THE COMPLETE GOLFER
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BY

HARRY VARDON

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PREFACE

MANY times I have been strongly advised to write a book on golf, and now I offer a volume to the
great and increasing public who are devoted to the game. So far as the instructional part of the book is
concerned, I may say that, while I have had the needs of the novice constantly in mind, and have
eendeavoured to the best of my ability to put him on the right road to success, I have also presented
the full fruits of my experience in regard to the fine points of the game, so that what I have written
may be of advantage to improving golfers of all degrees of skill. There are some things in golf which
cannot be explained in writing, or for the matter of that even by practical demonstration on the links.
They come to the golfer only through instinct and experience. But I am far from believing that, as is so
often said, a player can learn next to nothing from a book. If he goes about his golf in the proper
manner he can learn very much indeed. The services of a competent tutor will be as necessary to him
as ever, and I must not be understood to suggest that this work can to any extent take the place of that
compulsory and most invaluable tuition. On the other hand, it is next to impossible for a tutor to tell a
pupil on the links everything about any particular stroke while he is playing it, and if he could it
would not be remembered. Therefore I hope and think that, in conjunction with careful coaching by
those who are qualified for the task, and by immediate and constant practice of the methods which I
set forth, this book may be of service to all who aspire to play a really good game. If any player of the
first degree of skill should take exception to any of these methods, I have only one answer to make,
and that is that, just as they are explained in the following pages, they are precisely those which
helped me to win my five championships. These and no others I practise every day upon the links. I
attach great importance to the photographs and the accompanying diagrams, the objects of which are
simplicity and lucidity. When a golfer is in difficulty with any particular stroke—and the best of us are
constantly in trouble with some stroke or other—I think that a careful examination of the pictures
relating to that stroke will frequently put him right, while a glance at the companion in the "How not
to do it" series may reveal to him at once the error into which he has fallen and which has hitherto
defied detection. All the illustrations in this volume have been prepared from photographs of myself
in the act of playing the different strokes on the Totteridge links last autumn. Each stroke was
carefully studied at the time for absolute exactness, and the pictures now reproduced were finally
selected by me from about two hundred which were taken. In order to obtain complete satisfaction, I
found it necessary to have a few of the negatives repeated after the winter had set in, and there was a
slight fall of snow the night before the morning appointed for the purpose. I owe so much—
everything—to the great game of golf, which I love very dearly, and which I believe is without a
superior for deep human and sporting interest, that I shall feel very delighted if my "Complete Golfer"
is found of any benefit to others who play or are about to play. I give my good wishes to every golfer,
and express the hope to each that he may one day regard himself as complete. I fear that, in the
playing sense, this is an impossible ideal. However, he may in time be nearly "dead" in his "approach"
to it.
the game—A wise example—Go to the professional—The importance of beginning well—Practise with each club separately—Driver, brassy, cleek, iron, mashie, and putter—Into the hole at last—Master of a bag of clubs—The first match—How long drives are made—Why few good players are coming on—Golf is learned too casually.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHOICE AND CARE OF CLUBS

Difficulties of choice—A long search for the best—Experiments with more than a hundred irons—Buy few clubs to begin with—Take the professional’s advice—A preliminary set of six—Points of the driver—Seared wooden clubs are best—Disadvantages of the socket—Fancy faces—Short heads—Whip in the shaft—The question of weight—Match the brassy with the driver—Reserve clubs—Kinds of cleeks—Irons and mashies—The niblick—the putting problem—it is the man who puts and not the putter—Recent inventions—Short shafts for all clubs—Lengths and weights of those I use—Be careful of your clubs—Hints for preserving them.

CHAPTER V

DRIVING—PRELIMINARIES

Advantage of a good drive—and the pleasure of it—More about the driver—Tee low—Why high tees are bad—The question of stance—Eccentricities and bad habits—Begin in good style—Measurements of the stance—The reason why—The grip of the club—My own method and its advantages—Two hands like one—Comparative tightness of the hands—Variations during the swing—Certain disadvantages of the two-V grip—Addressing the ball—Freaks of style—How they must be compensated for—Too much waggling—The point to look at—Not the top of the ball, but the side of it.

CHAPTER VI

DRIVING—THE SWING OF THE CLUB

"Slow back"—The line of the club head in the upward swing—The golfer’s head must be kept rigid—The action of the wrists—Position at the top of the swing—Movements of the arms—Pivoting of the body—No swaying—Action of the feet and legs—Speed of the club during the swing—The moment of impact—More about the wrists—No pure wrist shot in golf—The follow-through—Timing of the body action—Arms and hands high up at the finish—How bad drives are made—The causes of slicing—When the ball is pulled—Misapprehensions as to slicing and pulling—Dropping of the right shoulder—Its evil consequences—No trick in long driving—Hit properly and hard—What is pressing and what is not—Summary of the drive.

CHAPTER VII

BRASSY AND SPOON
Now comes the all-important consideration of the grip. This is another matter in which the practice of golfers differs greatly, and upon which there has been much controversy. My grip is one of my own invention. It differs materially from most others, and if I am asked to offer any excuse for it, I shall say that I adopted it only after a careful trial of all the other grips of which I had ever heard, that in theory and practice I find it admirable—more so than any other—and that in my opinion it has contributed materially to the attainment of such skill as I possess. The favour which I accord to my method might be viewed with suspicion if it had been my natural or original grip, which came naturally or accidentally to me when I first began to play as a boy, so many habits that are bad being contracted at this stage and clinging to the player for the rest of his life. But this was not the case, for when I first began to play golf I grasped my club in what is generally regarded as the orthodox manner, that is to say, across the palms of both hands separately, with both thumbs right round the shaft (on the left one, at all events), and with the joins between the thumbs and first fingers showing like two V's over the top of the shaft. This is usually described as the two-V grip, and it is the one which is taught by the majority of professionals to whom the beginner appeals for first instruction in the game. Of course it is beyond question that some players achieve very fine results with this grip, but I abandoned it many years ago in favour of one that I consider to be better. My contention is that this grip of mine is sounder in theory and easier in practice, tends to make a better stroke and to secure a straighter ball, and that players who adopt it from the beginning will stand a much better chance of driving well at an early stage than if they went in for the old-fashioned two-V. My grip is an
overlapping, but not an interlocking one. Modifications of it are used by many fine players, and it is coming into more general practice as its merits are understood and appreciated. I use it for all my strokes, and it is only when putting that I vary it in the least, and then the change is so slight as to be scarcely noticeable. The photographs (Plates II., III., IV., and V.) illustrating the grip of the left hand singly, and of the two together from different points of view, should now be closely examined.

It will be seen at once that I do not grasp the club across the palm of either hand. The club being taken in the left hand first, the shaft passes from the knuckle joint of the first finger across the ball of the second. The left thumb lies straight down the shaft—that is to say, it is just to the left of the centre of the shaft. But the following are the significant features of the grip. The right hand is brought up so high that the palm of it covers over the left thumb, leaving very little of the latter to be seen. The first and second fingers of the right hand just reach round to the thumb of the left, and the third finger completes the overlapping process, so that the club is held in the grip as if it were in a vice. The little finger of the right hand rides on the first finger of the left. The great advantage of this grip is that both hands feel and act like one, and if, even while sitting in his chair, a player who has never tried it before will take a stick in his hands in the manner I have described, he must at once be convinced that there is a great deal in what I say for it, although, of course, if he has been accustomed to the two V's, the success of my grip cannot be guaranteed at the first trial. It needs some time to become thoroughly happy with it.

We must now consider the degree of tightness of the grip by either hand, for this is an important matter. Some teachers of golf and various books of instruction inform us that we should grasp the club firmly with the left hand and only lightly with the right, leaving the former to do the bulk of the work and the other merely to guide the operations. It is astonishing with what persistency this error has been repeated, for error I truly believe it is. Ask any really first-class player with what comparative tightness he holds the club in his right and left hands, and I am confident that in nearly every case he will declare that he holds it nearly if not quite as tightly with the right hand as with the left. Personally I grip quite as firmly with the right hand as with the other one. When the other way is adopted, the left hand being tight and the right hand simply watching it, as it were, there is an irresistible tendency for the latter to tighten up suddenly at some part of the upward or downward swing, and, as surely as there is a ball on the tee, when it does so there will be mischief. Depend upon it the instinct of activity will prevent the right hand from going through with the swing in that indefinite state of looseness. Perhaps a yard from the ball in the upward swing, or a yard from it when coming down, there will be a convulsive grip of the right hand which, with an immediate acknowledgment of guilt, will relax again. Such a happening is usually fatal; it certainly deserves to be. Slicing, pulling, slicing, and the foundering of the innocent globe—all these tragedies may at times be traced to this determination of the right hand not to be ignored but to have its part to play in the making of the drive. Therefore in all respects my right hand is a joint partner with the left.

The grip with the first finger and thumb of my right hand is exceedingly firm, and the pressure of the little finger on the knuckle of the left hand is very decided. In the same way it is the thumb and first finger of the left hand that have most of the gripping work to do. Again, the palm of the right hand presses hard against the thumb of the left. In the upward swing this pressure is gradually decreased, until when the club reaches the turning-point there is no longer any such pressure; indeed, at this point the palm and the thumb are barely in contact. This release is a natural one, and will or should come naturally to the player for the purpose of allowing the head of the club to swing well and
freely back. But the grip of the thumb and first finger of the right hand, as well as that of the little finger upon the knuckle of the first finger of the left hand, is still as firm as at the beginning. As the club head is swung back again towards the ball, the palm of the right hand and the thumb of the left gradually come together again. Both the relaxing and the re-tightening are done with the most perfect graduation, so that there shall be no jerk to take the club off the straight line. The easing begins when the hands are about shoulder high and the club shaft is perpendicular, because it is at this time that the club begins to pull, and if it were not let out in the manner explained, the result would certainly be a half shot or very little more than that, for a full and perfect swing would be an impossibility. This relaxation of the palm also serves to give more freedom to the wrist at the top of the swing just when that freedom is desirable.

I have the strongest belief in the soundness of the grip that I have thus explained, for when it is employed both hands are acting in unison and to the utmost advantage, whereas it often happens in the two-V grip, even when practised by the most skilful players, that in the downward swing there is a sense of the left hand doing its utmost to get through and of the right hand holding it back.

There is only one other small matter to mention in connection with the question of grip. Some golfers imagine that if they rest the left thumb down the shaft and let the right hand press upon it there will be a considerable danger of breaking the thumb, so severe is the pressure when the stroke is being made. As a matter of fact, I have quite satisfied myself that if the thumb is kept in the same place there is not the slightest risk of anything of the kind. Also if the thumb remains immovable, as it should, there is no possibility of the club turning in the hands as so often happens in the case of the two-V grip when the ground is hit rather hard, a pull or a slice being the usual consequence. I must be excused for treating upon these matters at such length. They are often neglected, but they are of extreme importance in laying the foundations of a good game of golf.

In addressing the ball, take care to do so with the centre of the face of the club, that is, at the desired point of contact. Some awkward eccentricities may frequently be observed on the tee. A player may be seen addressing his ball from the toe of the driver, and I have even noticed the address being made with the head of the club quite inside the ball, while in other cases it is the heel of the club which is applied to the object to be struck. The worthy golfers who are responsible for these freaks of style no doubt imagine that they are doing a wise and proper thing, and in the most effectual manner counteracting some other irregularity of their method of play which may not be discoverable, and which is in any case incurable. Yet nothing is more certain than that another irregularity must be introduced into the drive in order to correct the one made in the address. To the point at which the club is addressed it will naturally return in the course of the swing, and if it is to be guided to any other than the original place, there must be a constant effort all through the swing to effect this change in direction, and most likely somewhere or other there will be sufficient jerk to spoil the drive. In the case where the ball is addressed with the toe of the club, the player must find it necessary almost to fall on the ball in coming down, and it is quite impossible for him to get his full distance in such circumstances.

A waggle of the head of the club as a preliminary before commencing the swing is sometimes necessary after the stance and grip have been taken, but every young golfer should be warned against excess in this habit. With the stance and grip arranged, the line of the shot in view, and a full
I will try, then, to give the golfers who desire them some hints as to how by diligence and practice they may come to accomplish these master strokes; but I would warn them not to enter into these deepest intricacies of the game until they have completely mastered all ordinary strokes with their driver or brassy and can absolutely rely upon them, and even then the intentional pull and slice should only be attempted when there is no way of accomplishing the purpose which is likely to be equally satisfactory. Thus, when a long brassy shot to the green is wanted, and one is most completely stymied by a formidable tree somewhere in the foreground or middle distance, the only way to get to the hole is by working round the tree, either from the right or from the left, and this can be done respectively by the pull and the slice. Of the two, the sliced shot is the easier, and is to be recommended when the choice is quite open, though it must not be overlooked that the pulled ball is the longer. The slicing action is not quite so quick and sudden, and does not call for such extremely delicate accuracy as the other, and therefore we will deal with it first.

The golfer should now pay very minute attention to the photographs (Nos. XIV., XV., and XVI.) which were specially taken to illustrate these observations. It will be noticed at once that I am standing very much more behind the ball than when making an ordinary straight drive or brassy stroke, and this is indeed the governing feature of the slicing shot as far as the stance and position of the golfer, preparatory to taking it, are concerned. An examination of the position of the feet, both in
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