A good deal of what I have said in this book comes very decidedly under the head of advanced instruction. Some of it may be difficult to understand. It has certainly been difficult to express. In this chapter I am going to be more elementary. I am going to try to put down something of what I should say to an actual beginner who came to me as a pupil. I do not claim that all my methods of teaching are necessarily right, but such as they are I will try to explain them.

I will imagine, therefore, that I have got a complete novice, and that I am going to teach him to drive. For all I know it might possibly be better to begin at the other end of the game and start him close to the hole and work backwards, but I do not think that if I did so I should be a popular teacher. I can generally make a good guess, by looking at the pupil, whether he is likely to do any good at the game. One can always tell the natural athlete and also the man who will never be much of a hand at any game. However, to whichever class this pupil belongs, I shall begin in much the same way and ask him to bring his wooden club. Very likely this club is a brassy with a certain amount of loft on it, as beginners often
buy only a few clubs, and in that case their wooden club is generally a fairly lofted brassy. But if it happens to be a driver, by all means let him begin with that. There is no harm done by making things fairly difficult to start with.

I begin by making him take hold of the club with his left hand in such a way that when he looks straight down the shaft he can see at least two knuckles. If he gets the grip of this hand correctly, the right hand generally fits fairly well into its place. There is some inclination to get the right hand too much under, because he feels that this gives him power, but 'No,' I say to him, 'you will have all the power you want by holding at the roots of the fingers of both hands, if you will only believe it.' I always teach the overlapping grip whether the pupil is old or young, a man or a woman. I know it is said that it does not suit ladies, and that they have not strong enough fingers for it. I have also heard golfers, and very good golfers too, say that they cannot manage this grip because their fingers are not long enough. Personally I do not believe in any of these reasons. I think that any one can learn to do it, and that it is the best grip. Therefore any one beginning the game at the very beginning had much better adopt it.

Having taken hold of his club the pupil next takes his stand and addresses an imaginary ball, and the first thing that I nearly always notice is that he stands up too straight. So I tell him to sit down to it a little and get his weight back on to his heels. I don't worry him very much about his knees, but like him to stand easily with a little give in them. I fancy that
one of the reasons for this standing up too much is that the beginner thinks the club must be very carefully placed so that the whole sole of it is flat on the ground. This is quite wrong. I am a great believer in the hands being well down and, consequently, the nose of the club being a little cocked up in the air. I know that when I am driving my best the nose of my club is well cocked up. To have the hands down is to give the club-head every chance of beginning to go back properly—that is, to go round and inwards and not to be pushed out to the right. Another very common mistake in taking up the stance is laboriously to square the shoulders instead of allowing the right shoulder to be lower than the left. This is its natural and proper place, since the right hand is below the left, and any one who begins the game young gets this naturally correct. This is not so with grown-up learners, and I have to rub it in to them to get the right shoulder down and get more weight on the right foot.

The next stage is that the learner should waggle a few times. I show him what a waggle is like, and try to get him to do it with some freedom of wrist. If, as often, he is very stiff, I say to him, 'Now then, get a break in your wrist.' So many people do not seem to realise that they have got wrist-joints.

Having wagged and got a little freedom and some feel of his club, his next step will be a swing at the imaginary ball. I show him of course, by actual example, how to do it, and explain something of it to him in words. I say nothing whatever about the turning over of the wrists, which is as a rule the first
piece of preliminary instruction in books. I do not think it is necessary. If a player is holding properly with his left hand with those two knuckles showing, as much turning movement as is necessary will come naturally. I do not find that beginners have generally any difficulty in opening the face of the club, except that now and then there is one who is inclined to grip too fiercely with the right hand too much under and so shut the face. The chief point that I insist on in words is the movement of pivoting.

Briefly what I say is this: 'A half turn of your right shoulder, a half turn of your right hip, and get your left shoulder moving.'

When he actually begins to swing the club I try to make the learner take a three-quarter swing to start with, and then gradually lengthen it a little by means of more pivoting. With beginners, as with champions, there is a natural tendency for the strong right hand to take charge too early in the up-swing and spoil it. If a pupil suffers very badly from this I make him put his right hand in his pocket and do some one-handed swings with his left hand, and this, as it may be called, back-handed shot is often very useful in helping to produce some smoothness and rhythm.

All this has taken me some time to write down, but in real life it does not take very long. In point of fact it takes about a quarter of an hour, which is quarter of a lesson, and at the end of that time I generally let my pupil have a go at a real ball. It depends of course on how he shapes. Some people take longer to get a rudimentary notion of the swing than others, but in the case of a normally promising pupil I start
him on a real ball at about this time, and I generally have half a dozen balls and tee them for him one after another. The average result in my experience is this: three or four tops, one fair hit, and one or two slices. The topped shots are usually produced by swaying, the slices by insufficient pivoting, and the one fairly good shot possibly by chance.

Gradually the tops become fewer and the slices more frequent. The slicing nearly always comes from the same cause, namely, that the player does not pivot enough. In order to make him pivot properly I sometimes resort to exaggeration. I tell him that at the top of the swing he ought to be able to see the club-head and half of the shaft, and then get him to try to do so in a practice swing. This sounds as if it meant a very long swing. As a matter of fact it does not, but it does mean a rather exaggerated pivot. I find it a good plan for making the learner get well round with his shoulder. Another plan is to tell him to point the club-head at me at the top of his swing. Of course I stand in such a position that, if he is to do as he is told, he must bring his shoulder well round—and round he does come with a vengeance. There is sometimes great merit in exaggeration.

By this time no doubt I have got to the end of the first hour's lesson, and probably some way into the second. Exactly how much I try to teach a learner at once must of course depend a good deal on him and how he gets on. In nearly every case, however, I find that after the very first stages the thing that I have to rub in for all it is worth is pivoting. It is pivot, pivot, pivot all the time. If the pupil will
keep his hands low he has at any rate a chance of pivoting properly, but his hands will come up. Then out goes the club to the right and he cannot turn properly. I always tell him to allow his body to occupy in pivoting the same space and no more than it did in his address. This is really a piece of more advanced instruction, but I find that it often helps the beginner to get the right mental picture of the movement.

A great many people think that they are pivoting when in fact they are only screwing round on the ball of the left foot. This is a bad fault. When it is at all exaggerated it brings the left heel into such a position at the top of the swing that it is almost facing in the direction in which the player is aiming. Now by the time he hits the ball that heel has got to get back to the position from which it started. That is a comparatively long job, much too long to be comfortably managed in the space of time occupied by the down-swing. Of course the player does not manage it, with the result that his heel is in the wrong place and his body contorted at the moment he hits the ball. Never let the heel get past the line of the toe: that is a golden rule, and can never be infringed with impunity.

As regards this matter of footwork, I ought perhaps to have said something before now as to stance. I teach my pupils the square stance, in which I believe most strongly, and there are two other rules that I always try to make them obey. The right foot is to be at right angles with the line of direction; the left foot is to be turned outwards at an angle of forty-five
degrees. I think it is important to get that right foot at right angles, because it stops swaying, or at any rate makes it much more difficult. You have only to try a swing to see that this is so. It may, to begin with, make pivoting rather harder. If the right toe is a little turned out the body seems to turn rather more easily, but the advantage of stopping the sway more than counterbalances this, and pivoting with the foot at right angles is only a matter of practice.

There is one other point that I nearly always have to tell a beginner. It is not quite easy to explain. The beginner looks squarely down on to the top of the ball. That is not the way in which a good player looks at the ball except upon the putting green. Observe any good golfer and you will see that he has his head a little on one side. He seems to be leaning it a little to the right. Whatever may be the exact reason of this, experience proves it to be right. Perhaps it makes it a little easier to begin the pivot and let the club start round in the proper direction. It comes naturally to an imitative boy, but not to a grown-up beginner. To him it has to be pointed out, and it certainly is a help to him.

I generally give three lessons of an hour each with the wooden club before I touch irons, and I never teach wooden and iron clubs on the same day. I absolutely refuse to do it. When the time for irons arrives I start my beginner with a mid-iron. I don't tell him anything about half shots and push shots. He is to hit the ball, within reasonable limits, as hard as he can—an honest full smack. I say to him,
'Now the only difference I want you to make between this shot and the shot you have been playing with your driver is just this. When you get near the top of your swing, add a little tension to your left arm and wrist and hand.' This has the effect of making him take a rather shorter and tauter swing.

I don't know precisely why, but the beginner is particularly prone when he has an iron club to give a jump and lift his body upwards. It is certainly more noticeable than with wooden clubs. To cure this the best plan is to try to make him get his weight well on to his left big toe. With this mid-iron shot, be it understood, he is not worrying his head about an ascending or a descending blow. He is just trying to hit the ball. The leaning to the left in the upswing with its consequent transference of weight and descending blow (these things make up really all there is in the 'push shot') come at a later stage, and I have talked about them elsewhere.

After two lessons with the mid-iron, I go on to the mashie. Here the beginner has something quite fresh to tackle. So far he has been playing more or less a full shot. Now I leave the full shot behind, and teach from a half to a quarter shot. Moreover, here I do take him straight away to the descending blow. It is to be remembered that by this time he has had several lessons, is getting familiar with the feel of a club, and is not so elementary as he was.

The first thing I impress on him is that the club must to a considerable extent hug the ground on the way back, and that the loft on the club-face will get the ball up into the air for him. He is not to do anything
to help it. Nearly always he wants to pick the club up abruptly with the right hand: to check this, one-handed exercise with the left hand is very useful. As I said, I want him straightway to hit down on the ball a descending blow, which is in all ordinary circumstances the right shot with a mashie, and the best phrase I know, with which to make him see what is wanted, is 'Lean against the club.' That will get him with his weight well forward on to the left foot as his club is going up, and put him into the right position to hit down. It is a phrase that he ought to bear in mind long after he is a beginner. When I miss a mashie shot myself, it is generally because I have not remembered to lean against the club, and I am sure this is true of hundreds of other golfers.

On the same day as I start a pupil with a mashie, I give him a turn at putting. I am sure it is important for him to begin under a teacher's eye and not at his own sweet will, even though there may be more different ways of hitting a ball into the hole than there are of hitting it successfully with other clubs. Personally I putt with a cleek, but to a beginner who has no predisposition one way or the other I recommend an aluminium putter. It makes for more smoothness and more of a pendulum motion, and these are two valuable assets. To encourage this smoothness I always teach a pupil to roll the ball up to the hole with his putter. I know that elsewhere I have said that good putters seem to me to hit the ball a slightly descending blow upon the putting green. I stick to that opinion, but it is one for advanced players, not for golfing babees and sucklings. To think of rolling
the ball towards the hole is to play a smooth shot with the sole of the putter keeping close to the ground, hitting the ball beneath its centre, and that, I think, is the safest plan for the ordinary person. The beginner is inclined to pick the club up on the way back with his right hand—that right hand has a deal of mischief to answer for on the way back, whatever the stroke—and he is less likely to do this if he concentrates his mind on rolling the ball.

The three main rules that I try to instil are:

1. Shove the club back with the left hand,
2. Hit with the right hand,
3. Keep the body still;

and the greatest of these is the last. Everybody falls into the habit of moving his body in putting at some time or other, and the beginner is particularly given to it. He cannot begin too early or too earnestly to try to keep it still.