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ROQUET TACTICS



by

WALTER JONES WITMORE



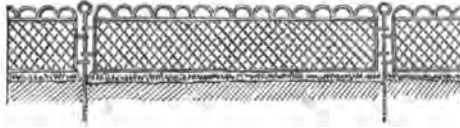
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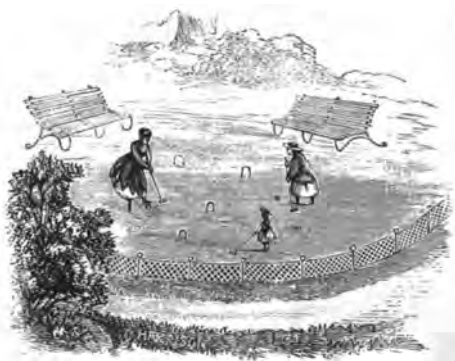
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CROQUET TACTICS,

WITH

ILLUSTRATIVE COLOURED FIGURES,

AND

DIAGRAMS OF THE VARIOUS CROQUET STROKES.

BY

WALTER JONES WHITMORE.



LONDON :

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PREFACE.

A NUMBER of my friends having done me the honour to say they would like to learn from myself the tactics of the game of Croquet, and it being impossible to give instructions to all without the aid of the press, I proposed to state what I knew of the game through the columns of the *Field*. The Editor most kindly acceded to my request; and the present volume is a compilation of my articles which appeared in that journal, though considerably enlarged, and with the addition of several points which have since occurred to me. I shall think my labours well bestowed if I in any degree add to the growing opinion that Croquet does not simply owe its sudden and unexampled success to the fact that it is played equally by ladies and gentlemen, but that it is in itself a first-rate game, requiring great *finesse*, nerve, and patience, as well as great accuracy of hand and eye.

WALTER JONES WHITMORE.

CHASTLETON HOUSE,
18th May, 1868.

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CROQUET TACTICS.

INTRODUCTION.

CROQUET: ITS ORIGIN, AND THE CAUSES OF ITS SUCCESS.

THE game of croquet has been known in this country—known generally, that is—for about ten years, and has made a more rapid success and taken a higher position than probably any other game has ever done in the same period of time. The manufacture of the implements has become quite a considerable branch of our national industry, and the balls, mallets, stands, &c., begin to be turned out with such exquisite finish as almost to entitle them to the appellation of works of art.

If we inquire what it is that has so suddenly raised this game to its present lofty position, we shall find a much larger number of causes than anyone would at first suspect—which very causes are often made a pretext for running the game down, for it is clear that croquet (like everything which greatly succeeds) is not without its enemies and contemners, who treat it after Sir Modred's manner,

With silent smiles of slow disparagement.

But since the game rests on a real merit, it will easily outlive both the faint praise or open abuse to which it is occasionally treated. It is, however, worth while to investigate that combination of adventitious circumstances, which, in addition to its real merit, has caused this very rapid and very extraordinary success.

Considered simply as an outdoor amusement, affording healthy exercise and excitement to a number of people who only got their exercise formerly in the dull round of a "constitutional" walk, we are bound to confess that it has conferred an immense boon on society, which boon society gratefully acknowledges by its attachment. Then, it is a game suited to every age and both sexes. This was, of course, a great element of success from the first. Next in its favour comes the fact that the first elements of the game are easily learnt, and that it is everywhere to be found. To use the general expression, "everybody" has a ground; and the expense of the very best sets does not exceed three guineas, no slight consideration with a large part of the world. In this particular it has (in Oxford phrase) the "pull" over both billiards and cricket, since both of these are expensive games—one very much so. These are, moreover, luxuries not everywhere to be found, and only to be played on occasion; whereas croquet in the season is everywhere, and at all hours going on. (I am not here instituting the slightest comparison between the three games, or entering into the question of the intrinsic merits of any one of them, but merely showing the outside advantages of croquet, to which in a great measure its sudden large importance is to be attributed.) Like billiards, croquet can be played, and is best played, by two persons, though four, two on each side, will also make a good game. In this, both billiard and croquet have an advantage over cricket, which without the full eleven loses much of its beauty. Then comes the great and often-repeated merit that croquet gives people an admirable excuse to meet their friends without making a grand affair, *sans gêne et sans cérémonie*; and, if their homes are of limited proportion, enables them to receive a whole neighbourhood, which was before an impossibility; so that, owing to the agency of this game, and the revolution which it has effected, the most solitary people have become social, and houses once deserted have become the scenes of the most gay and brilliant receptions. The fact is, it has placed hospitality within everybody's reach, and has linked the most distant neighbourhoods together in a sort of social chain. Those of our acquaintance whom we wish to see often, and seldom saw, we may now meet every week. We know where all the world will

be on a Monday, or Tuesday, or Thursday; so that the "new science" may be said to rank with the most friendly and neighbourly pastimes in the world; and those who dislike or despise it, have just as much reason to be grateful to it, as we its ardent followers and admirers. Then, there is an advantage in croquet which I must not forget to mention, that it does not necessitate the sacrifice of a whole day—an advantage much felt by clergymen, who in large cures, where the work is very heavy, must necessarily lose their cricket, and are as sorely in need of some recreation as any set of men I know. But this fact applies to us all, whether we happen to be playing croquet at home or at a party. We are never fettered to the game except by the love of it. If it rains we can order our carriage and go, and should we be playing at home, why, we are near all our other amusements. I must add that croquet leads neither directly nor indirectly to any species of bad habit; that there is no appanage of betting men belonging to it; no sharpers, open or disguised; no gentlemanly harpies; no doubtful set whatever in its train. Then—since I have taken in hand to account fully for its extraordinary and sudden burst of popularity—it is essentially a game of emulation, town boasting itself over town, and county over county. Then you can play the game for more months in the year than any other outdoor game, its more ardent admirers beginning generally about the middle of April and going on with it to the end of October, or carrying it even into the first fortnight of November. About that time the finest and grandest of all sports has commenced, and it is high time then that we should forget croquet until

Wheat is green, and hawthorn buds appear.

As I am now pretty well out of breath with the enumeration of the advantages which croquet enjoys, I will but add that last point in its favour, without which it could surely never have become the rage as it has done, viz., the grand merit of the game itself.

Amongst the fraternity of games, the rank of any particular one is rightly fixed by the amount of skill required in playing it, and by the faculties it either demands or evokes. Judged by this criterion, it is hard to say to what game croquet is to be considered

second. In absolute accuracy it yields of course to billiards, but then it far excels the latter game in variety of combination. I have, indeed, heard the opinion of a man who plays both games very well, and equally well, that it takes as long practice to become first-rate in one game as the other. My own experience is that it takes, with the generality of players, three or four years at least before they "play the game"—before they acquire an instinctive and clear notion what to do with the balls under all circumstances of the game. Croquet (I speak of it as played between first-rate players) certainly requires a large combination of qualities; considerable forecast; great tact and great *finesse*; and infinitely more nerve and temper than any other game going. A player must also, to get anything more than a local reputation, be rapid in learning the strength of particular grounds, must have an accurate eye, and great power of wrist and elbow. Then, for temper and patience, if you cannot play an uphill game, you may despair of ever being a proficient in this. To keep perfectly cool, and concentrate all your energies on long shot after long shot, without losing heart, or giving up the idea of final victory, though the game all the while seems slipping out of your hands, this is an admirable trial to those who are naturally inclined to despond; and I think to take a beating with all grace and good humour, and without finding some reason for it beyond your adversary's skill, is the very *acmé* of true politeness and generosity.

I presume that this eulogy is sufficient for the most ardent croqueist of my readers, and I proceed to answer, as well as I can, a question very frequently asked, and not always satisfactorily answered, "What was the origin of the game?" Some of my readers may have seen the description of Pall-Mall, as described by Cotgrave.

"Pale-Maille is a game wherein a round box ball is struck with a mallet thro' a high arch of iron, which he that can do with the fewest blows wins." "The game of mall," adds Strutt, in his "Ancient Sports and Pastimes," "was a fashionable amusement in the reign of Charles the Second, and the walk in St. James's Park, now called the Mall, received its name from having been appropriated to the purpose of playing at mall, where Charles

himself and his courtiers frequently exercised themselves in the practice of this pastime. The denomination mall, given to the game, is evidently derived from the mallet or wooden hammer used by the players to strike the ball." I may add, for the benefit of the curious, that specimens of the mallets used in the days of the merry monarch may be seen on any of the open days at the British Museum.

This game of mall, however, which was undoubtedly the fore-running idea and prototype of our modern croquet, does not seem to have been an invention of Charles the Second's time, but to have had a much earlier origin, and to have come down to us from those Saxon times, whence we draw the first notions of almost all our national sports. The little representation below, which is copied out of Strutt's *Sports and Pastimes*, is thus briefly alluded to in that author's work: "On the top of the 28th Plate is the representation of a very curious ancient pastime which seems to bear some analogy to bowling; but the bowls, instead



of being cast by the hand, are driven with a battoon or mall, through an arch, towards a mark at a distance from it."

With reference to this subject, so summarily dismissed by Strutt, we certainly are of opinion that the plate gives much more an idea of mall than of bowling, and that the game, whatever it was, was most clearly some sport which was the origin equally of mall and of croquet.

Fearing lest I may have too long engaged my reader's patience in this disquisition on the origin and success of croquet, I will add, as a relief to what may not have an interest for all my readers, the following verses from the brilliant and accomplished pen of Mr. Clement Scott. I am indebted to Mr. Hood, the editor of *Fun*, for his permission to enliven my pages with the following *jeu d'esprit*, so à propos of my subject.

CUPID AND CROQUET.

I.

ONE day on high Olympus, forging thunderbolts and fuming,
 Sat Jove, by gods surrounded, sipping nectar, as we're told,
 And he drew out from his pocket just a poster unassuming,
 Printed bright in fiery letters, on a double sheet of gold ;
 Then said Jupiter to Mercury, who happened to be boarding
 In Olympus with his brother gods and goddesses a night,
 " Paste the poster, trusty messenger, on wall and corner hoarding,
 That the deities who run may read, and running, read aright."

II.

Swift flew the glad intelligence, how Jupiter intended
 To ask each witty god and wily goddess to compete
 For a mighty prize he'd offered, on which fortunes he'd expended,
 For breaking women's hearts, and bringing lovers to their feet.
 " Seek me out a jolly pastime, game, amusement, if you like it,
 Wherein mortal men and women," said the king of gods, " can join.
 When the iron, of the heart, is hot I dearly love to strike it,
 Though some bachelors are needy, and some women roll in coin."

III.

Pan and Bacchus came together, with a double sort of notion,
 Of picnics on the river, sunny girls, and iced champagne,
 With a dream of woods, forget-me-nots, a boat's delicious motion,
 Songs and sentiments, and happiness—bar Pluvius and rain ;
 And they told how opportunities were advertised for strolling,
 And of couples who have lost themselves—pretended to, at least—
 Of ferny banks, and attitudes, and rugs, and lazy lolling,
 Lobster salad, wine in tumblers, and a very awkward feast.

IV.

To Jove's throne, in exultation, young Terpsichore came dancing,
 She had notions of excitement running strangely in her head,
 And in vivid colours painted, lights, and flowers, bright eyes glancing,
 And the waltzes which have little loves to Hymen's altar led ;
 And she told of sweet flirtations, over lemon-water ices,
 And of sweeter assignations when the cloaks are wrapt around ;
 Hinting strongly, how a *trois-temps* has led boobies to a crisis,
 And the comfort of conservatories mothers oft have found.

V.

Then with horsey slang and laughter, came Diana in a canter,
Shouting loudly to the loungers to get out and clear the way ;
And with noisy volubility propounded she instanter,
How she'd tame the wildest chestnut and the most pugnacious bay ;
Then she raved of hounds and hunting, meets, and horses tame and vicious,
And the " go-ahead, well-plucked ones," " snobs in scarlet who disturb ;"
And she hinted how men's tempers, like their horses, are capricious,
And how dainty women's fingers are the lightest on the curb.

VI.

Then Apollo, the far-darter, came with arrows in his quiver,
And was loud in exultation of the lesson of the bow ;
But the deities all shouted, " With your quiver to the river !"
And protested how that archery, and archers too, were slow.
When he tried a mild suggestion of toxophilites and parties,
Where for shooting and flirtation men and women oft are brought,
" Down at Plymouth," said old Neptune, " when they shoot, you know, my
hearties,
For a dozen married women I have vainly sought."

VII.

Little Cupid, for a minute, had escaped from Aphrodite,
Very plump and very hearty, as all honest love should be,
And he said, " I've found a game out, never slow and never flighty,
And it's capable of skill as well as spooning, as you'll see."
Then he sang a song of croquet, of its present and hereafter,
With such exquisite persuasion, and such mischief in his eyes,
That the deities, delighted, shook Olympus with their laughter,
And to Cupid was awarded, for his cheekiness, the prize !

CHAPTER I.

DESCRIPTION OF THE VARIOUS STROKES.

BEFORE entering on the scientific part of my subject it is necessary that I should give a full definition of certain terms with which the majority of players seem to be unacquainted, but which, in the explanation of the principles of the game, must necessarily be of frequent occurrence. I should state, however, that I am only about to define words in common use amongst good players; the tendency to create a host of new and unnecessary terms, or to alter and try to improve on the old ones, which have been fairly accepted, appearing to the writer neither witty nor sensible.

The terms in question are the "dead ball," the "player" or "live ball," and the "friend."

In all the illustrations which are to follow—and it will not be in my power to give all the many fine points and varied tactics of the game without a considerable number of illustrations—the game supposed to be played is a game of four, which may be played either between two players, each having two balls, or by four players, two on a side, each with a single ball. For clearness' sake, I propose to give all the diagrams which illustrate the principles of the game with the first four colours on the peg—viz., blue, pink, black, and yellow.*

Now suppose, gentle reader, that you are playing in this game, and that the ball you are playing with is blue; then

Pink will be your "player,"
 Black is your "friend," and
 Yellow is the "dead ball."

* The prettiest balls, and the ones most in fashion, are those which came into use as the "club set"—simple blue and red, and marked with one, two, three, and four stripes on each side. In matches of four the best way to divide the balls is to make one set of the ones and threes, another of the twos and fours.

The origin of the foregoing terms will now be explained, and the necessity of having a distinctive appellation for each ball will appear most clearly in the tactics.

The term "player" is borrowed from billiards in the game of pool, and means the ball which, after you have finished your break, will play on you: thus, pink is blue's "player," black is pink's, yellow is black's, and blue is yellow's.

The term "dead" ball is borrowed from cricket, and means the ball which, having just been played, has nothing actively to do for one turn, and is therefore "dead" for that period. In Mr. Jaques' rules it is stated: "When the ball of a player hits the starting peg, after he has been through all his hoops, whether by his own play or that of another, it is 'dead' and out of the game." This same definition was also used in the rules printed in the *Field*, but the term had not then come to be generally used in its present sense. It is clear that there can be no use in adopting a term which there will never or very seldom be an occasion to apply. We do not say of a cricket ball that it is "dead" before the game has commenced, or when the game is decided and over. It is "dead" directly it has passed the wicket keeper's hands (he having no further use for it) until the moment it is next delivered, or rather commenced to be delivered. It will thus be seen that the term is of frequent use in both games. In both a ball is constantly becoming "dead," and then again the "live" ball throughout the contest. In croquet it is "dead" every time it ceases to play until its "friend" has finished playing, when it again becomes the "live" ball, of which it behoves the adversary whose turn is next to beware, since it is his "player."

The term "friend" seems self-evident, and no explanation needed. Blue and black are "friends;" pink and yellow are "friends."

Before coming to the tactics I must, in order to make my labours as complete as possible, offer some short instruction as to the manual part of the game: the handling of the mallet, the action required in playing, and the attitude which gives the greatest accuracy in striking the ball—matters quite as essential in croquet as in billiards.

First, as to the attitude, which in a certain proverb or saying is declared to be "everything," and it certainly is a great deal in croquet. Each player must in some degree determine for himself



THE TWO-HANDED STROKE—FIRST POSITION.

what is *to him* the most easy and natural way of standing, and the one which gives him the greatest accuracy of aim, and the greatest power in striking the ball. Still, there is undoubtedly a good and a bad attitude, and, generally speaking, a good one may be

obtained, unless a bad one has become a matter of habit. First, I will suppose that the mallet is held with two hands. (Players differ greatly on this point, some not being able to play with two



THE TWO-HANDED STROKE.—SECOND POSITION.

hands, and some being quite powerless with one.) The body should be balanced on the right foot, and rest almost entirely on it, the left foot being merely used to steady the action. The shoulders should be exactly parallel with the line in which the

ball is to be driven. Each stroke must be given from the shoulders, and with a sort of swing of the arms, the body being kept perfectly firm, and as motionless as possible. The slightest turn or swaying of the body will destroy the accuracy of the aim. The action of the left elbow must be the same as in cricket—viz., forward in a line towards the ball or hoop aimed at; and, as in cricket, there cannot be too free and unfettered play of shoulder, elbow, and wrist. The player, having got the proper attitude, must take the line of the ball he is aiming at (first position), but at the moment of striking he must be looking at his own ball (second position). No great muscular action should be put into the stroke, the ball being driven as much as possible by the mere weight of the descending mallet. Of course the exact centre of the ball should be struck by the exact centre of the mallet head.* If excellence is to be obtained, everyone of these points must be carefully attended to and minutely practised, till they become habit and a sort of instinct. But if in this assertion I seem to be advocating a waste of time, I can only say that a practice of ten minutes a day is quite sufficient to acquire every point, if only it is regular and systematic.

Should my explanation of the attitude and action required be not sufficiently clear, it is to be hoped that the sketches given will be more explanatory.

At one time there was an attempt made to oblige every player to use only one hand; fortunately, this piece of arbitrary law did not prevail. There is no game in which any fixed attitude is dictated by rule, and it is to be hoped that such dictation will not succeed at croquet. The writer hopes so sincerely, as when one hand only is allowed the game will no longer be a game for him.

In playing with one hand, the attitude is necessarily much more stooping, because the mallet cannot be held firmly unless the hand is carried somewhat nearer to the mallet-head. The

* I should advise beginners to look frequently at the face of the mallet head, which will soon show them by the indentations whether the majority of blows are struck from the centre or side of the mallet. The sound of the blow will also indicate whether the ball is struck with the whole weight of the hammer or not. The heavier the mallet (supposing that a player has complete mastery of it) the more accurate the aim.

weight of the body should rest almost equally on the two legs; but, as in playing with two hands, the shoulders should be parallel with the line in which the ball is to be driven, and the body should be held as firm and motionless as possible. There is the same necessity for looking at the ball when delivering the stroke as in the two-handed position.



THE ONE-HANDED STROKE.

If it be asked which is the best method of playing, with one or two hands, the answer is that each player must decide this for himself. The majority of *good players* with whom the writer is acquainted is a one-handed majority; but of players, taking the good and bad together, the majority is decidedly two-handed.

There are no less than nine sorts of strokes at croquet, which must all be described. These strokes may be divided into roquet and croquet strokes as follows :

ROQUET STROKES.

- | | | |
|------------------------|--|------------------------|
| 1. The ordinary roquet | | 3. The leapfrog stroke |
| 2. The rushing roquet | | 4. The curling stroke. |

(Strokes in which a single ball is struck.)

CROQUET STROKES.

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| 5. The tight croquet | | 7. The stop stroke |
| 6. The following stroke | | 8. The splitting stroke |
| 9. The medium croquet. | | |

(Strokes in which a ball is struck when in contact with another.)

Of the foregoing, the most important are the "ordinary" and "rushing" roquet strokes, and the "following" "stop," "splitting," and "medium" croquet strokes. All these must be mastered before any great proficiency can be said to have been made in the game. The "leapfrog" and "curling" strokes are all very difficult, and cannot (as far as the writer's knowledge goes) be made with anything like certainty even by the best players. They are, however, seldom called for, and first-rate play (though not the highest) can be attained without their aid.

The explanations which follow are given, not according to the order of the strokes as numbered, but according to the importance of the strokes in the game.

Ordinary and Rushing Roquets.—It has been fully explained how the ball should be struck in the ordinary roquet. The "rushing" roquet is made when a player, having his ball so placed that he can roquet another to some spot on the ground more convenient to take croquet from, roquets it with force, so as to drive it the required distance. In making this stroke the ball must be struck exactly in the centre. Where a player has to strike violently, should the blow fall ever so slightly on the top of the ball, it is apt to leap from the ground, and will often thus hop over the ball to be struck. The roquéd ball also, if it is to be

driven to any distance, must be hit by the roquëing ball exactly in the centre.

The Following Stroke.—This is the most important of all the strokes, and a player who has not got the mastery of it at short distances will be “nowhere” in the game, even on the most crowded lawns.

I should state that the best plan in practising this and all other strokes is to commence at short distances, and not to proceed to longer until the short ones have become quite easy, and almost matters of certainty. In making the “following” stroke for instance, let the beginner try and make two balls run together for two or three yards. This being mastered, it will be comparatively easy to increase the distance to five or six yards. But the first grand difficulty is to attain the right action, and the proper turn of the elbow and wrist.

In making the following stroke, the player must follow with the mallet head, as a person follows with the cue at billiards. But as many of my readers will be amongst the fair sex, and perhaps not very well acquainted with the latter game, I should state that the best way for beginners to learn this stroke will be as follows: Place the balls so as to touch, and in a line with the ball or hoop towards which they are to run; then, holding the mallet firmly, but not tightly (and not approaching the mallet head to the ball, but holding it at a distance of five or six inches away), bring the mallet down on the ball with a quiet, uniform action; and, without thinking at all what is going to happen to the balls, raise the mallet head upwards towards the left shoulder. If the action of the mallet is uniform, a following strike is certain to be the result. (See Fig. 1.)

The Stop Stroke.—The stop stroke is made as follows: Place the balls in line and touching; hold the mallet handle firmly, and bring the mallet head sharply down on the ball you strike. At the moment of striking, draw the mallet head back. If this is done well, the croquëd ball will be sent to a distance, and the ball struck will not be moved very far from the position in which you strike it. (See Fig. 2.)

The Splitting Stroke is sometimes made with a "following," sometimes with a striking mallet—with a "following" mallet where the balls have to travel an equal distance; with a striking mallet where the ball is to be made to pass over more ground than the other. The two different ways of making this stroke will be clearly seen by looking at diagrams.

The Medium Stroke.—When one ball is to follow another, but only to pass over half the distance, or something considerably less than the croquéd ball, the stroke must be made with neither a "following" nor yet a sharply striking mallet. There are almost endless modifications of this sort of stroke, which are only to be acquired by long practice, and steady attention to the amount of strength and the turn of wrist required. It is necessary, also, to learn precisely at what angles two balls should be placed to send them into required positions. This angle must depend very much on the particular way in which each player handles the mallet. A sharp blow will send balls off at a much greater tangent than when struck with a following mallet.

On all these points I can only repeat my advice, that players who are beginners should first practise the various strokes given in Figs. 4 and 5 at short distances, and then proceed to practise at longer distances, so soon as the shorter ones become comparatively easy.

The Leapfrog Stroke is made by striking a single ball sharply, and nearly on the top. The result is that the ball will leap up from the ground, and, jumping over any intermediate ball, hit one beyond. This stroke is seldom required, but the writer has seen more than one game won by it.

The Curling Stroke.—When a ball is wired from another, and the distance between them is not more than two or three yards, it is possible, by striking the ball on one side, to give it a curl so that it shall round the wire, and strike the ball lying beyond it. This stroke is only to be acquired by long practice, and requires great power of wrist. But, when acquired, is of great service in the game.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DIAGRAMS.

Figs. 1 to 8 are descriptive of the various strokes. The mallet head and dotted lines show the direction of the blow. When the dotted lines pass entirely through the balls, this indicates a following stroke; when they pass partly through, this indicates a medium stroke; where they stop at the ball to be struck, this means a stop stroke.

Fig. 1.—The Following Stroke.

Place black and white at a distance of two or three yards from the striped ball. Required to send both balls together, so as to bring both of them close up to the striped ball.

Fig. 2.—The Stop Stroke.

Black and white are supposed to be one yard from black's hoop. White is to be sent through the hoop and two yards beyond, black being left as near as possible in its present position.

Fig. 3.—The Stop Stroke.

Strike black so that white shall go to hoop, and black remain near the striped ball. Black and white are supposed to be at one yard distance from the striped ball, and five yards from the hoop.

Fig. 4.—The Splitting Stroke.

Place black and white at a distance of two yards from black's hoop. Required to send them into the position indicated by lines. Play with a following mallet, because both balls have to travel nearly the same distance. Strike in a line straight towards the hoop. The angle will give the proper direction to the balls.

Fig. 5.—The Splitting Stroke.

Place white and black at a distance of three yards from white's hoop. Strike the balls so as to go into the position indicated by the lines. Play with a striking mallet, black having to travel a greater distance than white.

Fig. 6.—The Medium Stroke.

Place white and black at a distance of four yards from white's hoop. Strike so that white shall stop at one yard from his hoop, and black go two yards beyond it.

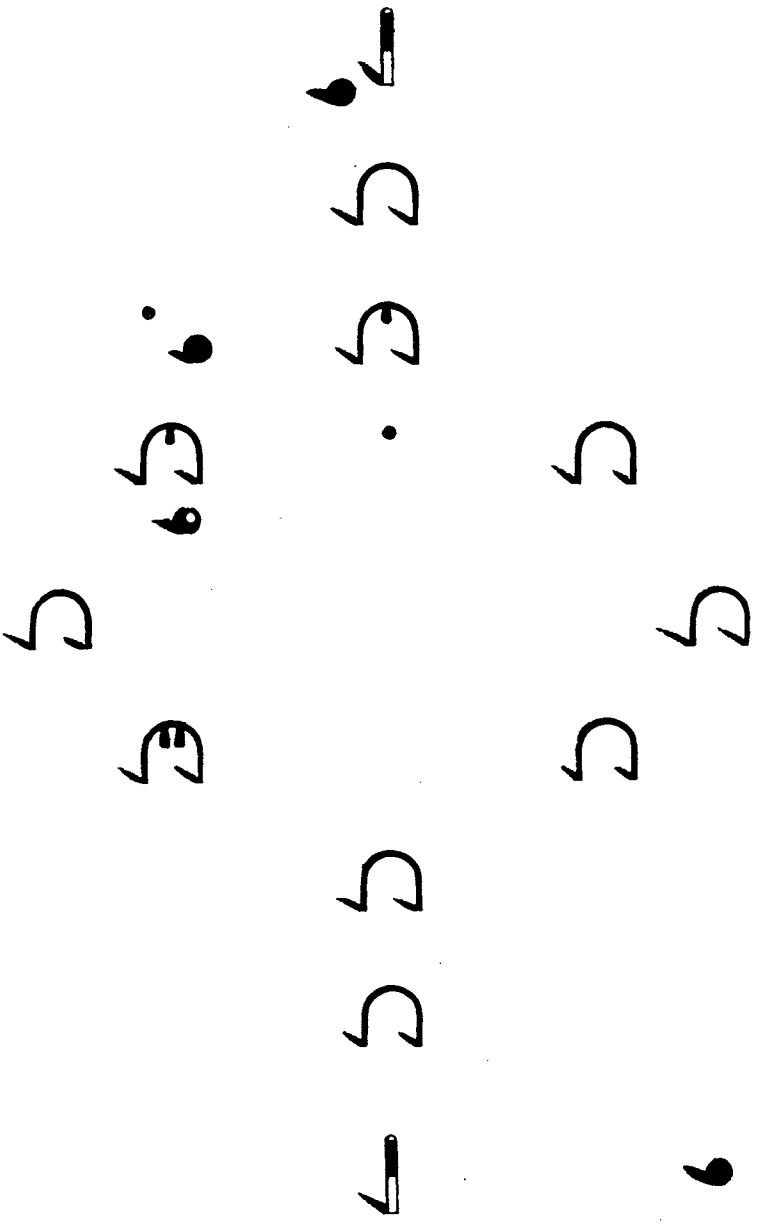
Fig. 7.—The Leapfrog Stroke.

Black has been playing a following stroke on white up to the striped ball (his player). Unless he can now hit the striped ball, the latter will, of course, have a game. The distance between black and white is supposed to be eighteen inches. Black, being struck sharply downwards, will hop over white and hit the striped ball.

Fig. 8.—The Curling Stroke.

Black is wired from both balls, and, unless he can hit one of them, the striped ball, which is his player, will have a game. Being struck a little on one side, and towards the left of the wire, by a mallet held firmly with both hands, black will curl round the wire and hit white.

FIG. 9.



GETTING THE RUSH.

CHAPTER II.

GETTING THE RUSH, AND PRINCIPLES 1 TO 4.

THE term to "get the rush" on a ball was partly explained in the last chapter under the term "rushing roquet." In slaving another ball a player should play systematically, so as to get the rush after each individual stroke; and it is the carefully attending to this point which, to a great extent, constitutes the difference between a good and indifferent player.

In Fig. 9 Blue is at hoop 2 *to peg*, and it is Black's turn to play, the latter being at the corner hoop. Black, to play well, should go through his hoop, so as to be exactly where the black dot is made. He will then "get the rush" on Blue—*i.e.*, will be able to drive him in front of what will then be both Blue and Black's hoop. (The blue dot indicates the spot to which the blue ball should be driven.)

It should be remembered that, even if Blue was not at the same hoop as Black, yet Black's play would be made much easier by his getting the rush on Blue. This is so important a point in the game that no croquet should be made without a careful calculation as to the rush; in fact, it should be considered that every advance in the game is to consist of two operations—getting the rush so as to facilitate the next croquet; taking the croquet so as to facilitate the next rush.

It is not the intention of the present slight treatise to discuss the question which is the best arrangement for the setting out of the hoops. There are as many as eight different settings; and from these the writer has chosen that which seems the most popular, and the one most common among the best players he has had the pleasure to meet. All the illustrations will be given with this setting, but the tactics and principles of

the game are very much the same, whatever setting may be adopted.

Where there are no clips* (and warm, truly, is the altercation as to the use of them, some declining to play with, and some without them), the question is very often asked, "Which is my hoop?" "Which is your hoop?" And it has been decided very properly that the antagonist is bound to answer the question put, for it seems rather senseless to turn the game of croquet into a simple game of memory. Now it is rather cumbrous to say the fifth, sixth, seventh, ninth, thirteenth hoop—which ever it may be—and it requires no small degree of "coaching" to learn which is the ninth or thirteenth hoop, so as to be able to distinguish them in a moment by these numbers. The hoops are much more easily remembered by the names given in Fig. 10—viz., 1st hoop, 2nd hoop, 3rd hoop, middle hoop, corner hoop, 2 to peg, 1 to peg, pegging, 1st back, 2nd back, corner back, middle back, last corner, 2 to go out, 1 to go out, roving or pegging out. In all the explanations which follow the hoops will be referred to under this order.

I trust I have now sufficiently cleared the ground by explaining those terms not universally known. All the other terms employed in these articles are such as are commonly used, and I merely append the following list for the sake of those who are entirely novices in the game. I give all the terms, down to the very simplest; but have not introduced any except such as are in vogue amongst good players, and such as have either passed, or seem likely to pass, into general use.

Roquet—To hit another ball. To make a rushing roquet is to hit another ball with force.

Croquet—To strike one's own ball when in contact with another after the roquet.

Friend—A ball belonging to one's own side.

* Since writing this, it has been decided by the *Field* laws that in matches clips ought to be used.

Player, when applied to the balls, means the adversary's ball which will play next. It is sometimes called the "live" ball, in contradistinction to the

Dead ball—The adversary's ball which has just finished playing.

Making a hoop is getting through it.

Slave—To "slave" or "make use" of a ball, is to take it on with you in the game, roqueting it after each hoop. The term "to make use of" is generally applied to one's friends; the term "slave" to one's enemies.

To take one off is that sort of croquet in which you only just move the ball you are taking croquet from.

To position a ball is to place it for its hoop.

To be wired is to have your ball in such a position that you cannot hit some other ball, or get through your hoop, because of a wire intervening.

To be blocked is to have some ball you have just played on (and cannot, therefore, take croquet from again) lying between you and another ball, or between you and your hoop or peg.

To get the rush on a ball is to have placed your own ball near it, and in such a position that you can roquet it to that part of the ground where you wish it to lie.

Tice—A tempting shot given to the adversary, in order to draw him from a better game.

Rover—A ball that has gone through all its hoops and is ready to peg out.

In hand—A ball which has just roquéted another, and has not taken croquet.

In order—A term applied to that hoop or peg which a player has next to make.

With these preliminaries we come to the

TACTICS OF THE GAME.

The principles of the game may be divided into general and particular. "To play the game" a person must of course play perfectly *au fait* as regards the latter. These, therefore, I will describe first.

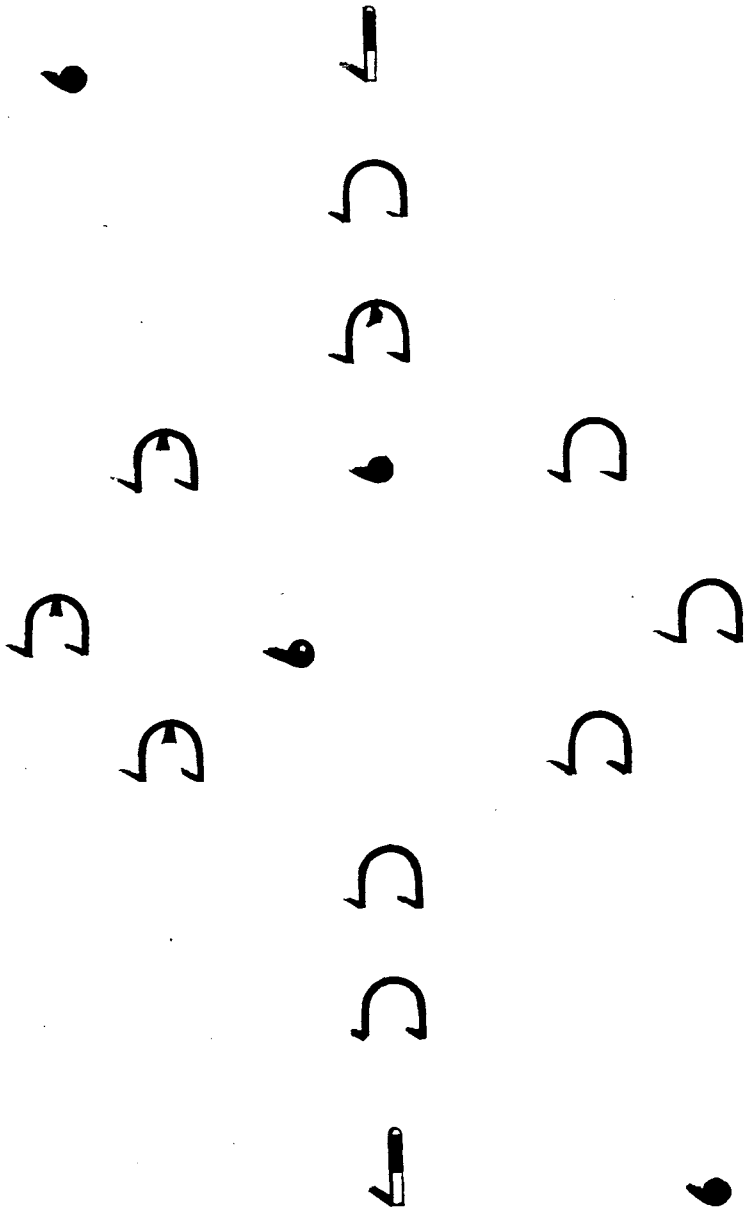
PRINCIPLE 1.—KEEP YOUR OWN BALLS TOGETHER.

This is the primary grand rule of the game, on which everything depends. If you have once parted the friendly balls, and then happen to make a mistake or miss your shot, the almost certain consequence will be that you will lose your break; and croquet, like billiards, may be stated to be a game of breaks. I do not, therefore, play to make one or two hoops, simply because they happen to be easy, but to gain and retain the break, which can only be done by keeping your own balls together and your adversaries apart. One of the first things to be learned is to deny yourself the luxury of making an easy or certain shot when the tactics of the game require you to join your friend instead.

In Fig. 11 Blue has an easy shot at his hoop, and feels perhaps quite positive that he can make it. The distance from Blue to Black is twice as far as from Blue to hoop, and, according to Blue's play (we will suppose), a probable miss. What is Blue to do? Although the hoop is a certainty, and the shot at Black very doubtful, yet he ought not to attempt the hoop. His proper play is to go at Black gently, because in the event of a miss he ought to lie as near Black as possible, so as to help Black in his next stroke. Should he, on the contrary, hit Black, he will then be able to make his hoop by means of a following stroke, and will then have an opportunity of getting on with the game by making use of Black after every hoop, playing (as I have already explained) every croquet so as to get the rush, and every rush so as to facilitate the croquet.

Now suppose, instead of this play, Blue had gone at his hoop, and made it. His only play then would be to go on through the

FIG. 11



KEEPING THE FRIENDLY BALLS TOGETHER.

next hoop; then to peg; make the first and second hoops back, and afterwards to roquet his friend—that is to say, he would have five strokes to make, and the danger of making a miss at any one before he got back to his partner. Should he make a miss anywhere near the peg, or should he hit a wire and fail at his hoop, the chances are that Pink and Yellow would get together, and the break be lost to Blue and Black.

PRINCIPLE 2.—SCATTER YOUR ENEMIES.

This is the converse of Principle 1, and is so simple that it hardly needs a diagram. It follows as a matter of course, that if it is good policy for you to keep your own balls together, it must be also good policy to keep your adversaries' balls apart.

PRINCIPLE 3.—DON'T PLAY ON YOUR PLAYER.

PRINCIPLE 4.—DON'T CROQUET YOUR PLAYER INTO YOUR LINE OF PLAY.

The foregoing principles are illustrated in Fig. 12. It is Blue's turn to play. He has an easy shot at Pink, which we will suppose he hits. He could now, by slaving Pink, make the "third," "middle," and "corner" hoop without much difficulty. By very good play he might of course go all round. But any single mistake made while he is slaving Pink would probably lose him his break, Pink being his player.

Blue's proper play will be as follows: Having roquéd Pink, let him make a medium stroke, sending Pink to pink dot, and leaving himself as near Black as he can. He can now make the "third" hoop by a following stroke on Black, and then play a forward game in all safety, making use of his friend at each hoop.

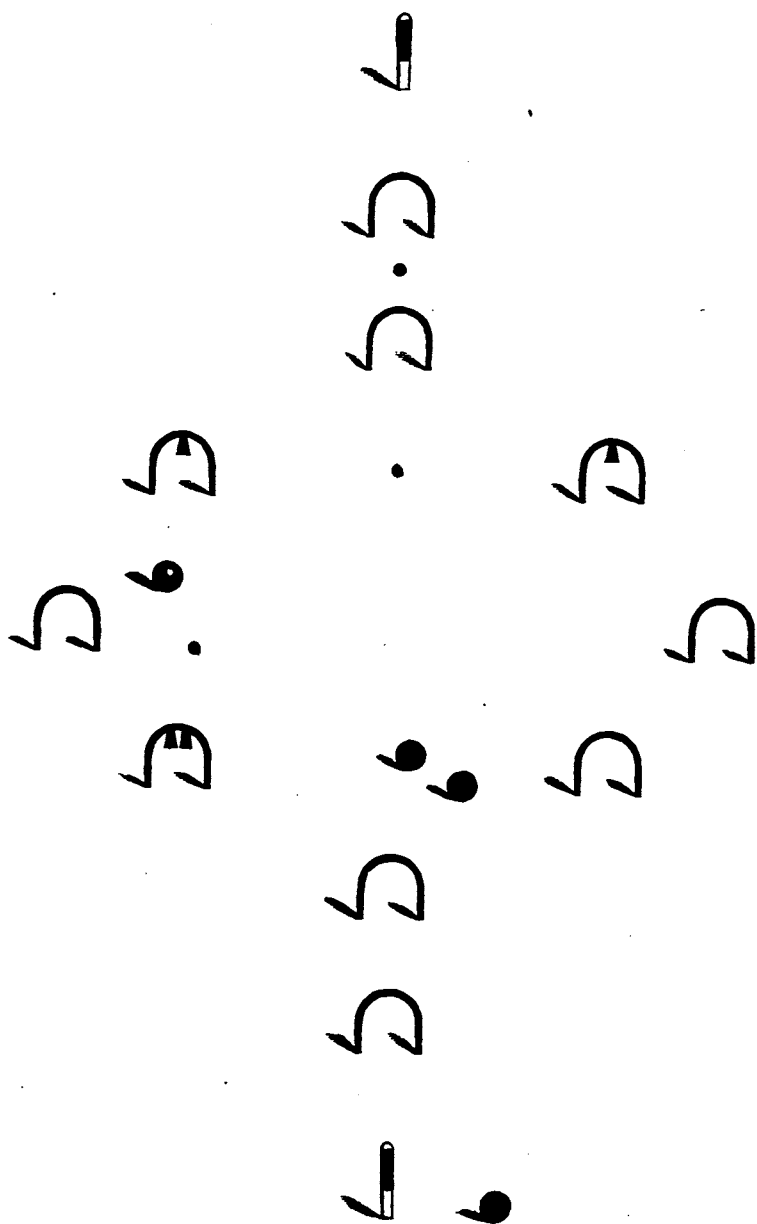
Pink is to be sent to the position indicated by the dot, in accordance with Principle 4, "Don't croquet your player into your line of play." It would have been just as easy for Blue, after making his roquet, to have sent Pink by a splitting stroke to the "middle back" or "last corner" hoop. But as Blue's forward game is through the "third," "middle," and "corner" hoops, then up

to the peg and back, it is evident that, should he make a miss anywhere after the hoop "second back," Pink, if he lay anywhere near the "middle back," or "last corner" hoop, would have a good chance of hitting him.

The particular spot to which Pink has been croquéd is also in accordance with Principle 2, "Scatter your enemies." Black and Blue are kept together, while Pink and Yellow are left the distance of the ground apart.

There are few games which require more forecast than croquet; and in Fig. 12 there is sufficient illustration of the fact, since Blue, in sending Pink to pink dot, has done so on a calculation of what the probable position of the balls would be after he has played eight strokes from the third hoop.

FIG. 13.



KEEPING THE DEAD BALL.

CHAPTER III.

PRINCIPLES 5 TO 8.

PRINCIPLE 5.—KEEP THE “DEAD” BALL.

A BEGINNER is very apt to croquet the ball of a good player away at once, without pausing to consider whether the ball he has to play is the “dead” ball, or the “player.” This is done, perhaps, out of simple fear of his prowess; but if his ball happens to be the “dead” ball it is a grand mistake. The safest place to keep him, in this case, is close to yourself and your “friend;” besides, it is very much easier to get forward with the game when you have two balls to slave, than when you have only one. With three balls together you are not liable to lose your break by getting your own balls wired from one another. Moreover, when you finish playing, should your adversary, whose “live” ball you are supposed to have left at a distance, miss his shot, then you have the dreaded “player” close to you, and can make sure of him at once, croqueting him to “penal settlements,” as it is styled—that is, to the most difficult part of the ground for him to come back from. Lastly, as long as you can contrive to keep the “dead” ball in your company, it is always possible to get any required rush on your “friend” by means of a skilful roquet or croquet of the “dead” ball, and by this means the difficulty and danger of passing the corner hoops is greatly diminished, as will be seen by looking at the play shown in the diagram.

Fig. 13.—*Blue to play*.—He first rushes Yellow (of whose play he is terribly afraid) to the yellow dot near Black. His business now is not to croquet Yellow away, but to keep him judiciously in his company, and to make use of him in passing all the corner hoops. For this purpose he croquets him to yellow dot in front of the hoop 2 to *peg*. He then roquets Black, plays a quiet following, or medium stroke, sending Black just beyond his hoop,

and leaving him exactly in position ; goes through, roquets Black again, then by a splitting stroke sends Black to black dot, leaving himself as close to Yellow as possible. He will now have an easy forward game by playing alternately on the two balls. This method of playing first on the "dead" ball and then on one's "friend" is fully explained in p. 35.

The converse of Principle 5 is

PRINCIPLE 6.—DON'T GIVE THE "DEAD" BALL.

Fig. 14.—*Black to play*.—Now suppose that Black should play softly at the two balls together, and miss his shot ; then Yellow, who comes next, would have his "player" (Blue) and the "dead" ball, Black lying close to him. In that case he would probably croquet his "player" away, and slave the "dead" ball, Black. To prevent the possibility of this, and mindful of Principle 6, "Don't give the dead ball," Black in taking his stroke should go hard at Yellow and Blue, so that in the event of his missing he would go far beyond Yellow to somewhere near where the black dot is.

This will leave Yellow the choice of two games, neither of them very first-rate—first to play a forward game on Blue, his "player," which is the dangerous game deprecated in Principle 3 ; or otherwise to play a following stroke on Blue up to Pink. This again is dangerous, for he may fail in his following stroke and not lie, after making it, in such a position as to be sure of Pink, and in the event of his missing Pink, Blue will have a good chance of recovering his break.

PRINCIPLE 7.—DON'T PLAY LONG ON THE "DEAD" BALL UNLESS YOU HAVE ALSO YOUR "FRIEND" TO PLAY ON.

Many very fair croquet players imagine that it is only the "live" ball that is formidable, and that they may slave the "dead" ball and play any number of strokes on it in any direction with impunity. This is a mistake, as will appear by the diagram.

Fig. 15.—*Blue's turn to play*.—He roquets Yellow. Then he slaves Yellow, and makes all the three hoops up to the peg,

which he misses. Yellow and Blue are now supposed to be near the peg, in the position shown by the dots. Although Yellow was the "dead" ball, it is clear that Blue's side has now lost the break—lost it, at least, unless Black can contrive, when his turn comes round, to make a very long roquet. This we shall see.

Blue having finished with missing the peg, it is now Pink's turn to play, and all that he has to think of is to keep out of the reach of Black. Black will then have a long shot at Pink, or a long shot at Blue and Yellow. It is, therefore, apparent that Blue was incautious, and did not judge his own powers with sufficient accuracy; for, without very great certainty of play, he ought not to have played on the "dead" ball, when parted from his "friend."

Blue's proper play would have been to have gone off Yellow to Black, and to have endeavoured to make his hoop by a following stroke. Even if he had missed doing this, Pink was at too great a distance for him to be alarmed at, and Blue, Black, and Yellow would have lain well for Black's play in the next stroke.

These Principles 6 and 7 are to be understood as indicating the safest play, and are intended as guiding principles for those who have not arrived at any great pitch of excellence in the game. Every rule will be necessarily modified by the skill and nerve of the player. A person who can trust implicitly to his accuracy of aim, is perfect master of the various strokes, and can place full reliance on his nerve, however long he may try it, will often go on making hoop after hoop with only the "player" or "dead" ball in his company. To be able to do this creates a very strong game. But unless a player has all these qualifications—a steady hand, an accurate eye, and nerves not to be shaken—and added to all these the advantage of long practice, he had better observe the two foregoing principles.

It is, however, a great point to be aimed at in all games to try one's nerve as far as possible; and—since great things may be learnt even in small matters—I should say that the education of confidence is one of the greatest parts of education itself. In billiards, cricket, and croquet, it is extraordinary how the eye

and hand obey the will and intention; and the worst possible players in any of these games will sometimes (through trusting implicitly to the skill of the moment, and the felicity of a steady but not overstrained attention) perform wonders in the game which they never before believed themselves capable of.

PRINCIPLE 8.—AT THE END OF EACH BREAK PLAY THE GAME OF YOUR OTHER BALL.

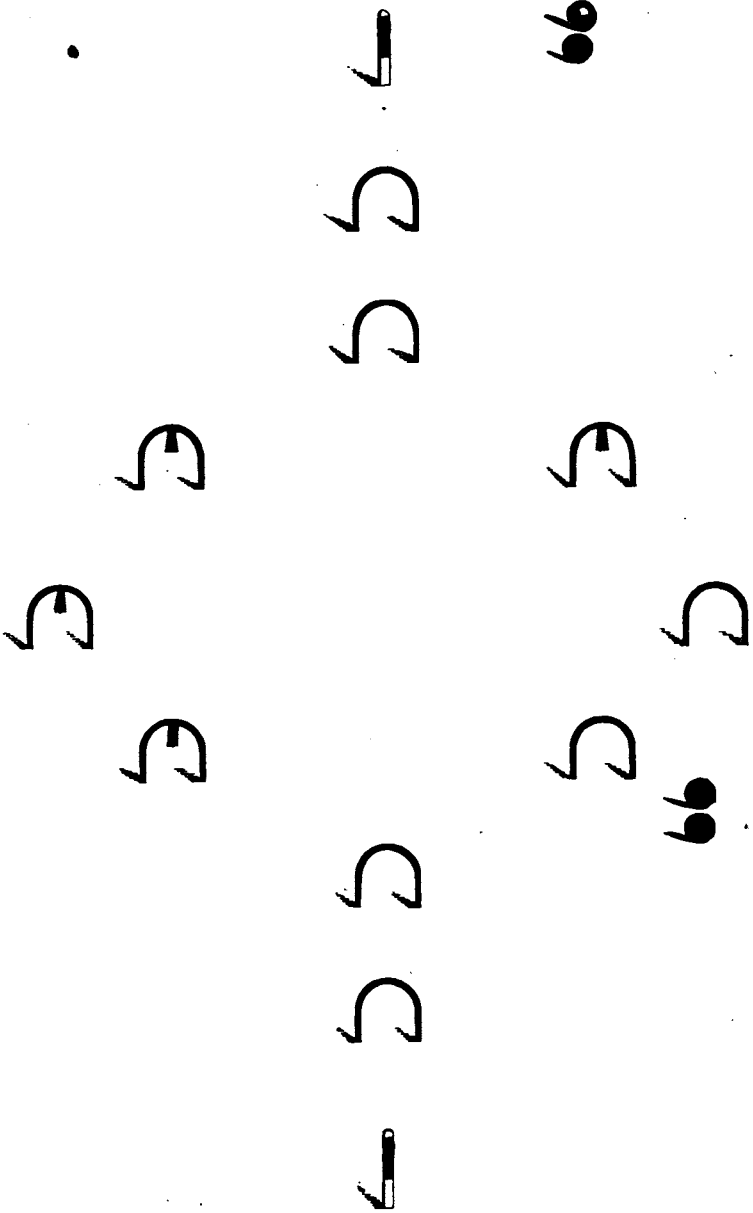
Grievous is the error of not observing this simple rule, to which there is hardly an exception, and to the non-observance of which is owing the fact that games do sometimes drag out to an indefinite period. To put a ball in front of its hoop at the end of its turn is of no good whatever; a player should either go to his friend, or, if his friend has a ball near him, play up to his friend's hoop. Example is better than precept.

Fig. 16.—*Black to play.*—He attempts a long splitting stroke off Yellow, trusting to get through his hoop and play on Yellow again; this he fails to do; he drives Yellow to yellow dot, but leaves himself a foot the wrong side of his hoop. He has now another stroke, in which it would be easy for him to position himself, and he could probably do so in all safety, by getting the wire between himself and Yellow. Besides which, he might consider that Blue is certainly out of shot of Yellow, and that therefore he was at liberty to consider solely his own interest. This would be the ordinary play of a summer's afternoon, where the chief merit of croquet is considered to be the excuse it gives one for asking the neighbourhood, and meeting one's friends. But it is not croquet.

Black, who is supposed to be lying a foot behind the corner hoop, has no business to think at all about his own play, but should consider what his "friend" Blue will have to do in his next stroke. Blue is lying near his "player," and is therefore so far in a dangerous position. His hoop is the corner back, and Black should therefore place himself just in front of that hoop.

We will suppose that Yellow misses his long shot. Blue will then take one off Pink to Black, and by following strokes on his "friend" will make the three side hoops back, and will then

FIG. 16.



WHEN TO PASS THE BREAK FROM ONE BALL TO ANOTHER.

again lie near Pink. He had better now leave the last two hoops unmade, in order to prevent all danger of being pegged out. His remaining play, therefore, will be to croquet Pink to somewhere near the starting peg, and then by a "following" stroke to send Black conveniently near his hoop, and place himself in the best position to be of service.

It is most important to know exactly when the break should in this manner be passed from one ball to another.

CHAPTER IV.

PRINCIPLES 9 AND 10; AND OPENING OF THE GAME FOR
THE SECOND BALL.

PRINCIPLE 9.—DON'T LEAVE THE PLAYER IN FRONT OF A HOOP
WHICH COMMANDS THE GROUND.

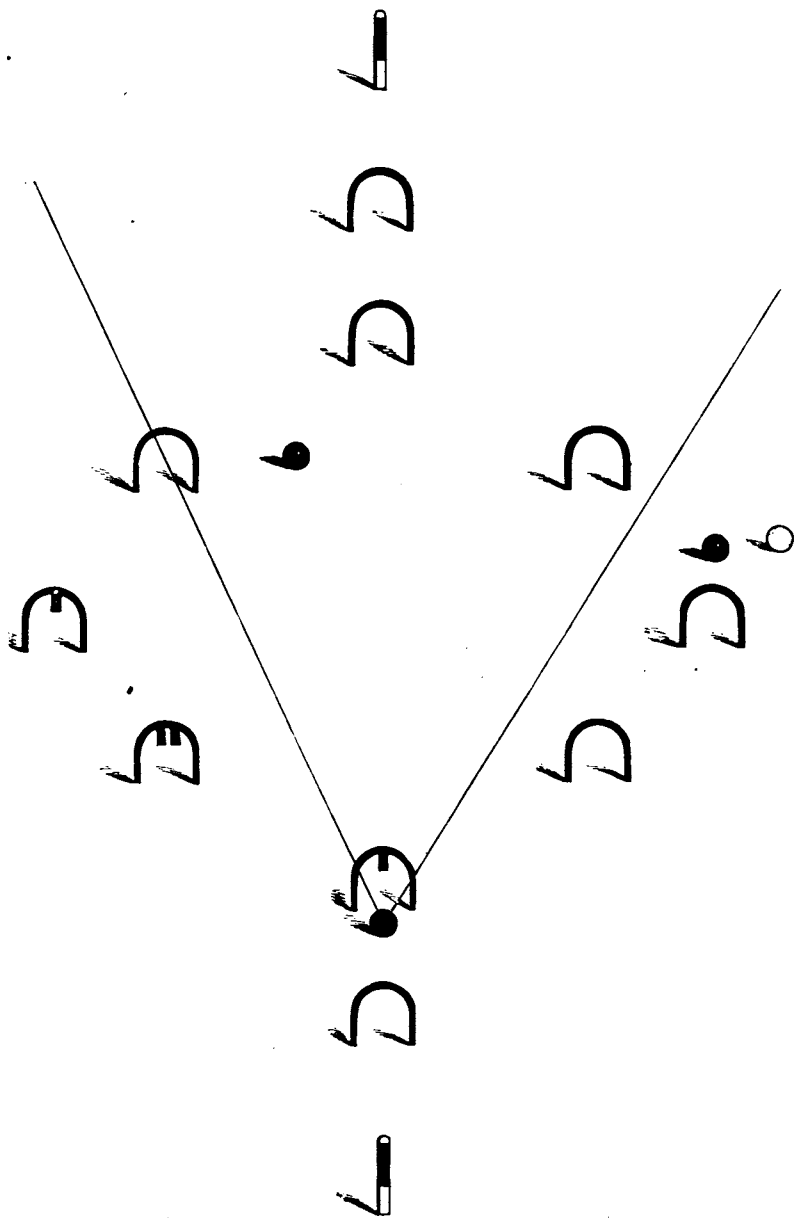
THE hoops which command most ground are the second and third hoops at starting, and coming back the second from the peg, and the corner back.

The lines drawn from Blue, in Fig. 17, will show what space of ground is commanded by a ball lying in position at the second hoop. But it must be remembered that Blue does not simply sweep the ground comprised within those lines. For suppose the player, who has Blue, to be a tolerably certain shot at 14ft., then the ground he threatens will extend that distance outside those lines. And thus it will be seen, by Fig. 17, that a ball placed at about half a foot from the second hoop commands nearly two-thirds of the whole ground. It is Yellow's turn to play; and Blue, his player, is at the second hoop, commanding the ground. Yellow should play as follows: First, he should rush Pink across the ground to lie as near Black as possible. He should then make a following stroke, bringing both balls up to Black. Then he should take two off Black to Blue; croquet Blue to somewhere beyond the last corner; and leave himself in front of Pink's hoop. (See Principle 8.)

PRINCIPLE 10.—WHEN YOU HAVE THREE BALLS TOGETHER, AND ARE ABOUT TO CONCLUDE YOUR TURN YOU MUST LEAVE THEM "WIRED" FROM YOUR PLAYER; OR AT BAULKING DISTANCES; OR YOU MUST LEAVE THEM IN LINE.

When you take your aim, you strike your own ball as near the centre as possible, and the aim you take is the direct line of the centre. (It is a popular delusion, that the aim of a ball of 3in.

FIG. 17.



CROQUETING THE PLAYER AWAY FROM HIS HOOP.

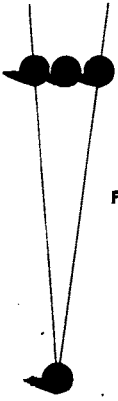


FIGURE 18

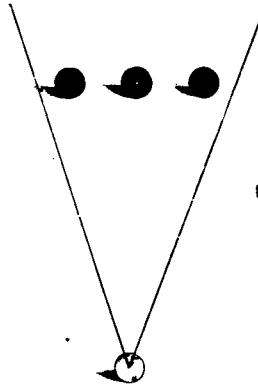


FIGURE 19



FIGURE 20



FIGURE 21



FIGURE 22

LEAVING THE BALLS AT THE END OF A BREAK.

diameter is exactly 3in. on each side of the object aimed at, because it happens to cover that space of ground on each side. This is not the case. The aim of a ball 3in. across is only $1\frac{1}{2}$ in., that is to say, that if such a ball be driven $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. out of the direction of the true aim, it will yet strike the object aimed at. To understand this point correctly is of greater consequence in the game than may appear at first sight, I therefore take some trouble to explain it, though doubtless it will be self-evident to many of my readers.)

We are to suppose the balls played with to be 3in. in diameter. It follows, therefore, that a ball aimed at gives so much target. But the aiming ball is also 3in. in diameter, and covers $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. each way from the centre; and thus, it will be seen, that a single ball gives a target of 6in.; that consequently two balls can be so placed as to give a target of 12in., and three balls a target of 18in.

The popular delusion of which I have spoken is, that a single ball of 3in. gives to another ball of the same size 9in. aim; now if this were the case, two balls might be placed together so as to cover 18in., and three balls 27in.

In Fig. 18, the lines drawn from the centre of the Blue ball show the ground which Blue's aim covers on each side of Red. In Fig. 19, Blue and Pink are placed at a distance of 3in. from Black, so that Yellow cannot pass either between Blue and Black, or between Black and Pink. As I have already explained, Yellow's aim covers $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. outside Blue, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. outside Pink. The spaces and balls added will make 18in. Thus:

Inches.	Space covered.	Inches.	Space covered.
$1\frac{1}{2}$	Outside Blue.	3	Between Black and Pink.
3	Blue ball.	3	Pink ball.
3	Between Blue and Black.	$1\frac{1}{2}$	Outside Pink.
3	Black ball.		

18

It will thus be seen that with hoops measuring 9in. across, it will generally be more favourable to aim at two or three balls, if tolerably close together, than it would be to aim at a hoop.

Fig. 20 shows three balls placed in a line from Yellow's shot, or, as it is commonly called, "lined."

Fig. 21 shows three balls placed at some distance apart, which, in Principle 10, I have called "baulking distances." It must depend very much on your adversary's play at what distance apart you ought to leave two balls, so as to baulk his aim. If I was playing against very good play, and found myself obliged to leave three balls for my enemy to take a shot at, at a distance of say fifteen yards, I should choose about 2ft. to leave between the balls. As each ball covers 6in., they all three collectively would cover 18in. But the leaving them in this way puzzles the eye; and very often a player neglects to take a distinct aim at any one ball, but takes a haphazard shot at all three, trusting to his luck, a very bad thing to trust to at croquet, however well it may have served you at other games.

Fig. 22 shows the balls as wired from Yellow. It must be borne in mind that a wire gives a defence of 3in., viz., the diameter of the aiming ball; for whether the ball hits it full or merely grazes it, it will be turned aside. The hoop therefore shown in Fig. 22 gives a defence of 6in.

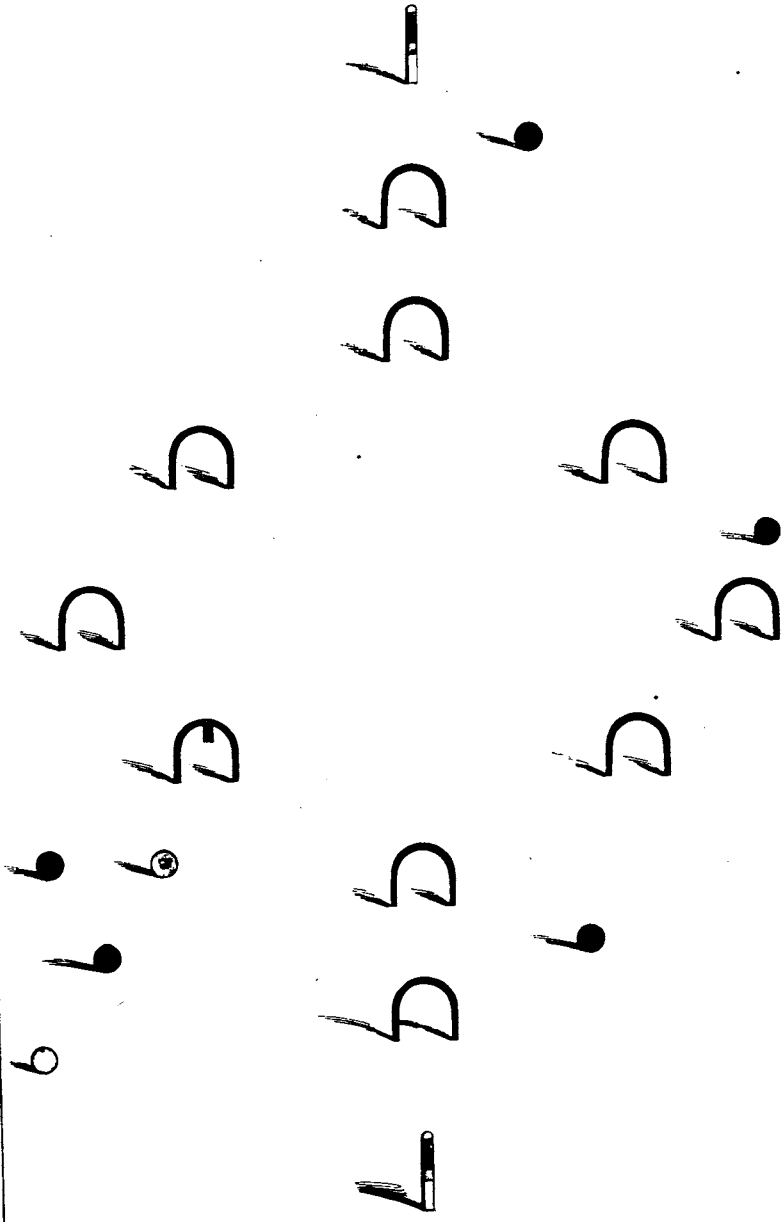
In commencing a game it is decided by lot which side or which player begins. There is a great diversity of opinion as to whether it is an advantage or disadvantage to begin. The writer considers it a decided advantage, and, winning the toss, invariably leads off. It is, however, quite a moot question, many very good players preferring to take the second and fourth balls.

There are four different ways of playing the second ball, all of which I will describe. A player who knows the game will vary the openings, choosing that one which is likely to be most puzzling to the particular antagonist with whom he is playing. But where two players meet who have never seen each other's play before, the second opening is seldom good.

FIRST OPENING.

The blue ball is supposed in all the openings to have positioned himself at the third hoop. The first opening is the old method to try and hit Blue with Pink. Should Pink miss, he will lie somewhere beyond Blue, and probably give an aim at two balls. Should, however, Black in his turn miss, then there will be three balls all pretty well in a line and probably giving a very wide

FIG. 23.



THE OPENINGS.

target for Yellow to aim at. But in the event of Yellow, the last ball, missing, it must be remembered that Blue and Black will have a very strong game.

The four balls to the left are illustrative of the foregoing, and are shown in that position, on the supposition that Pink, Black, and Yellow have all missed their shots.

SECOND OPENING.

Instead of going at Blue, place Pink to the right of the second hoop in such a position and at such a distance that Black cannot make quite certain of hitting him, and yet hesitates to leave the shot for Yellow. Should Black go at Pink and miss him, Yellow will evidently have a good game, or should Black go at Blue and miss him, Yellow will still have a good chance at Pink.

THIRD OPENING.

Pink has made the second hoop. Send him down to the right of the turning peg.

This is a daring, but very often a very successful opening. Black, in order to make the game quite safe, must make the first hoop, so as to command the ground where Pink lies; get down to Pink, roquet him, dismiss him to some part of the ground not commanded by the second hoop (since Yellow comes next), and get down to Blue.

In this series of operations Black may very easily make a mistake. First there is the difficulty of rushing the second hoop, so as to lie near Pink, for it is never quite easy to rush a hoop, and judge the strength required for a long distance at the same time. Then comes the danger, a chance at any rate, of missing Pink. And, supposing Black to hit, there will yet remain a slight difficulty, since he must croquet Pink to some spot not commanded by the second hoop, and leave himself within easy shot of his friend Blue.

FOURTH OPENING.

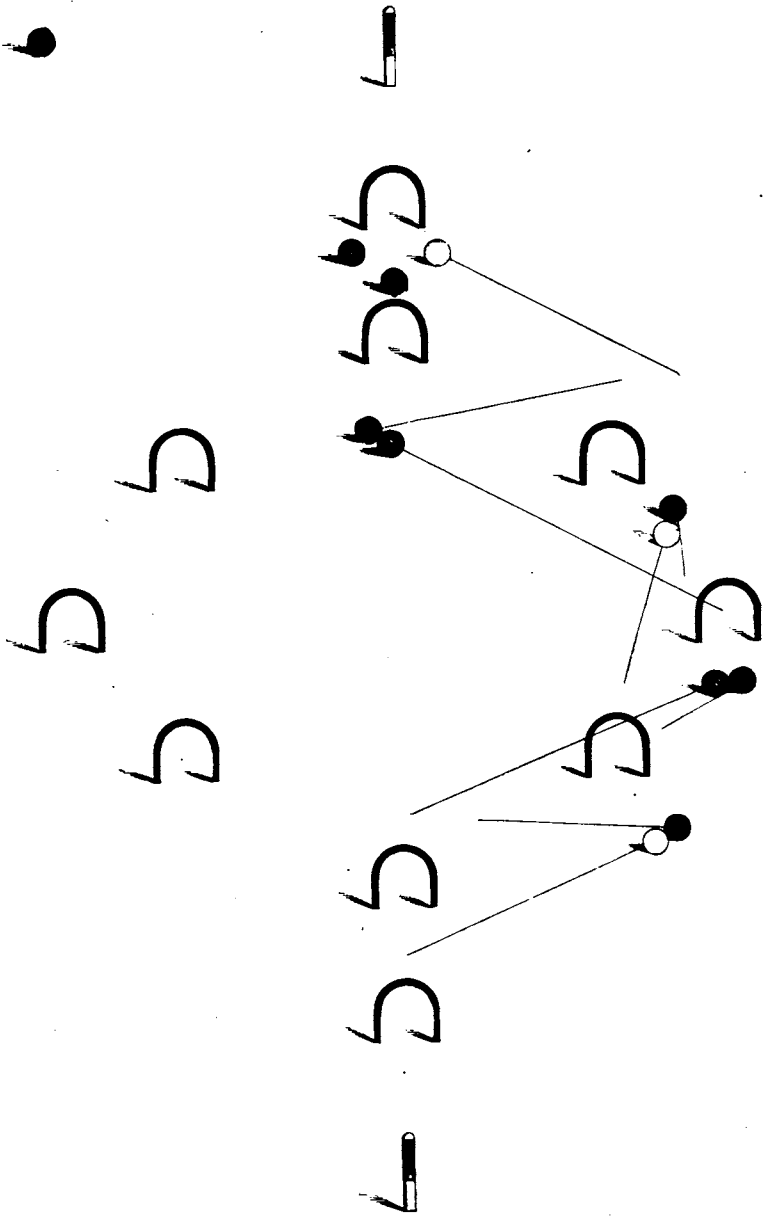
On getting through the second hoop, place Pink to the right of the ground somewhere beyond the middle back.

Black (who is not able to rush the second hoop so as to roquet

Pink) will, of course, go to his friend Blue. Should he miss, Yellow will take a long shot at his friend Pink, so as to lie near. When Blue's turn comes, he will have to choose between playing a forward game till he comes to the corner back, or he must take two off Black, and traverse the whole length of the ground in order to separate Blue and Black.

This, I think, is the weakest of the four openings, but it succeeds very often against players who are wanting in decision. It leaves two games open, and to play the forward game is dangerous except to very good nerves.

FIG. 24



PASSING A BALL.

CHAPTER V.

PASSING A BALL AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

No one can play a really strong game at croquet without completely mastering the foregoing Principles 1 to 10. The best shot who had not mastered them would not stand the remotest chance of winning a game against a very inferior player (as regards the mastery of the mallet), but one who thoroughly understood these principles.

It will be advisable, therefore, for those of my readers who may think it worth while to do well what they do so often, to go over the Principles 1 to 10 without the explanatory diagrams, and the full explanation of the text accompanying them, and see if they clearly understand the various points :—

1. Keep your own balls together.
2. Scatter your enemies.
3. Don't play on your player.

This is subject to modification. When by playing on your "player" you can make certain of making one or more hoops, by all means make them ; only understand the danger. A single mistake may lose you the break, and the loss of the break is often the loss of a game.

4. Don't croquet your player into your own line of play.
5. Keep the "dead" ball.
6. Don't give the "dead" ball.
7. Don't play on the "dead" ball unless you have your own ball also to play on.

Subject to the same modification as Principle 3.

8. At the end of each break play the game of your other ball.
9. Don't leave your player in front of a hoop which commands the ground.
10. When you have three balls together, and are about to con-

clude your turn, you must leave them "wired" from your player, or at baulking distances, or you must leave them "lined."

A player who has attained great accuracy in the splitting and following strokes, can play a very rapid and successful game whenever he has two balls to play on by a method which goes by the name of "passing a ball." This I will now explain.

In Fig. 24, Blue, Black, and Yellow are close together. It is Blue's turn to play, and his hoop is the second back. First, let him roquet Yellow, and pass him to the "corner back" (the position to which he is to be sent is shown by the line). He must now roquet Black, send him a little way beyond his own hoop, and follow through. He now roquets Black again, and then, by means of a splitting-stroke, must send Black in front of the "middle back," leaving himself as near Yellow as possible. This operation of sending on one ball two hoops ahead is to be repeated by means of stop or splitting strokes at each hoop, as the wires in Fig. 24 will, I trust, sufficiently explain.

The principles which follow are general, and will apply as much to billiards or cricket as to croquet. But for those who play only the latter game, it may be useful to state them.

1. As at billiards, never pause too long on your stroke; the more especially if it is a difficult one. The mind winks as much as the eye; it is not capable of retaining an exact aim above a second or two at a time. You must not keep your attention too long on the stretch, but strike the moment you have it in your mind that you will hit, though without hurry.

2. In easy strokes, however, which merely require care, take plenty of time. If you count the occasions on which you get your balls wired from each other, or miss a hoop at the distance perhaps of two or three feet distance, you will find, nine times out of ten, that the accident was the result of mere carelessness.

3. Never allow yourself to consider too much the responsibility of a stroke. If the whole game depends on it you should yet play it as coolly, and with as little concern, as if it was the second stroke in the game.

4. *Nil desperandum.* The game is never lost till it is won. If you once consider your adversary as certain of the game, you have morally given up. After that every stroke you make is pretty certain to be timid, uncertain, and unsuccessful. Always, therefore, keep it in your mind that so long as you have another shot you have another chance. I have seen many a game pulled through by a steady hand, though both of the adversary's balls were "pegging out."

5. You must learn quickly, in every game, to estimate your adversary's powers correctly. If you can form an accurate idea at what distance he is tolerably sure, by what distance most puzzled, you can leave your own balls at the end of each break so as to increase his difficulties as much as possible. Suppose he is very bad at long shots; directly you get your own balls together, keep his the whole length of the ground apart, and rather aim at this than at getting on rapidly with your own game. In course of time he falls into a chronic despair, loses all heart, and can do nothing with a break when he gets it. Therefore, play against the weakness of his character, as much as against the weakness of his game.

6. And whatever you do, never lose your temper. If you are fond of the game, and very fond of winning, and have yet schooled yourself to take every beating you get in a cheerful state of mind, you are likely very soon to be in the first flight amongst players. Apropos of this, pray, when you are unsuccessful, do not discover that you are playing with a wretched mallet, or that it is a ground which does not suit you, and is in favour of your adversary, or that it was too dark, or somebody was talking, &c. All these circumstances were as fair for one as the other. So "take your spiritings" gently, and give all credit to the skill of the other side.

7. Against a good player win quick. The better the play, the fewer the breaks on both sides. When you have a skilful antagonist of good nerve against you, you must play a bold forward game, or not expect to win.

8. Don't think about your practice in the middle of a match. The same thing often occurs at croquet which happens so frequently at cricket. Many a player has gone out the first ball through being anxious about his attitude or action. He should have studied these in practice, not in play. In play, all your energies should be simply given to getting the sight of the ball and to considering the means how best to defeat your adversary's plans.

I have now concluded my task, and must say good bye to all those of the fair or unfair sex who have honoured me with their attention. I have told my readers everything—everything at least that I know myself—as to the means by which a victory is to be obtained at croquet, and a mastership in the game itself. I certainly hope that by the prominence which the *Field* gave to my articles, of which this present volume is a compilation, I shall have done something to raise croquet above that slighting and surely not very polite sort of praise which declares that croquet “is a very good game for ladies.” It is a good game for ladies, that is most undeniable; and it is to their admirable perception, always quicker than ours, that the merit of croquet was first recognised, and that it is now beginning to be looked on as a first-rate game, and as one which may yet rank with the very highest.

There is, however, one thing still wanting to raise it beyond dispute to the dignity of a national sport; and that is, that there shall be a standard set of rules, and *one set only*. Without this, the game can never assume that position which is granted by universal consent to such games as cricket, billiards, and whist. The efforts of the *Field* to produce a standard law have been crowned with considerable success, and have already done a great deal for the game. But, as was pointed out in a leading article in this newspaper, on the 2nd of November last, “their rules have not obtained anything like the position which a national code ought to occupy, and which some code must obtain before the game can be considered to have arrived at a perfectly satisfactory position.” I am happy to say, however, that the revised laws of the spring of this year, drawn up by a committee in which

the *Field* did me the honour to request my services, have to a much greater extent than before been accepted by the sellers of croquet, who are at present the principal obstacles in the way of a national code. These laws, however, have not been thoroughly and generally accepted by them; and under these circumstances it is only by the public taking the matter into their own hands that the matter can be finally and speedily settled. In the interest of the game it is to be hoped that all players, good and bad together, who have a real liking for the game, will on all occasions play under the *Field* laws, and refuse under all circumstances to accept any challenge under any other code.

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