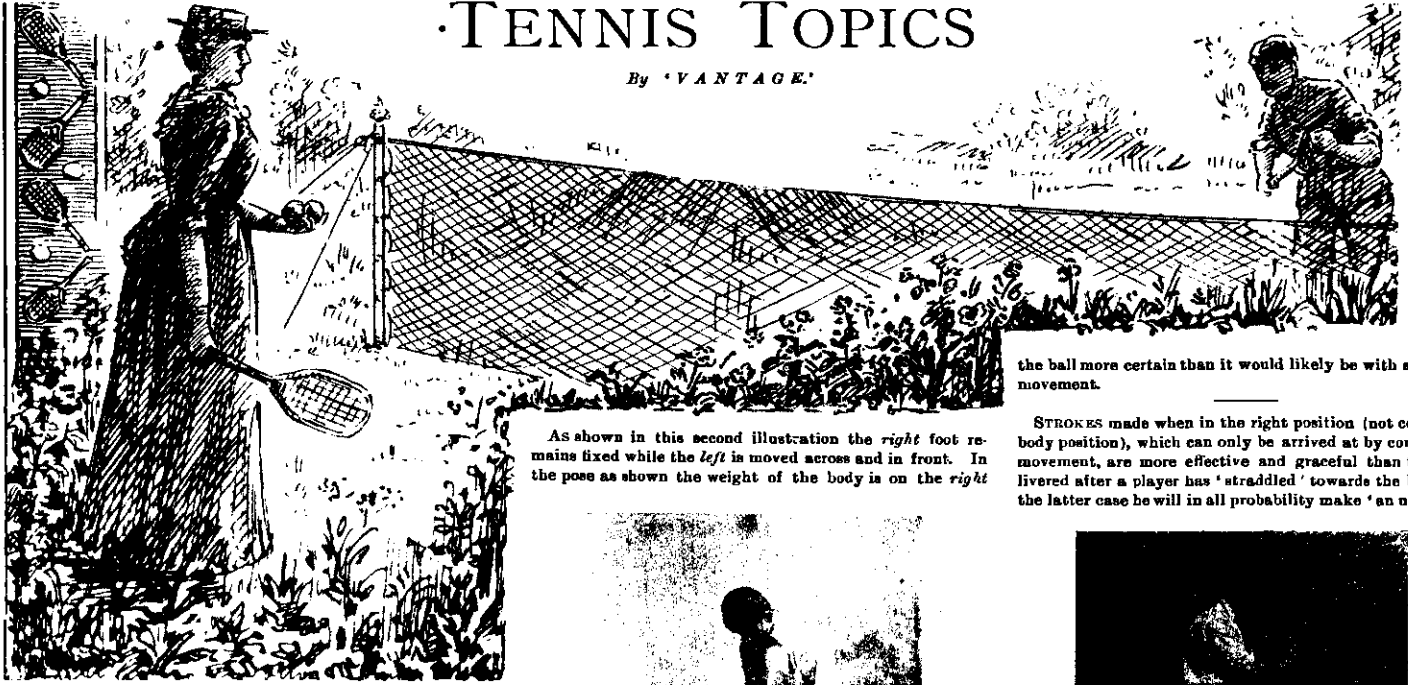


TENNIS TOPICS

By 'VANTAGE'



FOOT-MOVEMENT.

IN my last article, 'position in court,' I had occasion to remark on the want of knowledge shown by most of our players of that very important feature of the game. Only my uncompromising regard for the truth (for I hate to appear severe) compels me to draw attention to another common fault indulged in by our local men—I mean the disregard of the position of the feet in taking many strokes, and of the right movements to be made in getting the feet into those proper positions. That some players frequently adopt these correct movements and positions I don't deny, but observation has proved to me that their adoption is determined by chance rather than by habit, born out of an intelligent conception of their value, and fixed by assiduous practice.

NEARLY every stroke that comes to a player has to be taken either on the fore-hand or back-hand. A ball seldom pitches actually in front of a player. If it threatens to, a man instinctively feels that he is going to be in an awkward position to return it, and steps to one side or other, and thus makes either a 'fore' or a 'back' hand stroke of it. Sometimes a man is cornered by a ball coming straight at him, and even in such a case a right foot movement will help him materially.



Hanna, photo, Auckland.

WRONG FOOT MOVEMENT IN TAKING FORE-HAND STROKE.

THE illustration above shows the 'way not to do it.' Most of our players in taking a ball coming to their fore-hand move out their right foot as the arm is extended to make the stroke. In doing this the return is weakened. The attitude is an uncertain one, and the stroke made when the player is in this position lacks strength and precision. The 'reach,' too, is shortened. This may appear paradoxical, but if any tennis player will practise the right foot movement for a fore-hand stroke as described in the following paragraph he will find that 'this was some time a paradox, but now the time gives it proof.'

As shown in this second illustration the right foot remains fixed while the left is moved across and in front. In the pose as shown the weight of the body is on the right



Hanna, photo, Auckland.

RIGHT FOOT MOVEMENT IN TAKING THE FORE HAND STROKE.

foot, and simultaneously with the act of striking the weight is transferred to the left foot. Strokes made with this foot-movement gain in strength and precision. Try it.



Hanna, photo, Auckland.

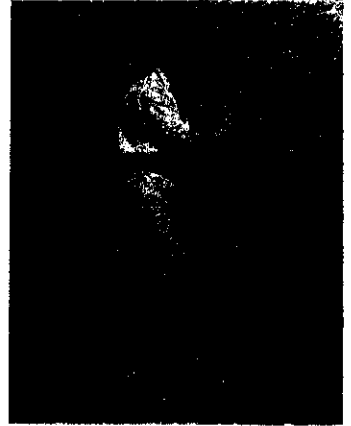
RIGHT FOOT MOVEMENT IN TAKING BACKWARD STROKE.

THIS position is for some reason or other less seldom adopted than the corresponding fore hand mistake. As shown, the left foot is advanced and bears the weight of the body, and any player while making a stroke in this attitude has little chance of getting any power into it. If the attempt is made to bring off a hard return it will be found that the left leg has to be straightened spasmodically, and all precision in placing is lost, the ball usually dropping outside the opponents' left side line, owing to the 'pull' from the racket.

HERE the right foot is advanced across the left, a clear swing backward for the racket is left possible, and the weight of the body in striking is transferred naturally from the right to the left foot, the left knee, which was bent in waiting for the ball, being straightened, thus lending weight and power to the stroke, and making the placing of

the ball more certain than it would likely be with any other movement.

STROKES made when in the right position (not court, but body position), which can only be arrived at by correct foot movement, are more effective and graceful than those delivered after a player has 'straddled' towards the ball. In the latter case he will in all probability make 'an ungaily'



Hanna, photo, Auckland.

RIGHT FOOT MOVEMENT IN TAKING BACK-HAND STROKE.

stroke, which if it ever pass the net and attain the dignity of a return, will be of such a character as to lend itself to severe treatment by his opponent. Good tennis is always 'easy and graceful,' I don't refer to 'flourish,' that is always easy of detection, but it may be observed that strokes made in the right way are made without any apparent effort or strain by the player, and this automatic action of hand, eye and foot, producing good strokes, makes up what we call 'good form.'

THE greatest difficulty will be found in making the proper foot movement while on the run. This is most certainly troublesome. The best way will be found in taking short, quick, running steps till almost on the ball, and when in the act of striking make the proper 'step across.' This 'step across' will partake somewhat of a stride. The advantage gained is that the player comes to a standstill to take the ball and prevents himself from running over it; further, it enables the player to get back, for even if he should succeed in making a return while on the run, the chances are that the next stroke will come to the part of the court from which he is running, and his getting back will be almost impossible, or if possible, only at a great cost in effort.

THESE foot movements apply equally to balls off the ground and to volleys. They should be made mechanically, and without the slightest hesitation, for it is obvious that in taking a fast return, if a player has to think out what he is going to do with his feet, he will be too late. As in learning correct strokes, so in moving the feet properly constant practice is necessary, and this practice can be undertaken in absolute solitude. One's bedroom does as well as a tennis court. Take a racket and picture a ball coming to your fore-hand, make the step across with the left foot just before swinging the racket for the stroke, so with the back-hand, step across with the right foot and put the weight where nature will dictate. When on a club court get some one to watch and correct you when wrong. It will be somewhat dreary at first, but assiduous practice will soon convince you of the value of these right foot movements.

I HAVE been asked to write an article on tennis for ladies. Certainly, with pleasure, and next week I will assume the office of guide, philosopher, and friend to our fair tennisians. I know the risks, also the privileges.