the fate of the match in hand, will ever make the tyro a player in the true sense of the word. In course of time, our hero begins to hit his ball more frequently than the turf; and forthwith lays the flattering unction to his soul that he is now out of training; marvels at the expeditious manner in which he has taught himself the art; and, as he views the lengthening couples of experimental golfers blundering away, thinks complacently that he bids fair to be one of the 'fliers of his year.'

Now this sketch is not over-drawn, or true only of the few; nor can it be fairly wondered at when we reflect that there have been at no time any written details of the practice of the game; no golfing dicta, saying, this shalt thou do, that thou mayest not; nor even a salutary injunction in the lack of positive information, that the tyro should commence his golfing studies under a master of the art. If, in this treatise, we so delineate the game as to give the uninitiated an idea of its true nature, of its difficulties, and of its capabilities as affording scientific amusement; and if we convince such readers that they ought to begin the pastime either with a little theory in their heads, or under the eye of a veteran, *then* do we hope and believe that a new era in the history of golf will dawn.

The peculiarities in the make of clubs, adverted to in the preamble to this chapter as being delighted in by players, owe their origin to the careless acquisition of style we have just deprecated. Both these impediments to an unanimous system in the practice of the game could be easily overcome; but another difficulty arises of a very different character, and which threatens the attempt to sketch out a theory with a complete defeat. Were Golfing confined entirely to active, lithe persons, with limbs untrammelled by flesh, and their muscular system never

fettered by bodily ailments, then indeed it were no difficult matter to lay down a code of Golfing laws and maxims for the guidance of such a 'glorious company.' But this is not exactly the case: the craftsmen of the Links are a more motley body. It is the blessed characteristic of the game that old and young, the healthy and the weak, the rotund and the spare, all may, and all do, share its invigorating influences. Now it is perfectly obvious that the invalid, his limbs cramped and attenuated by the couch of illness, cannot use his club with the same freedom as his healthier neighbour; nor is it convenient, albeit it may border on the impossible, that a Golfer whose *personale* resembles that assigned by popular superstition to the civic dignitaries of London, should sweep his club round his shoulder with the same far-circling swing as his lithier opponent. These differences must, to a certain extent, necessitate a variety in style, which, being compelled by natural causes, no system can wholly overcome. But we assert that *this variety is merely a difference in degree and not in kind*; that is to say, that the same directions are to be followed, the same dicta observed, in the acquisition of style in Golfing by each and all, *as far as their bodily organisation will allow*. In order to make this clearer to our readers, we shall refer players in all to two great classes—first, Golfer's Agile; and second, Golfer's Non-agile; terms which shall denote the natural differences we have been commenting on as existing amongst votaries of the sport.

When any points of separate or peculiar interest to one of these classes occur, we shall give special information concerning such; but the reader will bear in mind, that in general we shall treat our subject, whether it be the clubs to be used, the manner of wielding them, or a consideration of points of the game, in a broad manner which

shall cause our remarks to be applicable to, and applicable by, all players.

One other point we have to comment on before closing this preliminary and somewhat discursive chapter, which is, that difference of stature affects neither a choice of clubs nor style of play. The same qualities ought to exist in the tools irrespective of length; and the same principles are involved in the manner they should be used.

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