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GOLF SWINGS

By the Brothers, Frank Thompson, present Canadian Amateur champion, and W. J. Thompson, Ontario Amateur champion and last year's champion of Canada. They are native-born and resident Canadians, members of a family of five famous golfing brothers.

NUMBER FOUR

Number 4.

The question for practical golfers is the workability of Duncane's teachings. There is no doubt in the world that Duncane's description of the swing is true to fact. As already stated there is nothing new in the swinging of a golf club, but there certainly is a clearer conception of how it is done, and this definite knowledge has been made possible by the fast camera.

Harry Vardon was perhaps the greatest golfer that ever lived as a player. He published a book in which he stated in the clearest and most unequivocal terms that the club head moved first; that the left wrist started the swing by making a half turn. As soon as the fast camera was trained on Vardon it clearly demonstrated that he did not practice what he preached. It showed clearly that the hands dragged the club head back. In the light of the data supplied by the pictures, Vardon taught what has been called an arm swing, whereas he employed a body swing in play.

The point to ponder is this, that Vardon not only did not know how he swung the golf club, but actually misconceived the swing and Vardon was not alone in this. Every other golfer, including Duncane himself, followed Vardon's lead in misconceiving the swing. When the results of the fast camera were shown to the individual pros. each hesitated to show his swing to the others because of the peculiar action of the wrists. Duncane is a recent convert to this method of teaching, and for the golfer who has been brought up trying to swing his club according to the old teaching it certainly may act as a well needed antidote to the old method of teaching but for others one should be careful.

If Vardon and the rest of the pros. did not know how the wrists worked in the swing, but all swung their clubs the same way, it seems then that this is a perfectly natural way for the wrists to work in the swinging of the club, and it would, perhaps, be wisdom to allow them to work themselves. Timing or having the muscles working together as a system, is a mighty important factor in the golf swing. To emphasize any detail seems a pretty sure way of spoiling such harmony.

For those who followed the old teaching, dragging the hands back first will certainly help. Two points were emphasized in the old method, namely keeping the head still and turning over the left wrist. One is sufficient to utterly ruin effective golf, so that players who followed that method need not worry because their golf was mediocre. The still head invariably meant too much weight on the left foot, and a wooden swing because of restricted body movement, and wrist turn, meant a swing built up of parts disjointed at inception and distorted at impact. Now the peculiar feature of pictures taken a few years ago of Mitchell, Ray and Duncane, shows the strain at the wrist joints was less apparent with Duncane than Mitchell and Ray. This meant one of two things. Duncane either had less body swing or stronger wrists. Perhaps a third alternative that of holding the club tighter suggests itself.

Duncane on his visit to Canada had considerable to say about the straight left arm, the method used by Sarazen and others. He does not approve of it. He advocates just the opposite, of keeping the muscles relaxed and almost flabby. Duncane emphasized and advocated the importance of keeping the muscles relaxed. This is very timely in view of the tendency of a number of leading players adopting the straight left arm. He agreed that it was possible to play excellent golf in this manner, but that this was an artificial method that required continual practice, and which took more out of the player. During Duncane's previous visit little importance was placed on the points which he now emphasizes, and making allowances for exaggeration necessary to make his theories clear, it is the belief of many pros. that he has overstated his case.

Mitchell, of course, is more conservative in everything, and although no doubt agreeing with Duncane in principle, his teaching was very similar to that of the average accomplished professional. Mitchell talked about "width." This enabled the weight to get onto the right foot, and is in contrast to the beginner's tendency to take the club up too sharply.

Duncane spoke about relaxation and a relaxed grip, but he did not emphasize the important work the hands must perform. The body swing may

be ever so perfect, and yet if the hands lag or become lazy the stroke will not be so effective. The pictures show clearly that during the last three feet of the swing it is the hands, and especially the right hand that appears to be doing the major part of the work, and everyone knows from experience that the hands are continually lagging behind. Vardon, although he misconceived the swing from a theoretical standpoint, had no doubt or indecision about sailing the club head at the ball and this work was done with his hands.

The danger of Duncane's visit will be the exaggeration at the wrist joints. Golfers should remember that the "drag back" apparent in the pictures is not discernible to the eye. So long as the body initiates the swing there does not seem to be any necessity for exaggerating this point, and it is perfectly natural for the body to start the swing—it does so in chopping wood, driving spikes, shooting in hockey, batting in baseball, and in every other similar endeavour.

In asking a number of persons who attended Duncane's performance their idea of the flail, they gave the impression that the hands must come back first and invariably exaggerated the movement. The hands do not start to move before they are compelled to move, because of the body movement. So far as initiating the movement of the club they may be said to be passive, and are merely swung by the body, but the hands are actively engaged in holding the club up to its work. If the hands are pulled back consciously before they receive the urge from the body twist, anything may happen but certainly timing will be irrevocably destroyed.

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Q.—"Surely you cannot lead a Christian life on that."
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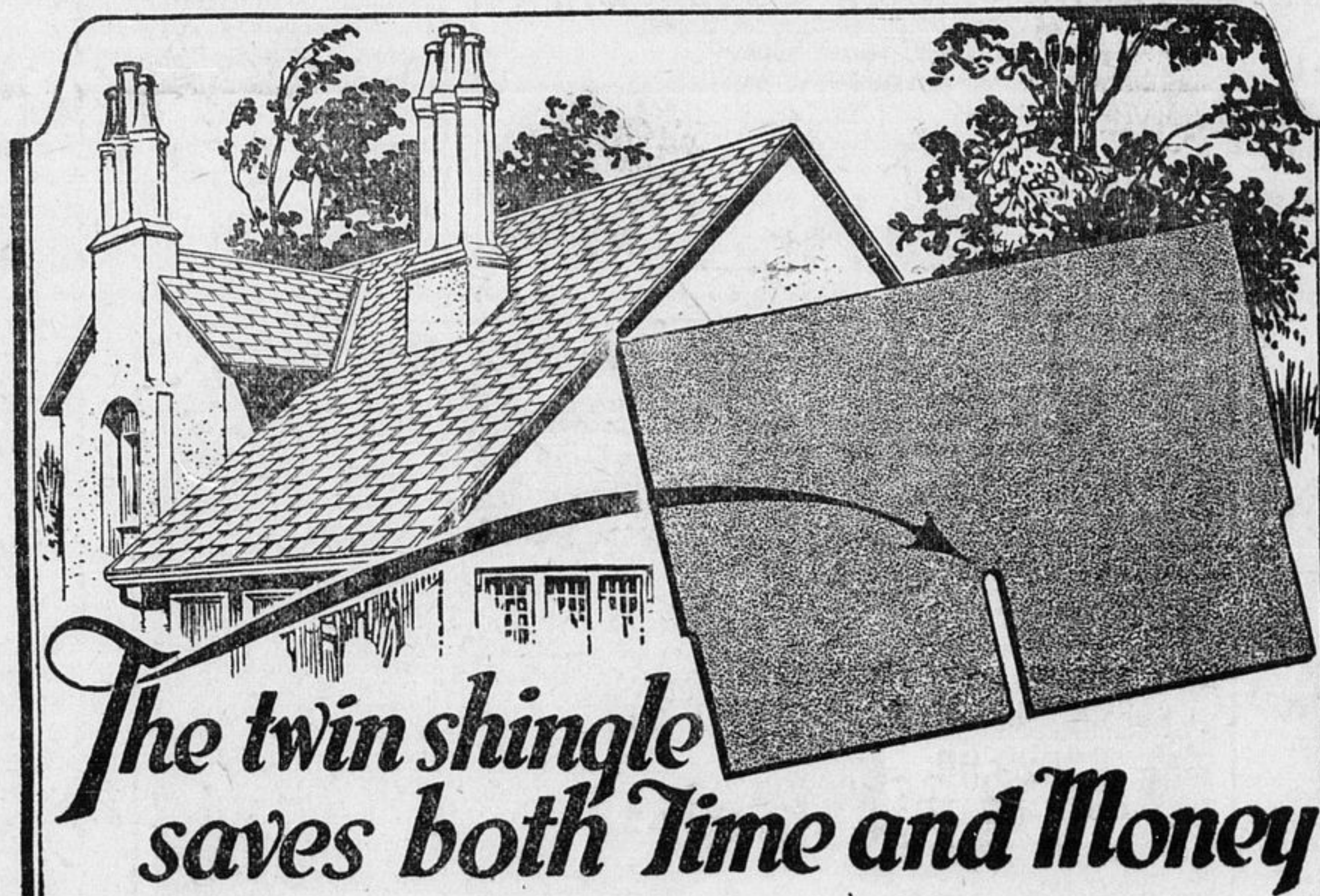
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