

Expert Tips on Tennis

III—THE FORE-HAND STROKE AND RUNNING DRIVE

By J. C. PARKE

IT is a general precept that in attempting to explain anything one should always start at the beginning, so in this case, I shall try to follow the counsel of the sages, and start with what I consider to be the very beginning, viz., the grip!

First of all, do not use too thick a handle, for the only result is that you tire and strain the muscles of your fingers and wrist, and thus lose firmness of hold, and that elusive quality known amongst the more expert as "touch." Exactly the same remarks apply to a heavy racket, and for exactly the same reasons: 14-12 oz., with a medium balance, is quite heavy enough for any man, and I myself use a 14 oz., with a similar balance. As to the shape of the handle, I prefer an oval one, as it seems to fit more firmly into my hand, but this, of course, is a matter of choice and each person must please himself. Just a word of advice here—having got a racket which suits you, try to get all your new rackets as nearly as possible models of the old one, and don't chop and change about.

And now how are you to hold this beautiful racket? Well, I can only tell you how I hold it myself, and explain a little as to the grips used by others, but again I do not wish to be dogmatic as to what is the best or most correct method. Personally, I fit the handle as far as possible into the "V" between my thumb and first finger, so that the back flatness lies practically across the balls of the fingers, and my thumb closes across the front flatness, while my fingers press the side up into the "V." The result is that when I stretch my arm stiff out from my side I have a straight-faced racket with which to meet the ball, and I also find that I can play the back-hand without altering my grip in the slightest. H. L. Doherty and the late "R. F." both used practically the same fore-hand grip as above, and altered it slightly for the back-hand, but A. F. Wilding holds his racket more at the back for his famous top-spin drive, and then has to alter considerably to use the Doherty grip for the back-hand. The Australians hold even further round than Wilding, but then they use the same side of their racket for the back-hand as for the fore-hand. It is a style adapted to the rushing net game in which most of them specialize.

THE next question is, how are you to hit the ball so as to obtain the best results? Well, every one is agreed that the feet ought to be parallel to the line of direction in which it is desired to send the ball, and that may be considered as settled and essential. Personally, I start the swing with the head of the racket well back and about waist high, and my arm practically stiff. The swing ought to be one easy movement with the weight of the body coming forward from the right foot to the left, until at the end of the stroke the right foot is off the ground, and one is ready to move to any new position to receive the return. Too much importance cannot be laid on this "foot-work," as it is called, for if the fore-hand stroke be finished with the weight on the right foot, it will be found that not only is the stroke lacking in power, but also in recovering position those few seconds are lost which so often mean the winning or the losing of the rally.

The head of the racket is coming through along with the weight, and the aim and object of every person ought to be to hit the ball in the middle of the swing with a straight-faced racket. At the moment of impact, I began to turn the face over so that I finish the swing with the knuckles pointing upwards. I find that this imparts considerable forward spin to the ball and adds tremendously to its speed off the ground, and in addition balls which may appear to be going across the lines very often duck at the last moment and drop just inside. For myself I prefer to hit the ball when it is between the waist and shoulder high,

and on the ordinary English grass courts this is the same thing as saying "at the top of the hop." It is also the natural point at which to hit it, as the ball has less motion than at any other moment—the upward or downward motion having for an instant disappeared—and it also affords the largest available space of the opponent's court into which it is possible to play the ball down.

Of course the foregoing is a description of how to produce the ordinary straight-forward drive with a little spin, but the so-called "top-spin" drive is produced quite differently, and is only used by one or two players in this country. In it the head of the racket starts very low down, and comes upward much quicker than in the ordinary drive, and finishes high in the air. The face commences to turn over actually before the moment of impact, the wrist action forms an all-important part in the stroke. By its means the ball is made to dip very quickly across the net, but at the same time it has nothing like the severity or pace of the straight-forward drive, and gives a poor result for the amount of energy expended in its production. It is useful, however, against a volleyer, who may find himself continually caught with this horrible dipping ball at his feet, and even when entrenched at the net he may experience great difficulty in dealing effectively with the spin added to the dip. It was just this weapon which Wilding found so efficacious in dealing with the (usually) deadly volleying attack of McLoughlin.

UPON beginners and medium players who really desire to improve, and even upon players who consider themselves beyond the medium stage, I cannot too strongly urge the advisability of practice off the court in addition to practice on the court.

Against an opponent we are almost always so carried away by the desire to win, that all our endeavours are directed to getting the ball over the net in any old way, and in consequence we forget all about an easy swing, a good follow-through, foot-work, etc., and so we go on day after day with the same old faults, and we can't understand why we don't improve more quickly.

Well, now, my advice is, start practising the swing in any odd moments when you have nothing better to do. You will constantly see the best golfers practising their swing, so why not do the same at tennis? Take up your stand with your feet parallel to the line of direction in which you wish to play the imaginary ball. Then imagine you are hitting a ball about waist high and half way between your feet. Start with the weight on the right foot and with the head of the racket well back and moderately low. Swing forward steadily and easily, meeting the imaginary ball with a straight-faced racket. Begin to turn the racket over on top of the ball immediately after impact, and finish well forward with all the weight on the left foot, and with the head of the racket pointing in the direction of the imaginary flight of the ball. Do this again and again until the entire movement is one whole, free from jerks or hinges, and until you find that you are beginning to do it instinctively.

Then try it with a real ball against a wall, being very careful to have your feet correctly placed for each stroke, and sticking to your swing at all costs. You will probably at first be extremely surprised and disgusted at how very bad you are, and at how hopeless it feels, but persevere—it's worth it—and you will again be surprised, but not disgusted this time, at how quickly things begin to come right for you, and it is then that you will appreciate your practice at the imaginary ball.

I'm not talking of what I know nothing about, for I've gone through it all myself, and I'm speaking from long and bitter experience! Some time about 1906 I decided that I would

A BREAKFAST IN CEYLON

would not bring you a more delicious cup of tea than you may have at your own table by using

"SALADA"

It is the world's choicest tea, at its best—the finest hill-grown Ceylon—in sealed lead packets.

BLACK, GREEN or MIXED

051

5% DEBENTURES

Capital Paid Up, \$2,000,000.00
Assets - - \$5,000,000.00

INTEREST
PAID
EVERY
SIX
MONTHS

Those who have the intention of making an investment, should write us for particulars of our five per cent. debentures. The safety of this security is easily explained and the splendid interest return makes them very attractive. Complete report for 1913 sent on request.

STANDARD RELIANCE MORTGAGE CORPORATION

Head Office, 82-88 King St. E. Toronto

THE INDEPENDENT ORDER OF FORESTERS FURNISHES A COMPLETE SYSTEM OF INSURANCE

Policies issued by the Society are for the protection of your Family and cannot be bought, sold or pledged.

Benefits are payable to the Beneficiary in case of death, or to the member in case of his total disability, or to the member on attaining seventy years of age.

Policies issued from \$500 to \$5000

TOTAL BENEFITS PAID, 42 MILLION DOLLARS

For further information and literature apply to

FRED J. DARCH, S.S.

E. G. STEVENSON, S.C.R.

Temple Building

TORONTO

The Modern Executor

A GENERATION ago a man usually appointed a friend or relative as his Executor. The growing preference for a Trust Company as Executor is largely based on the fact that it offers a more responsible and efficient handling of your estate. If you appoint this Company Executor your estate will profit by the experience, prudence and judgment of the Company's Officers and Directors. We invite correspondence or interviews.

**National Trust
Company Limited**

18-22 KING STREET EAST, TORONTO

2

THIS INVESTMENT HAS PAID 7 PER CENT. PER ANNUM

half yearly since the Securities of this Corporation were placed on the market 10 years ago. Business established 28 years. Investment may be withdrawn in part or whole any time after one year. Safe as a mortgage. Full particulars and booklet gladly furnished on request.

NATIONAL SECURITIES CORPORATION, LIMITED
CONFEDERATION LIFE BUILDING - - TORONTO, ONT.