

But that is going a great deal too far. The newer theorists, in their wild hunt for originality, are much too ready to pooh-pooh those ancient rules of play, which, although perhaps neither literally correct nor scientifically accurate, are yet generally based upon a very true conception of the game. In boldly stating that the club should be swung, and not hit, at the ball, the old writers meant nothing different from what we will believe to-day, but they couched their advice in the dogmatic form most likely to drive it home.

It is noticeable, for instance, that Mr. Horace Hutchison, one of the stoutest advocates of the "swing, don't hit" theory, warns his disciples against the "hammer-hurling heresy," which results from an exaggerated and over literal interpretation of the advice to make the stroke a swing. He points out that the motion of the club should never approach to that of the hammer, which the athlete is about to send hurtling through the air; in other words, the stroke must be in the nature of a swing, but it must not be purely a swing.

It is much more dangerous, however, to let it become purely a hit. For one thing, the Golf club, though not quite the "instrument singularly ill-adapted for the purpose" of striking the ball, which it has been dubbed, is certainly not formed for hitting. Let anyone test this for himself by suspending a golf ball on a string a foot or so from the ground, and striking it with his driver; he will be surprised how seldom he hits it clean. The truth is that it is not at all a simple thing to strike a golf ball clean with a slim-shafted club, and it needs the mechanical accuracy of the swing to make the stroke a reliable one.

There is only one thing in athletics with which the stroke of the golf club can fairly be compared, and that is the motion of the bowler's arm in cricket. The ball is not thrown; it is slung from a revolving arm. But no one would pretend that the motion of the bowler's arm is a pure swing.

I do not wish to say either that it is not possible to make the stroke a "hit" because I have seen it done. Cricketers, who are taking up golf for the first time, commonly "hit" the ball with great success in using their iron clubs—and are unable to touch the ball at all with their wooden ones. I was witness in one case of the first attempts at the Royal and Ancient game made by a number of Highland shinty players. They drove a fine ball with the wooden clubs, long and straight, and the stroke they employed was almost a pure hit; indeed, so little did it partake of the ordinary golfers' swing that they usually stood some distance behind the ball, and took two or three quick steps forward, in order to gain additional impetus for the stroke.

It is, therefore, impossible to lay down an absolute rule that the ball must not be hit, but, on the other hand, there is no doubt that in the case of the best players the features of the swing predominate. Nor is it difficult to see why this should be so. When the club is swinging at full stretch in an accustomed circle, it ought only to need the eye being kept upon the ball to ensure the accuracy of the blow. In the case of a hit, there is no such mechanical safeguard, and the factor of aim becomes of much greater importance. Similarly, when the head of the club is moving in a fair approximation to a true circle, the possibility of it swinging across the line, and imparting an undesirable spin to the ball, is greatly diminished.

The temptation to hit, in the case of most players, arises from the ever-present desire to get more distance out of the stroke, and the assumption that more force is obtained by hitting the ball. There is, however, a fatal flaw in the logic of this—it does not follow that because more force is exerted, more force is obtained. Doubtless it is possible to bring a larger amount of muscular power into play by departing from the simplicity of the pure swing, but it is at the expense of some part of the force which the mere action of gravity imparts to the descending club.

Moreover, it is not the ball which is struck with the greatest force which necessarily travels the greatest distance. The action of the loft of the club in imparting a backward spin is requisite to ensure the farthest carry. But in the case of a hit the action of this is much less thorough.

For, consider the way in which the

club is moving. In the case of a swing it is moving as nearly as possible in a circle at the full stretch of the golfer's arm. Any departure from this motion, such as is inevitable when the stroke is more in the nature of a hit, tends to shorten the radius of this circle, and consequently to sharpen the curve at the point where the club meets the ball. The immediate consequence of this is that the club head, during the brief interval of time while club and ball are in contact, is less able to insinuate itself under the ball than in the case of the more open curve, and so the amount of back spin which it produces is not so great.

CHESS.

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Answers to Correspondents.

H. N.—The question is being continually asked, but owing to the endless number and variety of combination that are possible over the board, it is impossible to give more than an approximate theoretical and practical comparison of the relative powers of the men. Staunton's "Handbook" gives the approximate mathematical value as follows:—Taking the pawn as the unit, the knight is worth 3.05; the bishop, 3.50; the rook, 5.48; and the queen, 9.94.

KING.—As you rightly observe, many players do not make good use of their king in end play. However, after considerable experience and study in pawn endings, the player will realise that the power of the king is stronger than that of a knight or a bishop.

BEGINNER.—There is no particular opening by which you could obtain a superior position; indeed, if a royal road were possible for White, having first move, to force Black, by a series of moves, into an inferior position, the game of chess would no longer be the noble pastime that it has been considered since its introduction into civilised countries.

Solution to Position No. 4.

K-R2, K-R2; K-R3, K-Kt2; Kt-Kt3, K-R2; K-B4, K-Kt3; K-Kt4, K-R2; K-R3, K-Kt2; K-Kt5, K-R2; K-B6, K-Kt; K-Kt6, K-R; K-B7, K-R2; rook mates.

Solution to Position No. 5.

Key move: R x P.

Position No. 6.

End Game Study.

Black.

