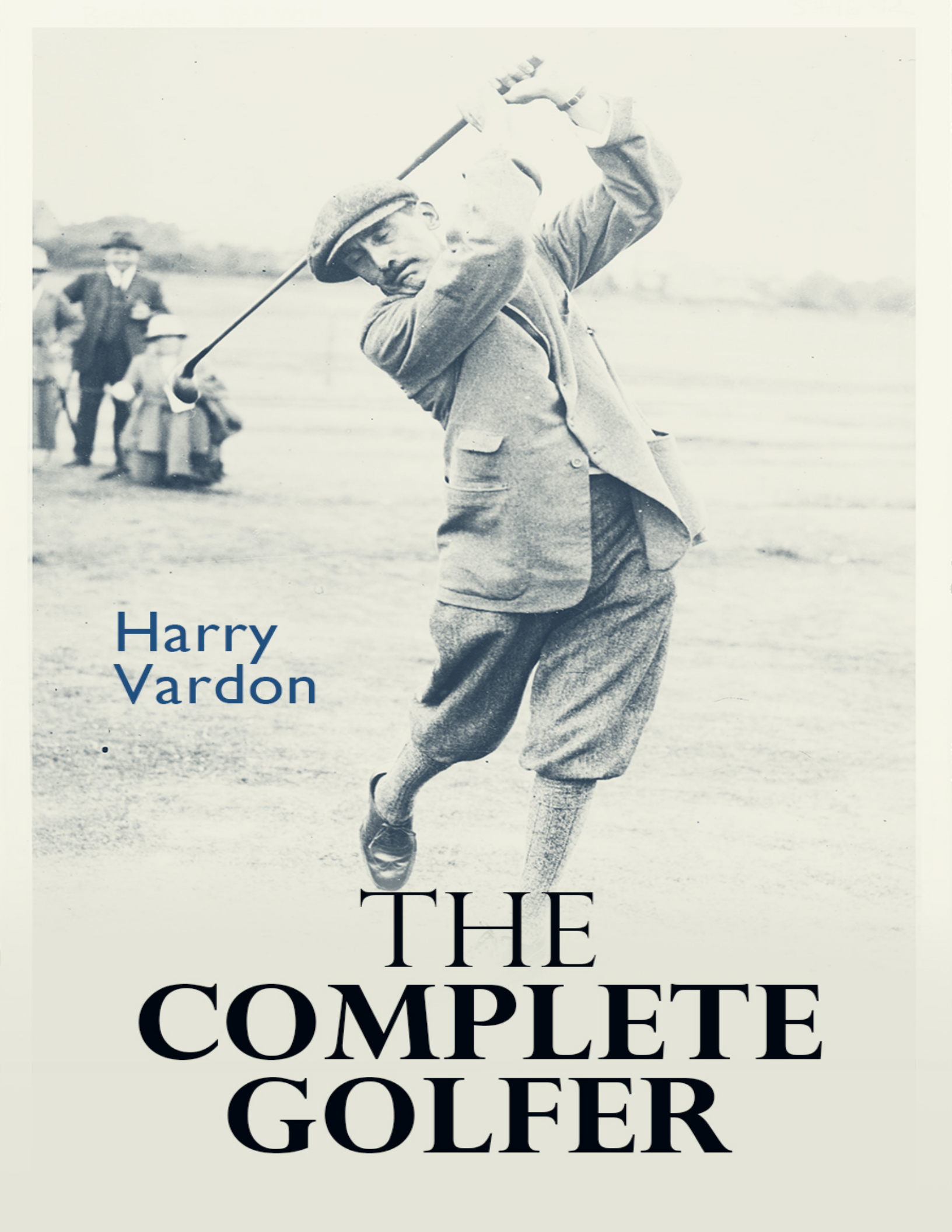


A black and white photograph of a golfer, Harry Vardon, captured in the middle of a golf swing. He is wearing a light-colored jacket, dark breeches, and a flat cap. The background shows a golf course with other people in the distance.

Harry
Vardon

THE
COMPLETE
GOLFER

Harry Vardon

The Complete Golfer

e-artnow, 2020

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Table of Contents

[THE COMPLETE GOLFER](#)

[CHAPTER I](#)

[CHAPTER II](#)

[CHAPTER III](#)

[CHAPTER IV](#)

[CHAPTER V](#)

[CHAPTER VI](#)

[CHAPTER VII](#)

[CHAPTER VIII](#)

[CHAPTER IX](#)

[CHAPTER X](#)

[CHAPTER XI](#)

[CHAPTER XII](#)

[CHAPTER XIII](#)

[CHAPTER XIV](#)

[CHAPTER XV](#)

[CHAPTER XVI](#)

[CHAPTER XVII](#)

[CHAPTER XVIII](#)

[CHAPTER XIX](#)

[CHAPTER XX](#)

[CHAPTER XXI](#)

[CHAPTER XXII](#)

[CHAPTER XXIII](#)

[APPENDIX](#)

THE COMPLETE GOLFER

[Table of Contents](#)

CHAPTER I

[Table of Contents](#)

GOLF AT HOME

The happy golfer—A beginning at Jersey—The Vardon family—An anxious tutor—Golfers come to Grouville—A fine natural course—Initiation as a caddie—Primitive golf—How we made our clubs—Matches in the moonlight—Early progress—The study of methods—Not a single lesson—I become a gardener—The advice of my employer—"Never give up golf"—A nervous player to begin with—My first competition—My brother Tom leaves home—He wins a prize at Musselburgh—I decide for professionalism—An appointment at Ripon.

I HAVE sometimes heard good golfers sigh regretfully, after holing out on the eighteenth green, that in the best of circumstances as to health and duration of life they cannot hope for more than another twenty, or thirty, or forty years of golf, and they are then very likely inclined to be a little bitter about the good years of their youth that they may have "wasted" at some other less fascinating sport. When the golfer's mind turns to reflections such as these, you may depend upon it that it has been one of those days when everything has gone right and nothing wrong, and the supreme joy of life has been experienced on the links. The little white ball has seemed possessed of a soul—a soul full

of kindness and the desire for doing good. The clubs have seemed endowed with some subtle qualities that had rarely been discovered in them before. Their lie, their balance, their whip, have appeared to reach the ideal, and such command has been felt over them as over a dissecting instrument in the hands of a skilful surgeon. The sun has been shining and the atmosphere has sparkled when, flicked cleanly from the tee, the rubber-cored ball has been sent singing through the air. The drives have all been long and straight, the brassy shots well up, the approaches mostly dead, and the putts have taken the true line to the tin. Hole after hole has been done in bogey, and here and there the common enemy has been beaten by a stroke. Perhaps the result is a record round, and, so great is the enthusiasm for the game at this moment, that it is regarded as a great misfortune that the sun has set and there is no more light left for play. These are the times when the golfer's pulse beats strong, and he feels the remorse of the man with the misspent youth because he was grown up and his limbs were setting before ever he teed a ball.

Well, at least I can say that I have not missed much of the game that I love with a great fondness, for I played a kind of prehistoric golf when I was a bad boy of seven, and off and on I have played it ever since. It was fortunate for me that the common land at Jersey was years ago the ideal thing for a golfing links, and that golfers from abroad found out its secret, as they always do. If they had failed to do so in this case, I might still have been spending my life in horticultural pursuits. For I was born (on May 9, 1870) and bred in Jersey, at that little place called Grouville, which is no more than a collection of scattered cottages and farmhouses a few miles from St. Heliers. Both my parents

were natives of Jersey, and my father, who was seventy-four on the 5th of last November, has been a gardener there all his life, holding the proud record of having changed his place of employment only once during the whole period. There was a big family of us—six boys and two girls—and all, except one of my sisters, are still alive. My brothers were George, Phil, Edward, Tom, and Fred, and I came fourth down the list, after Edward. As most golfers know, my brother Tom, to whom I owe very much, is now the professional at the Royal St. George's Club at Sandwich, while Fred is a professional in the Isle of Man. In due course we all went to the little village school; but I fear, from all that I can remember, and from what I have been told, that knowledge had little attraction for me in those days, and I know that I very often played truant, sometimes for three weeks at a stretch. Consequently my old schoolmaster, Mr. Boomer, had no particular reason to be proud of me at that time, as he seems to have become since. He never enjoys a holiday so much in these days as when he comes over from Jersey to see me play for the Open Championship, as he does whenever the meeting is held at Sandwich. But when I did win a Championship on that course, he was so nervous and excited about my play and my prospects that he felt himself unequal to watching me, and during most of the time that I was doing my four rounds he was sitting in a fretful state upon the seashore. I was a thin and rather delicate boy with not much physical strength, but I was as enthusiastic as the others in the games that were played at that time, and my first ambition was to excel at cricket. A while afterwards I became attached to football, and I retained some fondness for this game long after I took up golf. Even after my golfing tour in America a few years ago, when quite at my best, I

captained the Ganton football team and played regularly in its matches.

One day, when I was about seven years of age, a very shocking thing happened at Grouville. All the people there lived a quiet, undisturbed life, and had a very wholesome respect for the sanctity of the Sabbath day. But of all days of the week it was a Sunday when a small party of strange gentlemen made their appearance on the common land, and began to survey and to mark out places for greens and tees. Then the story went about that they were making preparations to play a game called golf. That was enough to excite the wrathful indignation of all the tenant-farmers round about, and without delay they began to think out means for expelling these trespassers from the common land. A tale of indignation spread through Grouville, and these golfers, of whom I remember that Mr. Brewster was one, were not at first regarded in the light of friendship. But they soon made their position secure by obtaining all necessary authority and permission for what they were about to do from the constable of the parish, and from that day we had to resign ourselves to the fact that a new feature had entered into the quiet life of Jersey. The little party went ahead with the marking out of their course, though indeed the natural state of the place was so perfect from the golfer's point of view that very little work was necessary, and no first-class golf links was ever made more easily. There were sand and other natural hazards everywhere, the grass was short and springy just as it is on all good sea-coast links, and all that it was necessary to do was to put a flag down where each hole was going to be, and run the mower and the roller over the space selected for the putting green. Rooms were rented at a little inn

hard by, which was forthwith rechristened the Golf Inn, and the headquarters of the Jersey golfers are still at the same place, though a large club-room has been added. That was the beginning of the Royal Jersey Golf Club. The links as they were when they were first completed were really excellent—much better than they are to-day, for since then, in order to prevent the sand being blown all over the course by the strong winds which sweep across the island, the bunkers have in most cases been filled with clay, which has to a great extent spoiled them.

When everything was ready, more of these golfers came across from England to play this new game which we had never seen before, and all the youngsters of the locality were enticed into their service to carry their clubs. I was among the number, and that was my first introduction to the game. We did not think much of it upon our first experience; but after we had carried for a few rounds we came to see that it contained more than we had imagined. Then we were seized with a desire to play it ourselves, and discover what we could do. But we had no links to play upon, no clubs, no balls, and no money. However, we surmounted all these difficulties. To begin with, we laid out a special course of our very own. It consisted of only four holes, and each one of them was only about fifty yards long, but for boys of seven that was quite enough. We made our teeing grounds, smoothed out the greens, and, so far as this part of the business was concerned, we were soon ready for play. There was no difficulty about balls, for we decided at once that the most suitable article for us, in the absence of real gutties, was the big white marble which we called a taw, and which was about half the size of an ordinary golf ball, or perhaps a little less than that. But

there was some anxiety in our juvenile minds when the question of clubs came to be considered, and I think we deserved credit for the manner in which we disposed of it. It was apparent that nothing would be satisfactory except a club fashioned on the lines of a real golf club, and that to procure anything of the sort we should have to make it ourselves. Therefore, after several experiments, we decided that we would use for the purpose the hard wood of the tree which we called the lady oak. To make a club we cut a thick branch from the tree, sawed off a few inches from it, and then trimmed this piece so that it had a faint resemblance to the heads of the drivers we had seen used on the links. Any elaborate splicing operations were out of the question, so we agreed that we must bore a hole in the centre of the head. The shaft sticks that we chose and trimmed were made of good thorn, white or black, and when we had prepared them to our satisfaction we put the poker in the fire and made it red hot, then bored a hole with it through the head, and tightened the shaft with wedges until the club was complete. With this primitive driver we could get what was for our diminutive limbs a really long ball, or a long taw as one should say. In these later days a patent has been taken out for drivers with the shaft let into the head, which are to all intents and purposes the same in principle as those which we used to make at Grouville.

By and by some of us became quite expert at the making of these clubs, and we set ourselves to discover ways and means of improving them. The greater elaboration of such brassies as we had seen impressed us, and we also found some trouble with our oak heads in that, being green, they were rather inclined to chip and crack. Ultimately we

decided to sheathe the heads entirely with tin. It was not an easy thing to make a good job of this, and we were further troubled by the circumstance that our respective fathers had no sympathy with us, and declined upon any account to lend us their tools. Consequently we had no option but to wait until the coast was clear and then surreptitiously borrow the tools for an hour or two. We called these tin-plated drivers our brassies, and they were certainly an improvement on our original clubs. Occasionally a club was made in this manner which exhibited properties superior to those possessed by any other, as clubs will do even to-day. Forthwith the reputation of the maker of this club went up by leaps and bounds, and he was petitioned by others to make clubs for them, a heavy price in taws and marbles being offered for the service. The club that had created all this stir would change hands two or three times at an increasing price until it required the payment of four or five dozen marbles to become possessed of it. But the boy who owned the treasure was looked upon as the lord of the manor, and odds were demanded of him in the matches that we played.

We practised our very elementary kind of golf whenever we could, and were soon enthusiastic. I remember particularly that many of our best matches were played in the moonlight. The moon seemed to shine more clearly at Jersey than in England, and we could see splendidly. Four of us would go out together on a moonlight night to play, and our little competition was arranged on the medal system by scores. Usually a few marbles were at stake. To prevent the loss of taws one of us was sent ahead to watch for their coming and listen for the faint thud of their fall, while the other three drove from the tee. Then the three

came forward while the watcher went back to drive, and I am sorry to say that our keenness in those days led us to disregard certain principles of the sportsman's code of honour which we appreciated better as we grew up. What I mean is that the watcher was often handicapped in a way that he little suspected, for when he went back to the tee, and we went forward and found that our balls were not always so well up as we had hoped, we gave them a gentle kick forwards; for in the dim light we were able to do this unknown to each other. But in legitimate play we often got a 3 at these fifty-yard holes, and with our home-made clubs, our little white taws, our lack of knowledge, and our physical feebleness all taken into consideration, I say we have often done less creditable things since then.

After such beginnings, we progressed very well. We began to carry more and more for the golfers who came to Grouville; we found or were given real balls that took the place of the taws, and then a damaged club occasionally came our way, and was repaired and brought into our own service. Usually it was necessary to put in new shafts, and so we burnt holes in the heads and put in the sticks, as we did with clubs of our own make; but these converted clubs were disappointing in the matter of durability. It happened once or twice that golfers for whom we had been carrying gave us an undamaged club as a reward for our enthusiasm, and we were greatly excited and encouraged when such a thing happened. I used to carry clubs about twice a week. I remember that Mr. Molesworth and Dr. Purves, both well known in the golfing world, were two players for whom I very often carried, and only the other day when I saw the former at the Professional Tournament at Richmond, watching the play, I was able to remind him

of those times and of a particular shot he once played. We young caddies were very eager to learn the game thoroughly, and we were in the habit of watching these golfers very closely, comparing their styles, and then copying anything from them that seemed to take our fancy. I may say at once, in reply to a question that I am often asked, and which perhaps my present readers may themselves be inclined to put, that I have never in my life taken a single golfing lesson from anyone, and that whatever style I may possess is purely the result of watching others play and copying them when I thought they made a stroke in a particularly easy and satisfactory manner. It was my habit for very many years after these early days, until in fact I had won the Open Championship, to study the methods of good golfers in this way, and there are few from whom one is not able to learn something. I cannot say that the play of any one man particularly impressed me; I cannot point to any player, past or present, and declare that I modelled my style on his. It seemed to me that I took a little from one and a little from another until my swing was a composition of the swings of several players, and my approach shots likewise were of a very mixed parentage. Of course when I took a hint from the play of anyone I had been watching it required much subsequent practice properly to weld it into my own system; but I think that this close watching of good players, and the borrowing from their styles of all information that you think is good, and then constantly practising the new idea yourself, is an excellent method of improving your golf, though I do not recommend it as the sole method of learning, despite the success which I personally have achieved. However, this is a matter for later consideration.

As we were such a large family and my father's means were very limited, there was the necessity which is common in such cases for all of the boys to turn out early in life and do something towards helping the others, and accordingly I went to work when I was thirteen. Some time afterwards I became gardener to the late Major Spofforth of Beauview, who was himself a very keen golfer, and who occasionally gave me some of his old clubs. Now and then, when he was in want of a partner, he used to take me out to play with him, and I shall never forget the words he spoke to me one day after we had played one of these matches. "Henry, my boy," he said, "take my advice, and never give up golf. It may be very useful to you some day." Certainly his words came true. I can only remember about these games that I was in the habit of getting very nervous over them, much more so than I did later on when I played matches of far more consequence. I joined a working men's golf club that had been formed, and it was through this agency that I won my first prize. A vase was offered for competition among the members, the conditions being that six medal rounds were to be played at the rate of one a month. When we had played five, I was leading by so very many strokes that it was next to impossible for any of the others to catch me up, and as just then my time came for leaving home and going out into the greater world of golf, the committee kindly gave me permission to play my last round two or three weeks before the proper time. It removed all doubt as to the destination of the prize, which has still one of the most honoured places on my mantelpiece. At that time my handicap for this club was plus 3, but that did not mean that I would have been plus 3 anywhere else. As a matter of fact, I should think I must have been about 8 or 10.

By this time my younger brother Tom had already gone away to learn club-making from Lowe at St. Anne's-on-Sea. He played very much the same game of golf as I did at that time, and it was his venture and the success that waited upon it that made me determine to strike out. While Tom was at St. Anne's he went on a journey north to take part in a tournament at Musselburgh, where he captured the second prize. Thereupon I came to the conclusion that, if Tom could do that, then I too with a little patience might do the same. Indeed, I was a very keen golfer just then. At last Lowe was summoned to Lord Ripon's place at Ripon, near Harrogate, to lay out a new nine-holes course, and Tom wrote to me saying that they would be wanting a professional there, and if I desired such an appointment I had better apply for it without delay. I did so, and was engaged. I was twenty years of age when I left home to assume these duties.

CHAPTER II

[Table of Contents](#)

SOME REMINISCENCES

Not enough golf—"Reduced to cricket"—I move to Bury—A match with Alexander Herd—No more nerves—Third place in an open competition—I play for the Championship—A success at Portrush—Some conversation and a match with Andrew Kirkaldy—Fifth for the Championship at Sandwich—Second at the Deal tournament—Eighth in the Championship at St. Andrews—I go to Ganton—An invitation to the south of France—The Championship at Muirfield—An exciting finish—A stiff problem at the last hole—I tie with Taylor—We play

off, and I win the Championship—A tale of a putter—Ben Sayers wants a "wun"—What Andrew thought of Muirfield—I win the Championship again at Prestwick—Willie Park as runner-up—My great match with Park—Excellent arrangements—A welcome victory—On money matches in general—My third Championship at Sandwich—My fourth at Prestwick—Golf under difficulties.

NO true golfer is satisfied with a little of the game, if there is no substantial reason why he should not have much of it. I was greenkeeper as well as professional to the Studley Royal Golf Club, Ripon; but golf did not seem to have taken a very deep root there up to that time. There was so little of it played that I soon found time hang heavily upon my hands, and in the summer I was reduced to playing cricket, and in fact played more with the bat than I did with the driver. There were one or two good players on the links occasionally, and now and then I had some good games with visitors to the place. One day after such a match my opponent remarked very seriously to me, "Harry, if you take my advice you will get away from here as quickly as you can, as you don't get half enough golf to bring you out." I took the advice very much to heart. I was not unduly conceited about my golf in those days, and the possibility of being Champion at some future time had taken no definite shape in my mind; but I was naturally ambitious and disinclined to waste any opportunities that might present themselves. So, when I saw that the Bury Golf Club were advertising for a professional, I applied for the post and got it. It was by no means a bad nine-holes course that I found at Bury, and I was enabled to play much more golf than at Ripon, while there were some very good amateurs there, Mr. S.F. Butcher being one of the best. I was now beginning to play fairly well, and the first professional match of my life was arranged for me,

Alexander Herd of Huddersfield being my opponent in this maiden effort, upon the result of which a stake of a few pounds a side depended. Herd was by that time a famous player and accomplishing some very fine golf, so that on paper at all events the unknown Bury professional had no chance whatever. So indeed it proved. It was fixed that we were to play thirty-six holes, home and home, Herd having the privilege of playing on his own course first. I forget how many he was up at Huddersfield, but it was so many that I had practically no chance of wiping out the difference when I brought my opponent to Bury, and in the end he won quite easily. "Sandy" Herd, as we all call him, and I have had many great matches since then, and many of them of far greater consequence than this, but I shall never forget this beginning. Neither in those days, nor in the others that soon followed, when it became clear that I had a chance of becoming Champion, was I ever in the least troubled with nervousness. I was completely cured of my early complaint. Moreover, I have not known what it is to be nervous even in a Championship round when my fate depended upon almost every stroke, and particularly on those at the last few holes. The feeling that was always uppermost in my mind was that I had everything to gain and nothing to lose. It is only when a man has everything to lose and nothing to gain that he should become uneasy about his game. When you have won a few prizes and there are critical eyes upon you, there may be some excuse for nerves, but not before. All young players should grasp the simple truth of this simple statement; but it is surprising how many fail to do so. No stroke or game ever seemed to cause me any anxiety in those young days, and my rapid success may have been in a large measure due to this indifference.

In 1893 I decided that I would enter for the Open Championship, which in that year was played for at Prestwick, and I went north in company with my brother Tom, stopping on our way to take part in the tournament at Kilmalcolm, which was attended by most of the other professionals. I did fairly well in this, the first open competition for which I entered, being bracketed with poor Hugh Kirkaldy for third place. But I failed in the Championship competition, as, of course, I fully expected to do. That was Willie Auchterlonie's year, and I was some way down the list. I started in great style, and, though I broke down badly later on, there was just the consolation left for me that after all I did better than my partner, Willie Campbell.

There were some curious circumstances attending the first big success of any kind that I achieved. This was at Portrush in Ireland, shortly after the Championship meeting, and the competition was a professional tournament. I was drawn against Andrew Kirkaldy in the first round, and his brother Hugh was one of the next pair, so it seemed that the two Kirkaldys would meet in the second round. Andrew assumed that that would happen, as he had every right to do, and he was heard to remark that it was rather hard luck that the brothers should be set against each other in this manner so early in the competition. The night before the match-play part of the business commenced, I was walking down one of the streets of Portrush when I encountered Andrew himself, and in his own blunt but good-humoured way he remarked, "Young laddie, d'ye think y're gaun to tak the money awa' with ye? Ye've no chance, ye ken." I said nothing in reply, because I felt that he spoke the truth. Next day a heavy

gale was blowing, and I started very cautiously. The first hole was on the side of a hill, and when my ball lay a yard from the flag and I had the next stroke for the hole, it was trembling in the wind and threatening every moment to start rolling. So I waited for it to steady itself, and my waiting exasperated Andrew to such an extent that at length he exclaimed, "Man, d'ye ken I'm cauld? Are ye gaun to keep me waiting here a' nicht?" Then I took the putt and missed it, so the hole was halved. However, I set about my opponent after that, and had begun to enjoy the game immensely by the time we reached the turn. At this point two of the holes ran parallel to each other, and as we were playing one of them we passed Hugh and his partner going up to the other. "Man, Andrew, hoo's the game?" called out brother Hugh. "Man alive, I'm five doon!" Andrew replied in tones of distress. "Ma conscience!" muttered Hugh as he passed along. Andrew was more than five down at the finish of that game, and in the second round I had the satisfaction of removing the remaining member of the Kirkaldy family from the competition, while in the semi-final I beat an old Open Champion, D. Brown. But in the final, Herd defeated me on the last green, and so I had to be content with the prize given for runner-up. Shortly afterwards I won another prize in a tournament at Ilkley, this time accounting for Herd as well as my brother Tom and many other well-known players. Tom was professional at Ilkley, and the course there was a very difficult nine holes.

I did better in the competition for the Open Championship in the following year when the meeting was held at Sandwich, playing a particularly good game on the second day, when my 80 and 81 were one of the two lowest

combined returns. At the finish I was fifth, and felt very pleased to occupy the position, for the excellence of the golf that I witnessed was a surprise to me. From Sandwich the professionals went on to Deal, where a tournament was held, in which I managed to secure second place. It was Herd who beat me once again. At St. Andrews in the 1895 Competition, I returned the lowest score in the first round, but could only tie for the ninth place at the finish. My old friend, J.H. Taylor, who made his first essay to capture the blue ribbon of golf at Prestwick at the same time that I did, was the winner at both this and the previous Championship meeting. A few months later I left Bury for Ganton; Tom, who had been over there with some Ilkley players at the Yorkshire meeting, having heard that they were in need of a new professional, and written to me at once with advice to apply. Between leaving Bury and going to Ganton I had three weeks of good golf at Pau, in the south of France, the great and unexpected honour being paid me of an invitation to form one of a small party of professionals for whom a series of matches and competitions had been arranged there. Taylor, Herd, Archie Simpson, Willie Auchterlonie, and Lloyd, the local professional, were the others. Professional golfers when they are out together usually manage to have a pretty good time, and this occasion was no exception. Knowing a little French, I was once appointed cashier and paymaster for the party, but I did not know enough of the language to feel quite at home when large figures were the subject of discussion, and I remember that the result was an awkward incident at Bordeaux on the return journey. We were called upon to pay excess fare for the luxury of travelling in the express, and, failing to understand the ticket collector, I was filling his hand with francs, one by one, waiting for him to tell me when he was

in possession of the required amount. But he needed more and more, and the situation was becoming embarrassing, when the guard whistled and the train moved off. If it had not been for that intervention we might still have been paying him excess fare. I went to Ganton immediately on my return, and in the spring of that year, 1896, a match between Taylor and myself was arranged on my new course, when I had the satisfaction of winning.

I was looking forward very keenly to the Open Championship that year. It was at Muirfield, and it took place only four or five weeks after this encouraging victory over Taylor. In the meantime I had been a little off my game, and when I teed my first ball at Muirfield it seemed to me that I was as likely to make a bad drive as a good one, and I was equally uncertain with all the other clubs in my bag. But as it happened I was fortunate enough to be playing well during the competition, and was close up at the end of the first day, with Taylor in the next place above me. The next day I was again playing well, and the result was exciting. Taylor was doing his rounds only a few holes in front of me, and late in the contest it became apparent that the issue would be left between us. I did not know exactly what I had to do to win until about four holes from the finish, when someone, who had seen Taylor putt out at the last green, came up to me and told me what number of strokes was still left to me to play if I were to tie with him. When I came to the last hole I had set me what I think was the most anxious problem that has ever come my way since I first took up golf. I had five strokes left to play in order to tie with Taylor and give me the right to play off with him for the Championship, and four left with which to win it outright. It is a fairly long hole—a drive and a good brassy,

with a very nasty bunker guarding the green. Thus, while it was an easy 5, it was a difficult 4, and the bold golfer who made his bid for the low figure might possibly be punished with a 6. My drive was good, and then I had to make my choice between the bold game and the sure one. A Championship hung upon the decision. The prospect of being the winner in less than five minutes was tempting. The brassy would give me the Championship or nothing. The iron would admit me to the privilege of playing off with Taylor another day. I hesitated. I think I would have taken the iron in any case; but just when I was longing for an inspiration, my eye wandered among the spectators some sixty or seventy yards in front of me, and I caught sight of my friend James Kay of Seaton Carew making frantic efforts to attract my attention, and pointing with his hand to the ground on the near side of the bunker as a hint to play short. That settled it. I played short, got my 5, and tied with Taylor with a total score of 316.

The play-off was full of interest and excitement. Taylor and I were granted permission to take part in a tournament at North Berwick before we settled the question between us. When at length we teed up again at Muirfield, I felt as though I were fit to play for anything, and started in a way that justified my confidence, for I picked up a useful lead of five strokes in the first half-dozen holes. After that Taylor settled down to most brilliant golf, and brought my lead down to a single stroke; but at the end of the first round I was two to the good. To my exasperation, this lead disappeared with the very first stroke that I made after lunch. There is a wood running along the left-hand side of the line of the first hole on this course. With my cleek shot from the tee I pulled the ball into this dismal place, and by

the rule in force at the time I lost two strokes and played again from the tee, Taylor holing out in 3 to my 5. However, at this crisis I came out again and won a stroke at each of the next three holes, and only lost one of them from that point to the seventeenth. Two strokes to the good and two holes to go—that at least seemed good for the Championship. On the seventeenth green, my brother Tom, who was carrying my clubs for me, took a lot of trouble to point out the line of a putt the whole length of the green, but something prompted me to take an entirely different course, and I holed the putt, gaining another stroke. There we were, Taylor and I, at that last hole again, but this time we were together, and I had a big advantage over my good friend on this occasion. There was more mental golf to be played, and though Taylor's ordeal was the more trying, neither of us had any difficulty in coming to a decision. My course was clear. With a lead of three strokes I had to play for a 5, as on the previous occasion, because it was certain to give me the Championship. Taylor's only chance was to blaze away with both his driver and his brassy, and trust to getting his second shot so well placed on the green as to secure a 3, which, in the event of my dropping a stroke through an accident in the bunker or elsewhere and taking 6, would enable him to tie. I obtained my 5 without difficulty, but Taylor's gallant bid for 3 met with an unhappy fate, for his second shot was trapped in the bunker, and it took him 6 to hole out. And so with a score of 157 to Taylor's 161, I was Open Champion at last, and for the first time in my life I felt some emotion as a golfer. I was too dazed to speak, and it seemed as if my feet had taken root on the eighteenth green, for I don't think I moved for several minutes.

There is a little tale I want to tell about that Championship, illustrating the old saying that golf is a very funny game, and giving some point to a recommendation that I shall have to make later on. Never in my life have I putted better than I did in those two rounds. If, when I had a putt the whole length of the green, I did not actually rattle it into the tin, I laid it stone dead on the lip of the hole; on no green did I take more than two putts. Yet in the various rounds I had played on several days before my putting had been very indifferent. How came this remarkable change? It seems to me that it was entirely due to a chance visit that I paid to Ben Sayers's shop when I was at North Berwick in the interval between tying with Taylor and playing the deciding rounds. I told the clubmaker who was in charge that I was off my putting, and wanted a new putter. Hitherto I had been playing with one of the bent-necked variety. While I was looking about the shop my eye was attracted by an old cleek that lay in a corner—a light and neglected club, for which nobody seemed to have any use. The strange idea occurred to me that this would make a grand putter, and so I told the man to take out the old shaft and put a new and shorter one in, and when this process had been completed I determined to experiment with it in the play-off with Taylor. I fancied this new discovery of mine and had confidence in it, and that was why I got all those long putts down and achieved the golfer's greatest ambition. But though I keep it still and treasure it, I have never played with that putter since. It has done its duty.

I must tell just one other story concerning this Muirfield Championship. Among the favourites at the beginning of operations were Ben Sayers and Andrew Kirkaldy, and a

victory on the part of either of them would have been most popular in the North, as it would have settled the cup on the other side of the Tweed. Ben was rather inclined to think his own prospects were good. Someone asked him the day before the meeting who was the most likely Champion. "Jist gie me a wun' an' I'll show ye wha'll be the Champion," he replied, and he had some reason for the implied confidence in himself, for he knew Muirfield very well, and no one had better knowledge of how to play the strokes properly there when there was a gale blowing over the course, and pulling and slicing were constantly required. But neither Ben nor Andrew was as successful as was wished, and not unnaturally they thought somewhat less of Muirfield than they had done before. Therefore it was not fair to ask Kirkaldy, after the competition had been completed, what he really considered to be the merits of the course. I was standing near him when a player came up and bluntly asked, "What d'ye think o' Muirfield now, Andrew?" Andrew's lip curled as he replied, "No for gowff ava'. Just an auld watter meedie. I'm gled I'm gaun hame." But the inquirer must needs ejaculate, "Hooch ay, she would be ferry coot whateffer if you had peen in Harry Fardon's shoes."

There was an exciting finish also to the 1898 Championship, which was held at Prestwick. The final struggle was left to Willie Park and myself, and at the end of the third round, when Willie was three strokes to the good, it seemed a very likely victory for him. In the last round I was playing a hole in front of him, and we were watching each other as cats watch mice the whole way round the links. I made a reckoning when we reached the turn that I had wiped out the three strokes deficit, and

could now discuss the remainder of the game with Park without any sense of inferiority. I finished very steadily, and when Park stood on the last tee just as I had holed out, he was left to get a 3 at this eighteenth hole to tie. His drive was a beauty, and plop came the ball down to the corner of the green, making the 3 seem a certainty. An immense crowd pressed round the green to see these fateful putts, and in the excitement of the moment, I, the next most concerned man to Park himself, was elbowed out. I just saw his long putt roll up to within about a yard of the hole, which was much too dead for my liking. Then, while Park proceeded to carry out his ideas of accomplishing a certainty, I stood at the edge of the crowd, seeing nothing and feeling the most nervous and miserable man alive. Never while playing have I felt so uncomfortable as during those two or three minutes. After what seemed an eternity there rose from all round the ring one long disappointed "O-o-o-h!" I didn't stop to look at the ball, which was still outside the hole. I knew that I had won the Championship again, and so I hastened light-heartedly away. I must admit that Park was playing an exceedingly fine game at that time, and it was only the fact that I was probably playing as well as ever I did in my life that enabled me to get the better of him. The day after winning the Championship I gained the first prize in a tournament at the adjoining course of St. Nicholas, and thereafter I frequently took part in competitions, winning much more often than not.

But the most important event, and the biggest match I ever had with anyone, was my engagement with Willie Park, who, not altogether satisfied at having missed the Championship by a putt, challenged me to play him home and home matches, thirty-six holes each time, for £100 a

side. There was some difficulty in arranging final details, but eventually we agreed to play at North Berwick and Ganton, North Berwick first. I have never seen such a golfing crowd as there was at North Berwick the day we played there. All golfing Scotland seemed to be in attendance, and goodness knows how many people would have been watching the play if it had not happened that the lukewarm golfers went instead to Edinburgh to see the Prince of Wales, who was visiting the capital that day. As it was, there were fully seven thousand people on the links, and yet this huge crowd—surely one of the very biggest that have ever watched a golf match—was perfectly managed, and never in the least interfered with a single stroke made by either Park or myself. The arrangements, indeed, were admirable. In order to keep the crowd informed of the state of the game at each hole, two flags were made, one being white with a red "P" on it, and the other red with a "V" worked on in white. When Park won a hole the flag with his initial was hoisted, and the "V" was sent up when I won a hole, both flags being waved when it was a half. At each teeing ground a rope three hundred yards long was stretched, and fourteen constables and a like number of honorary officials took control of it. In order to prevent any inconvenience at the dyke on the course, a boarding, forty feet wide and fifty yards out of the line from the tee to the hole, was erected, so that the crowd could walk right over. Mr. C.C. Broadwood, the Ganton captain, acted as my referee, and Lieutenant "Freddy" Tait served in the same capacity on behalf of Park. One of the most laborious tasks was that undertaken by the two Messrs. Hunter, who acted as forecaddies, and did their work splendidly. In two practice rounds that I played before the great encounter opened I did 76 each time, and I felt very

fit when we teed up on the eventful morning. And I played very steadily, too, though my putting was sometimes a little erratic, and Park is one of the greatest putters who have ever lived. The early part of the game was very extraordinary in that the first ten holes were halved in 4, 5, 4, 4, 4, 4, 5, 4, 4. Then Park drew first blood, but in the end I finished two up on the day's play. When Park came to Ganton three weeks later, I beat him on the two matches by 11 up with 10 to play. Naturally he was disappointed, but he was very sportsmanlike. He was acknowledged to be the greatest match-player of his time. I do not care for myself to lay any more stress on the importance of this match, or of the value of my own achievement; but those who have taken up golf quite lately can have no conception of the stir that it caused. It was the event of my lifetime.

The remembrance of this encounter brings forward the question of big money matches generally, which several people have declared they would like to see renewed. Fifty years ago they were common enough, and there are great stories told of foursomes between Allan Robertson and Tom Morris on the one side and the brothers Dunn on the other for a stake of £400, and so on. The sightseers of golf ask why there are no such matches now. I think it is because golf professionals have to work too hard for the money they earn, and they do not care for the idea of throwing it away again on a single match. They do not receive large "benefits" or gate money, as do professionals in other branches of sport. So they deem it best to be careful of their savings. Besides, such matches tend to create bad feeling among the players, and we professionals are such a happy family that we distrust any scheme with such a tendency. Moreover, golf at the present time is a

delightfully pure game, so far as gambling is concerned—purer than most others—and such matches would very likely encourage the gambling idea. That would be a misfortune. I contend that after all, for the best and fairest and most interesting trial of strength there is nothing like a good tournament where each player has to test himself against all comers. Every man plays to win, the golf is generally good, and what more is wanted?

When I won the Championship again in the following year at Sandwich, my success was chiefly due to my brassy play, which was better than it ever was before or has been since. From my brassy strokes the ball was often enough laid dead near the hole; certainly my second shots were always the winning shots. The game seemed very easy to me then, and I gained the Championship for the third time with less difficulty than on either of the two previous occasions. In 1900 I made a long tour in America, and won the American Championship. Concerning these events I desire to write at some length in a later chapter. The greatest success which I have ever achieved in face of difficulties was when I again became Open Champion at Prestwick in 1903. For some time beforehand I had been feeling exceedingly unwell, and, as it appeared shortly afterwards, there was serious trouble brewing. During the play for the Championship I was not at all myself, and while I was making the last round I was repeatedly so faint that I thought it would be impossible for me to finish. However, when I holed my last putt I knew that I had won. My brother Tom was runner-up, six strokes behind, and, glad as I was of the distinction of having equalled the record of the two Morrisises in having won the Championship four times, I could have wished, and did wish, that Tom had

been the victor. In all the circumstances I was very much surprised that I did so well. The last day's work was an enormous strain, yet on the following day I played in a tournament at Irvine, won the first prize, and broke the record of the course. It is wonderful what golf can be played when one's mind is given to the task, whatever the adverse factors in the case may be.

However, these are the events of recent golfing history, and I have no desire to inflict upon my readers a narrative of any more of them. As nearly as I can reckon, I have up to date won the first prize in forty-eight first-class tournaments, and by being four times British Open Champion and once American have still that record to my credit. And I hope to play many of my best games in the future, for it takes longer to kill the golf in a man than it does to breed it.

CHAPTER III

[Table of Contents](#)

THE WAY TO GOLF