

WOMEN'S GOLF

Conducted by DOROTHY CAMPBELL HURD

Mrs. J. V. Hurd will always be glad to receive items of news, snapshots of current events, notices of forthcoming meetings, etc., from her readers for Women's Golf. All communications to be addressed "Mrs. J. V. Hurd, c/o 'Golf Illustrated & Outdoor America'" 389 Fifth Avenue, New York

A CERTAIN theologian whom I have met has more than once told me that he considers the game of golf to be a most dangerous and harmful one, contending that it is bad for a man's character for the same reason that a Presbyterian sergeant in the Boer War objected to bayonet charges:—"because it makes the men swear so." Now, having wasted all my life, more or less, on various golf courses I have had plenty of opportunities for observing what effect golf has on the average character, and have come to the conclusion that, far from encouraging the display of bad temper, it is most beneficial by reason of its teaching self-control.

The comic papers seem never to tire of poking sly fun at the golfing fraternity and accuse us of exhausting the apparently inexhaustible supply of expletives in the English language; but that is only because of an ancient tradition that golfers are like mothers-in-law—an ever ready butt for a joke. As a matter of fact the great majority of golfers are very peaceful people, for if they did not learn to control their tempers at a very early stage of the game, would probably find it too expensive, by reason of broken clubs and slain caddies, to pursue it for any length of time. Indeed in this country the opposite mistake is often made and people are not always as keen to do their best on the links as they might be, with the result that the standard of the game suffers considerably. Consequently, an article on the golfing temperament which makes great players may be of some small assistance to women who are anxious to reduce their handicaps.

Often at the end of a round a golfer is heard accounting for his defeat by saying that he became nervous, adding that his opponent had the advantage of him in temperament. Now what is known as the golfing temperament is not really a Heaven-sent indifference to all outside circumstances, but is absolute concentration on the matter in hand, determination not to let any bad luck discourage us and the resolve never to give up hope until the match is really over. So many players are terribly fussy when in pursuit of their beloved game and allow themselves to be upset by the smallest trifle, worrying themselves and their opponents until golf becomes a pain instead of a pleasure. This trait is a great handicap to anyone and puts him absolutely at the mercy of any chance incident. Everyone knows the story about the man who complained bitterly about a lark which was singing in a field several hundred yards

from the boundary of the links, he was one of the type which does not spell concentration with a capital C.

Some people object to facing the sun, saying that it makes them take their eye off the ball, others hate having the wind behind, explaining that it flurries them; while yet another class say that they cannot possibly make a good shot when anyone is looking at them. To be a really successful golfer one has to get over all these objections, and surely the will power expended on overcoming one's dislike to playing under these fancied disadvantages must have the result of strengthening peoples power of self-control instead of leading to ebullitions of bad temper as my friend contended.

Golfers in the old world very soon become accustomed to having spectators as many of the best known courses are on common ground, and the people avail themselves very freely of the privilege of watching the play. At Musselburgh, for example, where the principal street and the links are side by side no one on the sidewalk is ever in such a hurry as to be unable to stop and watch even the most mediocre player make his stroke should his ball lie near the road. This of course makes people indifferent to gallery so that they cease after a little while, to even notice that any one is there. As the links in this country are practically all on private ground it might fairly be contended that there is no such opportunity of becoming used to onlookers and except in championships there is not enough interest taken by the general public to provide a crowd. Here the frivolously inclined might perhaps suggest a trial of the plan followed out in the staging of plays in Shakespeare's day, and hire a man to wear a placard bearing the words, "This is an army."

But seriously, it is perfectly possible to overcome even a very deeply-seated disability in the face of outside influences and the solution of the problem lies in the one word *Concentration*. Not that it is necessary to stalk along oblivious to everything, or to be intolerant of any word uttered that does not bear directly on the game; but while actually making a shot the player should empty his mind of every thing except the resolve to accomplish it successfully. It has fallen to my lot to see a man who could send a clean straight ball of two hundred and fifty yards when there was no one watching him, become utterly helpless when he saw a fellow creature some distance off and three times in succession hit an inoffensive motor which was standing at right angles to the

G O L F I L L U S T R A T E D

tee. An experienced golfer would have found great difficulty in playing a complicated shot of the kind off the toe of a driver, but the player in question seemed to find it quite easy. It would be hard to decide which was more amusing, the look of hopeless rage on the face of the golfer or the indignant expression of the owner of the car as he heard the ball hit madly off his cherished enamel.

The same broad principle may be applied to the game of golf as to the game of life. If it can be instilled into a player's mind that he can do a thing he will generally be able to do it. By that I do not mean that mental suggestion can make a beginner drive three hundred yards or play a complicated approach shot successfully into a side wind, but even the most mediocre player can prevent himself from having a species of paralysis when circumstances seem unfavorable. Genius has been described as "an infinite capacity for taking pains," and success in golfing may be attained by anyone through patient endeavor provided that he has been given a fairly strong physique, a good eye and a sufficiently sound constitution to stand a certain amount of fatigue. When a ground work of knowledge has been acquired as to the proper way to make the various strokes, proficiency becomes a matter of temperament. A large proportion of golfers reach a certain standard and never get beyond the class of what is known as medium, there being various reasons which may account for this. Some attain mastery over all their clubs except one and fail every time at one particular shot, which prevents their handicaps ever being lowered to a single figure. Others say that they are "off" a certain club, meaning that they have made indifferent shots with it so often that they now dislike

taking it out of their bag. This can be overcome by practising over and over again with the offending club until it is as dependable as the others. It is really only a matter of confidence after all; if we think that we are going to make a certain stroke successfully, the result will usually be satisfactory.

Any one who has followed a number of golf matches will have noticed something which proves the truth of this. If a player selects a certain club from her bag and then, after taking up her stance, rejects that club for another, a poor shot generally follows. That does not mean that the second choice was the wrong one but that the player's mind was in an undecided state when the shot was made. It is small incidents such as these which show plainly that golf is an essentially psychological game and one in which a successful player has to strive as much for control of her mind as control of her muscles. Any golfer who is anxious to attain distinction has to bear in mind that she has two people to get the better of—herself and her opponent. There are many players who always start a round badly and have schooled themselves into thinking that the first two or three holes in a match are of no importance. This is a mistaken idea and one that the possessor ought to rid herself of as quickly as possible. Such an authority as Walter J. Travis has said more than once that many a match is lost or won at the first hole. In this connection it will often be noticed that in an important match a participant will become so encouraged by winning the first hole that she will play better than she knows how, as the saying goes, for the rest of the round. This is only one example out of a hundred of the effect a player's mental attitude will invariably have on her game.