

The AMERICAN GOLFER

VOL. XIV
No. 4

AUGUST
1915



PLAYERS OF THE PERIOD*

AN INTIMATE STUDY OF THEIR EXPERIENCES, CHARACTERISTICS
AND METHODS

BY HENRY LEACH

III.—GEORGE DUNCAN

IT MIGHT WELL BE SAID of George Duncan that he is the best human golfing discovery of the twentieth century; indeed is he not in the uttermost sense the only real discovery of this kind, meaning a player of real genius as above superlative skill? I believe that to be a true and proper judgment. Harry Vardon, the greatest golf genius of all, was, you must remember, primarily attached to the last century, for it was in its closing years that he shone in the full splendour of his ability, and indeed, he reached his summit in the very last of the eighteens. He soliloquises himself, a little pathetically, "I say that when I won my fifth championship I was four strokes worse in the quality of my game than when I won my third championship in 1899, though the competition was ever so much keener at the time of my fifth success in 1911."

However, for the purposes of the proposition that is here put forward, it matters nothing whether Vardon played better in the nineteenth or the twentieth century; he was established in the former and essentially he belongs to it. And without doubt,

either, he was the golfing king of that century; it contained nobody like him. There are still doubts and mysteries about the excellence of young Tommy Morris, and we shall always be in a difficulty about him, because those who still live and saw him (and among them are some fine players and good and fair judges of the game, for whose opinions I have the highest respect) seem often to be rather prejudiced in favour of the players of the olden time when golf was less populous than now, and when, in a good sense, it was less vulgar. On the other hand, those who did not see Tommy, feel that on a kind of circumstantial evidence, he must be considered inferior to the best players of the present day, or at all events his equality or superiority is not proven. If he had not won the Open Championship four times we should probably never have had his claims asserted for him as they have been; but yet the mere winning of that championship meant hardly anything at all, for the competitors were exceedingly few and there were still fewer of really great quality. Yet young Tommy was undoubtedly a very fine

player, and he may be accounted one of the great geniuses of the game.

I IMAGINE that in a hundred years from now there will still be great arguments as to whether he or Harry Vardon was the better, or, rather, as to whether the former was as good as the latter, and our posterity will have even less living evidence at their disposal than we have now. Old Jamie Anderson, who won the Open Championship three years in succession, may have been something like a genius at the game; so, too, Bob Ferguson, who did the same. John Ball and Mr. Hilton, Taylor and Braid, are uncommonly near it; but though their skill is magnificent and their achievement grand, they may not yet have had within them that divine spark of genius, that subtle quality of instinct and temperament which are not matters of training or ordinary

ability at all. The man who is not a golfing genius may sometimes beat the man who is, but he would not be a greater golfer just for that. He who is not such a genius has to try very hard to be something like a great

player, but the genius cannot help being one. The twentieth century has produced a very large number of most brilliant players, men who seem to have got nearly as far on in the game as they can in the absence of real genius. Yet it has been very un-

productive in this matter of genius. Very few players of really extraordinary ability have arisen; most of those who have succeeded seem to have done so as the result of study, practice and experience. Seldom has the golf been born in them. Only four men outside the great triumvirate have won the Open Championship in this twentieth century; these being Herd, Jack White, Massy and Ray, and one could not describe any of these as a genius, though they are all most excellent players. I can, for myself, think of only two men who might be set in this rare class. One of them is young Mc-

Dermott, the



DUNCAN on his entry for the championship.

American, who may not quite belong to it but is uncommonly near to doing so. We have hardly had time to see as yet, but all the evidence is in his favour, and though he has done things to prevent us from rejoicing

In his success in England and elsewhere, we hope that for the sake of himself and the game in America he will soon recover from troubles that we heard recently had befallen him.

About George Duncan there can be no sort of doubt whatever. He is a genius, by far the best golfing product of the century, a man who plays from instinct and inspiration as much as from anything else, a person of strange beliefs and moods such as Harry Vardon is, and one who really plays so much from instinct and so little from definite thought that he must often have difficulty in explaining to anyone how exactly he plays a particular shot. Indeed, I have heard of George Duncan in perfect good faith saying that he did certain things in a certain way when I know quite well that he did nothing of the kind, and Harry Vardon can always be told something that is true and new to him about his own style and ways. Only the mechanical golfer, as we call him, the trained player, the man of plain experience can account exactly for every one of his movements. Genius cannot be explained any more than the mysteries of heaven and hell. Although he has never won the Open Championship and will certainly never win it six times as Harry Vardon has done—and may even never win it once, though it is probable he will do that—George Duncan is still a great golfing genius, undoubtedly the most brilliant of the younger school of players that comes after the triumvirate, the only man the game has produced who, in quality, is up to the level of that glorious three, and the man of whom it is commonly said in Britain that he is the natural successor to Harry Vardon, which is paying a player the utmost possible in the way of compliment. Duncan has

been once to America but the players of the United States had not many opportunities of watching him then although here and there he broke records of courses. Some day he will cross the Atlantic again, and I counsel all my American friends to watch him closely whether he is winning that competition or match in which he is engaged or not, for he is very well worth the watching, and is one of the most interesting players who ever handled a club. Of course, he is a Scot. His name tells you that, and there is the look of the Scot on his countenance and the sound in his speech. But in every way he is a very agreeable Scot with a bright and engaging personality, and in the full sense he is a golfer and a gentleman, one who is a credit to the game as most great golfers are. Now let me explain some of the most interesting facts of his career.

THE GREAT SCOTTISH GOLFERS most frequently come from round about St. Andrews or Elie, but some have descended upon us from the neighbourhood of Aberdeen which is farther north, and Duncan is one of them. He was born at Methlick in Aberdeenshire on the sixteenth of September, 1883, so he is only thirty-two years of age this year. Methlick is but a little village, and the child, Duncan, did not dwell in it long enough to become attached to it, the family homestead being established in the city of Aberdeen itself, where there is an excellent public course. His instincts as a boy led him very decisively to this golf course, and the game soon became a passion with him. Here is some curious news, that at the beginning when he first attempted to handle clubs for himself he gripped with the left hand below the right and

had some difficulty in getting out of that habit. Another great player used to do the same thing in his immature years, and that was Tom Morris, the elder. About twelve months after he first began to play, or try to play, Duncan acquired the ordinary grip of a golfer. For about six years from the age of ten he carried clubs on the Aberdeen links, and was regularly in the service of Jim Donaldson, who was then an amateur, but is now the professional at Glen View on the American side of the Atlantic. He studied Donaldson closely, also Archie Simpson who was one of the greatest golfers produced in that part of the world. More of Simpson than anybody else crept into his play, but he never really made anything like an idol of any master player until he saw Vardon at the game, and was then so fascinated that he set himself out to copy as much of him as he could. He is an inch and a half taller than Vardon, but much the same in build, free of limb and athletic, and his original style was one that was very susceptible to Vardonic influences. The result is that he has now far more of Vardon in him than any other living golfer, and indeed is the only player who comes anywhere near to the great champion in the smoothness and rhythm of style and the astonishing results that are apparently gained from the very minimum of effort. At fourteen years of age he went round the public links at Aberdeen in a score of 77, which was excellent for a boy, especially as the clubs he did it with were a mixed set, the rejected of former masters, and had all seen their best days. For a few seasons he was a caddie at the Balgownie links at Aberdeen, and then he received a modest appointment as professional at the Stonehaven course, a

little golfing ground perched up in a queer place on the cliffs of Aberdeenshire.

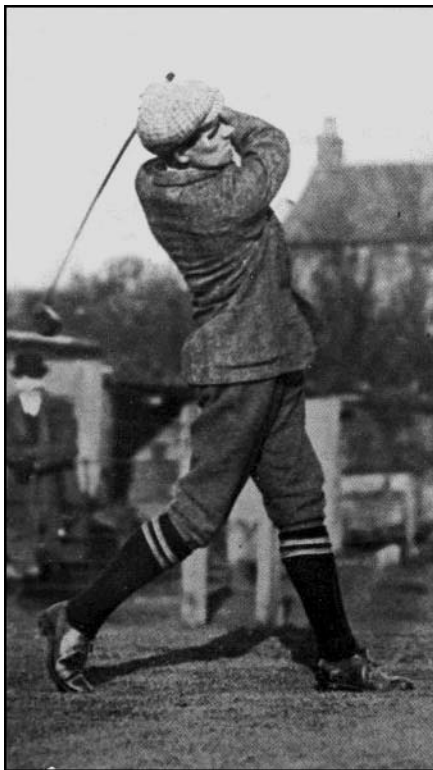
At the age of nineteen he took the important step in his career to which every ambitious Scotsman looks forward. He crossed the border and travelled south, though he did not attach himself to England at first but went along to the neighbouring Wales where he set up as professional at a seaside club at Rhos-on-Sea near to Llandudno. He tarried at the Rhos for a little while; but it was while here that he played his first big match, and his opponent was Fred Collins, the very able professional at the adjacent course at Llandudno. Collins won at Rhos, but Duncan gained the day at Llandudno, and when a deciding match was arranged at Conway, another place near by, Duncan won the rubber. The members of the Carnarvonshire Club at Conway were much impressed by what they saw of the shots of this young man of whom so little had been heard up to that time, and they engaged him as their professional. He held the appointment for a couple of years, and then crossed another border into England, being engaged as professional at the Timperley club on the outskirts of Manchester. It was while he was here that his fame began to spread all over the country. He made a good showing in big events, his wonderful style, and the amazing speed with which he played the game attracted attention, and at last an important foursome for stakes of a thousand dollars was arranged between him and his friend, Charles Mayo, on the one side, and Harry Vardon and James Braid on the other. The challenge on the part of Duncan and Mayo was thrown out to the world in general, and it was taken up

without delay by Vardon and Braid, the arrangement being that thirty-six holes should be played at Walton Heath, and thirty-six at Timperley, the former being Braid's own course.

IN THIS MATCH Duncan for the first time came into the full glare of publicity, and as I undertook the duties of referee in it I had the best possible opportunity of studying him. And a most interesting experience it was. I don't think anyone really expected Duncan and Mayo to beat the pair of old champions to whom they were opposed. They themselves did not expect to do it, but they meant to have a big try. Duncan and Mayo often afterwards went into harness together as partners in foursomes but I doubt if they were well suited to each other though there was always a good understanding and sympathy

between them. Duncan as the saying is, looks as fast as a racehorse, or seemed so at that time, and, as we have declared, he is a man who plays largely from inspiration. On the other hand Mayo then was slow, most painfully slow on the putting greens, while his style was to a considerable extent mechanical. I say this not by any means in a disparaging way, for he is a good golfer who has done great

things, and in one point at all events he is the superior of his old foursome mate—in temperament and in steadiness. Vardon and Braid became four up at Walton Heath, the match there creating enormous interest, and special trains being run from London to take the spectators there. Then at Timperley the older players went ahead still more and won by nine and eight. Two years later Duncan and Mayo won the London Foursome tournament, then they beat Ray and Tom Vardon over seventy-two holes (played at Deal and Prince's Sandwich) for a thousand dollars, and afterwards lost to Braid and Taylor in a similar match for same stakes.



GEO. DUNCAN'S finish on the drive.

DURING THIS PERIOD Duncan was trying to make headway in other events, but his hot-headedness was often the cause of his undoing. He won a fifteen-hundred dollar tournament at North Berwick in 1909 after a most brilliant exhibition, but he failed continually in the big autumn tournament of the Professional Golfers' Association never getting further than the semi-final until 1910 when he reached the final and then played his worst against Sherlock at Sunningdale. In 1913 however he won this event. But at other times and places, when less publicity was

given to his doings and they mattered not so much, he accomplished some remarkable things. Once after being beaten by Mayo in the first round of the P. G. A. tournament he went back to Timperley where he was then, very much annoyed with himself, and straightaway averaged 69 for ten consecutive rounds on a course the bogey for which was 81. These scores included two 66's and a 67, and his worst round of the ten was 74. That was in 1907. Hot-headed he still is, and will always be—and he would be far less attractive if he were not—but harsh experience has toned him down a little since those days and taught him that, prosaic as are the ways of discretion, they must sometimes be trodden. "Too often," Duncan once reflected in those days, "I take the risk of being made or marred by a single stroke." Nobody among first-class professional golfers was ever more liable to run into double figures at a single hole. Once he got started on the track of them there was no stopping him. In big tournaments when four rounds were to be played he could often be depended upon to do both the best round and the worst, or nearly the worst. He would generally start off in most brilliant style, and half way through the competition would be the leader. But, sure as fate, he would get in one thoroughly bad round before the finish and that settled him. Once he started going to pieces there was nobody like Duncan for making a general hash of everything. It was that fiery temperament of his.

IN THE OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP he has had some extraordinary experiences ; for a loser his career in that event has indeed been the most ex-

traordinary ever known. Year after year we have been expecting him to win. For the last five or six years he has continually been a favourite, and if he had had half the steadiness of some of the old champions he would have won more than once. Two great tragedies stand out in his championship history. The first of them was at St. Andrews in 1910. Who at that memorable Jubilee championship meeting—it was the fiftieth of the series and a special gold medal was being given to commemorate the occasion—will ever forget the pitifulness of the fall of Duncan in the last round, when he had seemed an almost certain winner! He took the lead in the first round with a brilliant 73, and though he was displaced in the second his 77 still kept him among the dwindling set of possible winners. It was in this second round that Wilie Smith of Mexico made a new record for the old course with a 71. In the third round Duncan himself equalled that record, and the 71's of him and Smith are still the best ever done in competition on the most famous courses of the world. In view of all the circumstances Duncan's record for St. Andrews is still worth quoting in detail. The figures are:

Out—3 5 4 5 5 3 4 3 4—36
In —4 3 4 5 4 4 3 4 4—35—71

At the end of this third round he again led the field with an aggregate of 221, Braid being second with 223, while the next men, Herd and Ray, were four strokes behind Braid. Then see what happened in the last round when he ought to have been making himself a winner. All went fairly well until he reached the fifth hole where he took six, and those who knew Duncan and his liability to be upset were afraid for him then. It

was soon proved that they didn't fear without good reason. He added six more at the next hole. He was 41 to the turn, and, coming home, his iron play and his putting were so frequently at fault that he took 42 for the last nine holes, slicing over the wall from the Elysian Fields, and taking another six. Thus the total for the round was 83, and it is almost unbelievable that a player of his extreme quality could break the record of the course in a morning round and take 83, or twelve shots more, the same afternoon, with a championship depending on it. I shall always regard this as the most extraordinary thing of its kind that I have ever witnessed. In the end Braid won that championship with 299 and Duncan was third with 304. Not another man in the first twenty did a round in all the four so bad as 83, so Duncan had the best and the worst.

AT SANDWICH in the following year he came within three strokes of the winner, and might have done better if on the last day he had not reckoned up the circumstances and conditions, and prepared a kind of schedule for himself, showing what he must do at each hole to win the championship. But the worst of it was that the schedule he arranged was far too severe, as schedules often are. He set himself too much to do, and in trying to do it when it was not really necessary he again failed. At Muirfield in 1912 he was fourth. So it will be seen that now he was chasing the championship continually, and it seemed that nothing could keep him out much longer. Consequently at Hoylake in 1913 he was made the favourite and a good one too. And what happened then? The second of the two tragedies to which I have re-

ferred. Duncan failed to survive the qualifying competition, and so he took no part in the championship proper. That is the most awful thing to the account of the very unsatisfactory system of qualifying competitions in the Open Championship. At Hoylake that time everybody was feeling very angry against the system which could make such a result possible. It seemed a crime; it certainly was a calamity and an absurdity that one of the greatest players of modern times should be rendered ineligible to play for the championship. But of course Duncan should have played much better and could have done, and the system, bad as it was, cannot be wholly blamed. But some day surely Duncan will win this championship.

THE STRANGE THING was that nearly all that year he was playing at his very best, and far more steadily and consistently than before. A new Duncan seemed to have come to life. Perhaps the tragedy of Hoylake did him good, but certainly afterwards he was a much more careful and thoughtful player, and in the autumn his brilliance and steadiness combined to place him in a class quite by himself, in fact never since Harry Vardon was high and dry above all the other players of the game has any golfer ever showed such a distinct superiority over his fellows as Duncan did that autumn. Never was any player made such a good favourite for the big events, and never was such favourites so well justified. He won the P. G. A. big autumn tournament at last, though it was played on Braid's own course at Walton Heath, beating Braid himself in the final by three and two over thirty-six holes. This was indeed a great achievement, one of the finest that has ever been

accomplishd by any player. And then almost immediately afterwards he went over to France and at Chantilly, where the field was of nearly full British Open Championship strength, he won the French Open Championship. Here at last Duncan rose to the summit, and if there had been the real Open Championship to be played for at that time he would have been made the best favourite for the event that there has ever been. When that season ended and the professionals went into winter quarters, the star of Duncan was highest in the firmament, shining as it had never shone before.

I RECALL an interesting conversation I had with him at that time. I had been congratulating him on his greatly improved steadiness, and on the seeming cure that he had made of some of his old faults of temperament. "There is no more of that for me," he said like a little boy, who had been doing something very naughty and had been made to suffer for it. I talked to him frankly and critically about his ways, as I have always done, and discussed the merits and demerits if, any, of his speed of playing. "That anyhow is all right," he remarked. "I don't wish to alter it. It is just myself, and it is natural to me, and that

is the way I can play best. Besides is it a bad thing for someone to be quick? Is there not far too much slow play in these days? In one thing only do I sometimes try to be slow. I try to slow down the back-swing in my putting. It makes for good sound reliable putting, with the smooth stroke always. I have tried so much to go slowly back with my putter that sometimes it interferes

with my concentration. I am a great believer in concentration in putting. I concentrate, and then a moment seems to come when I feel that I have got the line and strength and everything, and in that inspired moment I putt. But today, for instance, I could not concentrate, and the inspiration would not come. On the 17th green, you will remember, I did not send the ball half way to the hole."



Another finish of the DUNCAN swing.

NOW IN SUCH SPACE as is left to me I shall try to explain some of the features of the Duncan method, but the ways of genius are always far more difficult to discuss than those of others, if for no better reason than that there seems so little in them to comment upon. Duncan like Harry Vardon is, as one might say, somewhat orthodox. Despite that extraordinary way of starting his golfing career by holding the left hand below

the right there is hardly a first-class player of the time who conforms more generally to the strokes of the game as they are described in the best text books than George Duncan. He has few peculiarities so far as the strokes themselves are concerned, and always the game seems so easy to him that there is hardly anything to describe. It is that way with Harry Vardon too. But consider, first of all, the speed with which he plays, for that after all is a most uncommon thing. Despite the fact that he has slowed down just a little since the hot-headed days of his youth, he is still the fastest player of good golf in the world today. Just when he was rising to fame he had a practice round with Mr. Maxwell before the beginning of an Open Championship meeting at Prestwick. "What do you think about him?" they asked Mr. Maxwell afterwards. "Oh," answered the amateur, "he plays so confidently quickly that I cannot count his strokes!" While it might be a good thing for the average player to realize it is possible that he spends more time over his strokes than is necessary, and that a dozen waggles of the club before driving are perhaps worse than none at all, still it would be a mistake on the part of anyone to attempt to play the game as quickly as Duncan does. Being a genius he needs to think little about how he will do anything. It all just comes natural to him, as one might say, and he does not need to trouble. Also when he has to concentrate he does that quickly too, and the average man often finds that even the preliminary necessary to concentration take up a few moments of time. After such a player has secured his stance and addressed the ball there is a brief interval in which he prepares for the stroke, tries to prepare for it. It is

no use attempting to play until one feels that the proper moment has arrived. There can be no confidence until it does. One would not, of course, refer to James Braid, for example, as being by any means a slow player. His game is up to a good average of quickness all the way through, but if he were to attempt to play at the speed that Duncan does, we might write him off the list of men who may win more championships in the future. Duncan's quickness of play would never be safe for him but for his marvellous gift of accuracy. His balance of body, and his timing of stroke are superb, and his general accuracy is such that it can only come from instinct. This human golfing machine is a wonderfully precise and sensitive thing, and little wonder then that when the Duncan temperament becomes a little ruffled in such circumstances of disappointment as those to which reference has been made, the whole arrangement falls to bits.

LISTEN TO THE WHIRLWIND himself on some of the features of his inspiration: "My mind works rather quickly in golf, so quickly in fact that it almost tires me out sometimes. But I am obliged to say that it seems efficient in its reckonings and decisions, and my first thoughts, speedily as they are made, are generally the best and most reliable. The moment I have walked up to the ball and seen the line of play I decide instantly on all that is to follow. I know at once the strength with which to make the stroke, the club to take, how to use it, the exact details of the stroke—everything. And knowing this all so soon, it is quite necessary too, for me to act at once without a moment's delay. If I stopped to think it would be fatal, because my second

thoughts have nearly always something wrong in them. And if there is the slightest disturbance of my mind or attention between the moment of decision and the moment of action, my stroke is liable to be spoiled." When Duncan tells me these things I reflect on the case of the average player with all his doubts and hesitations and realise what a sad martyr he is to his second thoughts, and not only the second ones but the third and fourth. Second thoughts, or alternatives, are the ruin of many golfers. It is of the subtle wickedness of this game that, before taking any stroke one has time to think backwards and forwards and all round it. That seems as if it must ensure efficiency, but in practice we know it is not so, because it merely breeds the alternatives and given them trials, which bring about one's undoing. The average player thinks the whole thing out again and again, wavers and changes, wonders and fears, while he is standing over the ball, and then he fails. And again on that point of accuracy of balance and timing, the extent of endeavour in regard to the former by the average player consists in trying to keep his head still, while the question of timing, which is so closely allied to balance, is often ignored. This average man will not realise that great length in the drive does not invariably come from hard hitting and fine work with the wrists, and he will not believe, though he sees it, that very long drives are often obtained with apparently the gentlest taps. A moment of timing is worth pounds of strength. Timing comes more easily when not only the head is kept as still as it should be but all the movements of the body work round a centre that is practically fixed, and when every movement of arms, body,

legs, feet and ail the rest, are just exactly what they should be, and all in harmony with each other. In such harmony and coordination of movement, and not in strength or mere accuracy of swinging, are the secrets of length to be found. Men will ponder upon and practice at details of their swings and all the arm movements in connection therewith until they have them all apparently perfect, and yet they cannot attain the length they desire. They have overlooked perhaps, that there is something wrong—their right leg all the time, and even when it is pointed out to them they hardly consider such a thing to be worth troubling about. With a large proportion of players the training of body movements begins and ends with a more or less faithful adoption of the old adage about keeping the head still, and well balanced, and they overlook the fact that there is a kind of super-stillness or super-balance of the whole physical system that has to be cultivated to a fine pitch of perfection in the course of many seasons perhaps. All this will George Duncan tell you.

ANOTHER OF THE STRANGE FEATURES of the golf of this remarkable man is his surrender to whims of the moment, or, as you might describe the habit in a more respectful way, his obedience to sudden inspirations. Considering that his inspirations are generally so sound and reliable, perhaps there is good reason to obey them, but Duncan agrees implicitly to any suggestions they make to him, however extravagant they now seem. Having a distinct liking for the unorthodox and for experiment and variety he will not be a slave to any method or club. While he may have been playing a particular kind of

stroke with one kind of club for weeks or months, he will suddenly get it into his head in the middle of an important match or competition to play it with another, and forthwith he takes the other and generally makes a success of it. He did such a thing as this when winning the chief prize of his life so far, the P. G. A. Tournament with its five-hundred-dollar first award. He suddenly began to use a

natural game. But on others he has a different kind of feeling, and it amounts to this that he, Duncan, shall not be bound down by anyone's systems or ideas, even his own, and that he will proceed to enjoy life and golf while he is young and try a little of many things. Thus he says, to himself when a shot is presented to him, that he will try it in the way that Vardon does. The very next



A critical moment near the end of DUNCAN'S most brilliant success, when he beat Braid in the final of the great tournament at Walton Heath.

mashie niblick for such approaches as he had always employed the mashie for before. But in this surrender to whims and moods, he by no means confines himself to variation in clubs. He wanders as you might say, in the garden of methods and picks a flower from every plant. He will tell you that he has days when he has what he calls "the sensation," when he is not able to do anything wrong even if he should however try. On those days he is just Duncan and plays his

time he says "Now it was Vardon at that last hole; here shall be Braid." And in this way he will travel the course and be one golfer who in his round plays the parts of many others, an actor, a plagiarist if you will, successful always, and invariably delighted with the game.

DUNCAN IS ONE of the upright swingers and a very firm believer in the method. He does not think that any player can endure for long in

first-class golf in these days, and be as consistently successful as he should be, unless he swings in the upright way with his wooden clubs. He thinks that this system means everything to accuracy and direction, and makes the game far less difficult and more to be depended upon. To some extent he thinks the flat swing may be the more natural, but the other one pays best, and he advocates it to all and sundry. And, mind you, he is not without practical knowledge of flat swinger for quite a long time, and did not abandon the way until he was quite convinced that the other one was the better. He believes in the overlapping grip and the square stance, the latter because it allows more freedom in the upswing. The other may be the more comfortable for the follow through, but what is the use of that if the upswing is not as good as it should be, is what Duncan asks of the open stance advocates. There is one point in connection with his address to the ball, and his explanation of it, which is illuminating. He is one of those who are inclined to address not with the place where one desires to hit from but with the toe. Those who never do this sort of thing wonder why it ever is done and conjecture that the player must either be put to a dangerous process of correction in the downswing or must strike from the toe. But Duncan urges that it is really the more natural way, because the head of the club, says he, makes a rather wider arc in the downswing than when going up through the tendency of the arms to straighten themselves out on he return journey. Addressing with the toe of the club makes an allowance for this natural tendency and conduces to ease of movement. And, when one comes to think of it, the contention of Duncan

is supported by the certain knowledge that there is more bad driving done through hitting from the heel than from the toe.

WHEN GEORGE DUNCAN is at his best his driving and brasseys are very fine to see, they are so full of life and grace and power. Nothing better has been witnessed in golf since Harry Vardon began to give delight to the spectators. But, again, his iron play in recent times has been very wonderful and less importance has been attached to it by the critics than it deserves, as is often the case. They say, of course, that it is fine, but they do not notice how fine it really is,—how, as with Vardon in his most glorious days with his cleek, the ball from his iron shots seems to be ever in search of the pin the moment it leaves the club and snuggles up to it very closely as a rule, leaving the player much less putting to do than most of his rivals have. Like many of the great professionals, Duncan has gone over entirely to the push shot, that is to say, he does not merely play it for long low shots with the cleek in which its advantages were first found and appreciated, but plays it for practically every shot with an iron club from the cleek shot down to the little chip with the mashie, the only exception being in the case of very lofted pitching. The gain in straightness and accuracy is undoubtedly great, and the pleasure of playing the push is a thing that those who make iron shots only in the old-fashioned way, and take their turf before they touch the ball, cannot dream of. But all the mysteries of the push shot are not yet known, particularly to amateurs, and those who play it all the time and with perfect accuracy and naturalness have the utmost dif-

ficulty in describing how it is done. It is far more of a shot from instinct than people think. Once a man can do it the power never leaves him and no shot can ever be depended upon so well, but he cannot say exactly how he does it. He knows that there is more rigidity of body and arms than usual, that there is a strong suggestion of forcing at the moment of impact and that there are other subtle and important differences between this stroke and others, but that is all. Duncan has one interesting, important and real discovery to give to the collection which will some time make up our complete knowledge of this stroke which becomes more popular and universal every season. He says that the secret of it is in leading with the body from the top of the swings—just that and hardly anything more. I think he is right. In recent times Duncan has seemed to be playing his irons better and with more confidence than ever before, and one time not long since, when talking about these and other things with him, he told me that he attributed a material improvement in his iron play to swinging back much more slowly than he used to do, resulting in the left wrist not being allowed to get in its work too soon as it is so much inclined to do. So he keeps the left wrist as firm as he can, and swings slowly back. Duncan is no believer in loose wrists for any form of iron play.

THERE ARE TIMES, many of them, when he is a splendid putter. Favouring an upright club which allows him to get well over the ball, his work on the greens is often heartbreaking to his opponents. One of the peculiarities of his putting, perhaps not much

noticed, is that he seems often to get a touch of pull on his stroke and to bring the ball into the hole from the right hand side. However, though he can explain all about it, no doubt, Duncan knows very well that in putting he plays very largely indeed from inspiration and hardly anything else. He looks and feels and waits until his instinct signals to him that he is on the line of the hole and everything is well for the stroke, just as a rifle marksman gropes about with his aim on the target until the moment comes when he knows he is on the bull's eye. It is no use shooting when in doubt, nor putting either, at least when men ever have inspirations to help them. But when Duncan is without his inspiration, or "sensations" as he calls them, he has a way of performing very miserably on the greens. I have seen him doing some shocking putting, and he has been so much disturbed by it that, on going home, he has had a week or so of hard practice with nothing but the putter. A little while since I had him in conversation towards the end of a championship meeting at Le Touquet when his putting had been not by any means what it should have been, and he urged then half seriously that putting is all nonsense and has far too great a share in the game, and for his part he would like to see a new and revolutionary rule made by which the hole, as we know it, is abolished and a big circle a couple of yards wide or something like that, substituted for it, or the circle could be made round the hole. Then when any player putted inside the circle he was deemed to be down with the next stroke, which is, much the same thing.

(Next—Mr. Robert Maxwell.)