



A quartet of low scorers in the literary field who have been basking in California sunshine around Pasadena. They are, from left to right, Samuel Blythe, Hugh Wiley, Harry Leon Wilson and George Ade

The Curse of Golf

Some Observations on and Suggestions for Eliminations of the Pestiferous Slice

By Jack Hoag

CHICK EVANS of Edgewater calls the drive the easiest shot in golf and he may be right so far as his own game is concerned. But the evidence is all against him where the play of the average golfer is considered and we have noticed that Chick never takes liberties when playing this "easiest of shots." Chick will hook with his irons or play a cut shot up to the pin as his fancy dictates or the peculiar requirements of the situation demand, but when it comes to wooden club play, he is satisfied to hit a low, straight ball. We do not recollect ever having seen him play for an intentional hook or slice during a real match.

The drive may be "the easiest of shots" but the fact remains that Chick never experiments with his wooden clubs during a tight match and the golfing public would do well to follow his example in this respect. The drive may be the easiest of shots once it is mastered but you have to admit that the swing with the wooden clubs calls for the longest, fullest stroke in golf and conse-

quently brings into play more and varied muscles than any other stroke in the game. Admitting this fact, it stands to reason that the drive calls for more perfect co-ordination between the mind and the body than any other stroke for, if there is the least hitch or pause in the swing, all rhythm is lost, and without perfect timing the result is bound to be unsatisfactory.

Admitting that, in the drive, your ball is teed so that your club head has an unobstructed pathway, it is questionable if it is as easy to get good direction off the tee as it is when your ball lies well in the fairway and you have the ground to steady the club head as it comes through onto the ball. The drive may be an easy shot but you have only to compile a few statistics to convince yourself that the average high handicap golfer does not find it so.

Just consider for a moment the golfers of your acquaintance and see how many there are who can be relied upon to get away eighteen good drives during a round which will

produce fair distance and leave the ball in a good lie in the fairway at the finish of each stroke. The answer is easy, you can't think of a one for there ain't no such animal living. Go further, how many golfers do you know that you'd gamble could play a correct stroke and hit the fairway two times out of three? We are not referring to stars of national renown, but to the average player. Statistics show that the high handicap golfer who plays a good drive fifty per cent, of the time is above the average.

Willie Park said that the man who can putt need fear no rival, but you have to get to the green before you can putt and a good drive takes you a long way on the right road. Don Hamilton used to say that he tried to drive far enough so he'd have a stroke or two in reserve by the time his opponent reached the green, for he felt that he'd probably need them. Few golfers are capable of getting Hamilton distance off the tee, but most high handicap golfers should

(Continued on page 24)

drive better than they do, and statistics show that their fault lies in poor direction rather than failure to get distance.

It is not our intention to enter into a minute description of the many movements which form the component parts of a good swing, but rather to call attention to the vital points of the stroke and then leave each to work out his own salvation by practice. Probably all have seen pictures of James Braid driving from a block of squares marked out on the ground and J. M. Barnes using a letter "H" to illustrate the correct principles of the stroke. All are familiar with the theory, "Hit from the inside out across the line," and yet, ninety per cent. of all high handicap golfers fail to do it.

The Pestiferous Slice

THE slice is the curse of the dub and many a really good golfer would give the clothes off his back to get away from that little swerve to the right on the end of his drive. A slice puts your ball in the rough and a confirmed slicer dares not look at a hazard on the right of the fairway for fear he will slice his ball into it. In short, a slice is the cussedest thing in golf and you can't pick up a golf magazine without reading a sure cure for it, if the reader will only follow directions.

This story is no exception to the rule and our cure can be told in the following sentence, "Hit from the inside out across the line." That's All you have to do, but many players find this difficult and it will do no harm to pause and consider the causes of slicing. There are many reasons why golfers slice but we have never seen a slice that could not be cured by the application of this simple remedy. We will go further and say that we do not recollect of ever

The Curse of Golf

(Continued from page 12)

seeing a ball slice where the club head had taken a divot or marked the turf in a manner which indicated that the ball had been hit from the inside out.

But, you will say, "if I can't hit from the inside out and my play proves that I can't, what am I to do?" Our answer is, "Why can't you?"

Given the correct theory, the execution is up to yourself. There are several reasons why your club head gets outside the line on your downward stroke. You may turn your shoulders too soon, thereby producing a loop in your swing and throwing your club head outside the line before your hands start to move downward at all. You may get outside the line by being in too great a hurry to hit the ball and, in your haste, try to take a short cut from the top of your swing to the ball. You may play the ball too far off your left foot and then sway on your back swing so that you are so far behind the ball that your club head reaches the fullest arc of your circle and is swinging in toward the left of the line of play before it reaches the ball. You may take your club head back outside the line and bring it down again without turning your body at all and in this case your club head never gets inside the line until after the ball is hit.

How to Effect a Cure

BUT, you will say again, "if I do any or all of these things how am I going to stop it?" The answer is easy. First diagnose your own stroke until you can classify your

fault or faults and a friend who will watch you while you practice will be a big help in locating the trouble. Once located, use your own common sense in devising a way to eliminate the fault. If you find this difficult and all other cures fail, try this.

Mark out a line on the ground which will represent your line of play and tee your ball on it. Take any stance you prefer, but a square stance might help. Grasp your club firmly in the fingers of both hands and start the club head away from the ball so that, for the first foot or two, it stays close to the ground. If you will pause here and look at the head of your club, you will note that it is already well inside of the line, and, if you were to play a quarter or even a half shot with your driver, you would have no trouble at all in hitting from the inside out, for you would be playing an "underhand" stroke. This is the important feature. The club head must come through underhanded just as you would throw a baseball underhanded, if you are to hit out across the line and produce a good drive.

Anybody can take the club head two, three, or four feet from the ball and hit out across the line without any trouble and, if the right elbow is kept close to the side, you can play a half shot and still produce the desired result. It is after the shaft of the club passes the perpendicular that most golfers go wrong, and our suggestion is, that temporarily at least, you stick to the half stroke until you form a habit of hitting from the inside out. You can afford to waste a little time at the start of the season, if it will help you to

eliminate a really dangerous fault.

But, some of you will say, "who in heck wants to play half shots with a driver or brassie? Our answer is, that a half shot is a controlled shot and control is what most high handicap players sadly need. Control means better direction and steadiness and, once acquired, this would be a long move in the right direction. Further than this, we'd just as soon play a half shot with a wooden club as to slice all over the course. No golfer would stick to a half shot indefinitely, for there is a natural inclination to lengthen your stroke as the weather grows warmer, and the chances are that you'd lengthen it too soon. Be that as it may, a slice is the hall-mark of the dub and the cure is there for those who will take it.