

FORM IN GOLF.

By Harry Vardon.

I HAVE never before written, or had published, any matter regarding my ideas of playing golf; and

I will commence by contradicting the statement so universally made by people when speaking or writing about me, that I "infringe every known rule laid down in the books and play a game which is peculiar to myself." The only peculiarity about the way I play is in the manner in which I hold my clubs, and this I will endeavor to explain, with the aid of the accompanying illustrations from life.

I grasp the club about two inches from the top, and I always play with very short clubs, my driver being only forty inches long, measured from the top of the shaft to the heel of the head; my brassy is the same length, my idea being that I have better control over a short club than over a longer one.

I place my left thumb along the center of the shaft and completely cover it with the palm of the right hand, the little finger of my right hand overlapping the knuckle of the first finger of my left hand, the end of the little finger being half way between the knuckle and the second joint of the first finger of the left hand.

I neither hold my club in the palms of my hands nor in the fingers; the shaft lies across my right hand and rests between the palm and the fingers of the left hand, and I grasp the club equally tightly with both hands. I use the word tightly because I mean tight, and do not mean to convey the idea that I merely hold the club firmly.

My idea in holding the club as I do, is that I, to all intents and purposes, make the two hands into one and consequently only have to consider the swing of one arm instead of two.

I adopted this grip after trying all kinds of methods of holding clubs, some seven years ago; and not until then did I feel the perfect confidence in myself which is absolutely indispensable to a proper control over the ball and the consequent control over direction.

I ought to add that I put my right thumb on the left-hand side of the centre of the shaft when driving, and straight down the centre of the shaft for all kinds

of iron shots. I never allow my club to move in my hand after addressing the ball until I have completed my stroke.

I carry the club for a full swing back behind my shoulders, almost parallel with the ground, my two hands a little above the top of the shoulder, about on a level with my jaw, and the point of the elbow almost squared a very little above the level of my hands, probably an inch, or possibly two.

I come down much straighter than men who carry their clubs further back



VARDON ADDRESSING.

and I stand very much more upright; my club thus describes a truer arc from the top of the swing to the end of the follow through than if I described a wider circle.

A great deal has been said in the papers about my method of approaching. It is perfectly true that I always run a ball in preference to pitching it, if the nature of the ground permits; as it is very much easier to simply have to calculate the amount of strength to put

behind a ball to roll it a certain distance than to have to gauge the strength required to pitch a given distance and allow for the roll after, especially as it is very frequently impossible to tell whether you are going to pitch on an exceptionally soft spot or vice versa.

I consider putting, next to the mashie approach, the most important stroke in golf. I always carry two different kinds



VARDON'S GRASP.

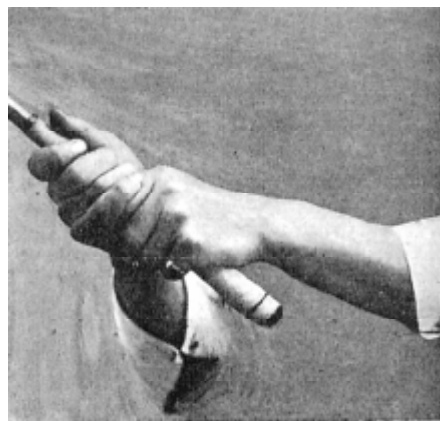
of putters and I have several different stances, and if I find I am off with one putter I try the other and keep altering my stance until I feel perfectly comfortable; for without this feeling you can not have confidence, and without confidence good and accurate putting is an impossibility.

The expression "a wrist shot" is to me an absurdity; there is no such thing as a wrist stroke alone. In all my so-called wrist shots I make the arms and the wrists act together, but I do not turn my wrists back, My left arm is almost straight, and my right elbow is close to my side and my right forearm is held stiff. It amuses me very much to hear people remark when I place an approach shot close to the hole, "Goodness gracious, what a cut he did put on the ball! He must have drawn his club clean across the ball to make it stop so dead." Now as a matter of fact, I do not put any cut on the ball with my club; but instead of striking the ground

about half an inch behind the ball and pitching it straight up, I strike the ball itself almost on the side, a little above the center, and drive it into the ground, from which it ricochets. The ground puts the cut on which stops the ball, and not the club.

I believe I am the only man who makes this stroke, and it is another of the instances in which I am supposed to infringe the rules of golf as laid down in the books.

Newspaper critics always say that it is my second shot which wins me the championship. This I believe myself to be perfectly true, and I will endeavor to describe how it is that I make it. The most important point, which results in long accurate playing, is the keeping perfect time between the raising of the club, after addressing the ball, to the top of the swing, and the raising of the left heel over the left toe as it pivots around. These two motions should take place simultaneously; and the downward swing and the return of the left foot to the exact position it was in when the upward swing commenced should also be simultaneous. At the precise moment when the left heel reaches the ground and the club head strikes the ball, the



VARDON'S GRASP.

raising of the right heel over the right toe commences; and it rises in the same proportion as the club rises in the follow through, until both reach their limit, which limit is the very point of your right toe. The minute that point is reached the swing is completed, and unless you allow your arms to follow

through until your toe reaches that point, you check your swing and lose distance.

In regard to my method of training, or rather, to my lack of training, I have what seems to me to be common-sense reasons for acting as I do. I am naturally a healthy man, with a good appetite, and I live about the same all the year round; I always drink whenever I feel like it, but never to excess, and I am an inveterate smoker. This mode of

living, combined with an outdoor life, keeps me in perfect health, and I consider that my normal condition is the one in which I am the most likely to play my best; my nerves are not irritated either by extra abstinence or by any sudden excesses, and I feel no more excitement when entering for a big match than I do when playing a mixed foursome, which, after all said and done, I consider the most pleasant way of enjoying a game of golf.

VARDON AND HIS IDEAS.

By Charles S. Cox.

IN writing about Harry Vardon and his style of playing golf, a most important point in my opinion is the man's temperament.

He is naturally very quiet and unassuming in his manner and gives you the idea of being phlegmatic and not much given either to study or thought; but underneath his outward appearance of "don't care much about anything" lie a very shrewd head and a bundle of nerves, which supply him with an inexhaustible fund of vitality, directly he is interested in anything.

The shrewd, common-sense style of analysis which he brings to bear upon subjects about which he knows absolutely nothing, invariably leads him in the right direction, and he seems to get to the very bottom of whatever he attempts to do or to talk about. If he had not been a golf player he would probably have been a great man in any other line of business requiring a good eye, perfect control over the nerves, and the faculty of accomplishing anything by the power of deduction.

He is supposed to infringe every known rule laid down by the best writers on golf, such as Horace Hutchinson, Simpson, and Park. As a matter of fact, I do not think he does anything of the kind; he simply supplies the missing links to the chain which they attempt to make when describing their ideas of what constitutes a perfect style when playing.

They give an idea of a swing, which no doubt is mathematically correct, but as there are no two men made alike, their ideal swing is one which very few

men can adapt to their varied styles of physique.

I have heard it frequently stated by men who have seen Vardon play since he came over here, that he drives with a three-quarter swing. Now, with a three-quarter swing, the elbow of the right arm is down, and the hands are below the level of the arm-pit, or about on a level with it, and the club is pointing up; while for a full swing the elbow is square on a level with the face, and the hands are about on the same level as the elbow. The general idea of a full swing is, that it is the length of the arc described by the club, which constitutes a full swing. This is not correct. It must depend on the height to which you raise your arms. Whether, when at the top of the swing, you allow your club head to drop until it points to the ground behind you, or whether you keep it about parallel with the ground, as Vardon does, is perfectly immaterial as far as the fullness of the swing is concerned.

The men who describe an arc, which is commonly called a full swing, are the men who hold their clubs loose in the palm of their hands and allow it to drop out of the palm into the hollow of the thumb when at the top of the swing. This is an impossibility when the club is held as Vardon holds it, perfectly tight with both hands; in such case you cannot get your club below the level of a line which is parallel with the ground.

When first Vardon became a professional he always used to grip his club with his thumbs around the shaft, and sometimes he could drive a few