



FIG. 59.—SPLIT-SHOTS—IRISH STYLE—FROM 3RD HOOP TO 4TH AND 5TH HOOPS
FINISH FROM SIDE.

Photo by Harold Haines, Tarporley.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SPLIT-SHOT

THE Split-Shot in its various forms is another of the "Standard" shots to be learnt.

There are four rules which are common to every Split-Shot, no matter what the angle of split may be :

First.—Decide where you want the *Pilot* ball to stop. Then aim the two balls at this point.

Second.—Decide where your ball is to stop.

Third.—Select a point half-way between the desired *finishing point* of each ball ; called the "Half-way point."

Fourth.—Look straight up an imaginary line drawn through the middle of your *own* ball to this "Half-way point."

This line I call the "Line of Force." Along this line to the "Half-way point" is the line of aim for the mallet, and the direction towards which you yourself should face.

The centre of your *own ball* should be regarded as the centre point of the angle.

In shots of this sort the two things to get into your head are the "Line of Force" and the "Half-way point."

Having obeyed the four rules above mentioned, concentrate the whole of your attention on this "Half-way point." This is the point which your mallet should aim at ; and the mallet head should never be pointing off it, either before or after the stroke.

A natural tendency will be found to drag your mallet after your own ball. If the shot is to be a success this must be resisted. It will generally end in your own ball going too far, and the *Pilot* not far enough. The angle of the Split will not

be true. The Pilot will in all probability show a strong tendency to pull in towards your own ball.

There are three kinds of Split-Shot :

(1) The Stop-Shot Split.

(2) The Roll Split.

(3) The Ordinary Split (where neither a Roll nor a Stop is used).

First decide which you want ; then address your ball with the mallet tilted at the same angle as if a Roquet was being played, viz. :

(1) The Stop-Shot Split, toe of mallet off the ground, standing well *behind* your ball, with considerable bend in the wrists.

(2) The Roll Split, toe of mallet on the ground, mallet head tilted well forward, standing well *in front* of the ball. Wrists very rigid.

(3) Ordinary Split, same address as for the ordinary Roquet (*see* Chapter III).

Now comes what perhaps is the most difficult thing to acquire in plain Split Shots, i.e., "to regulate the distance each ball will go."

You must, as it were, do two things at once. You must have in your mind the distance both balls have to travel. The best description I can give of this is that the distance the *Pilot* ball will travel is regulated by the *power* you put into the stroke ; the distance your *own ball* will travel is regulated by "*how high up*" you hit your own ball, from well underneath the middle, which will be almost a Stop-Shot, to rather above the middle, which will be nearly a Roll, and would become so if you were to stand a little more forward.

The first thing to do is to think out the *strength for the Pilot ball* ; then concentrate the whole of your attention on *where* you are going to *hit your own ball*. Remember it is the *power* you use which controls the *Pilot*, and the *place* you hit which controls *your own*.

The thing to do then finally is to concentrate the whole of your attention on your *own ball*, where it is to go, and exactly "*HOW HIGH UP*" you are to hit it. If this is correct, and the

correct type of shot has been used (as above mentioned in 1, 2, 8), the Pilot ball will nearly always be about right, if your own is.

It is the two to one proportion, i.e., where your ball goes half the distance of the Pilot, which will be found the most difficult to do well. I think that this ought to be thoroughly mastered, and regarded as a Standard, and variations made from this afterwards. My reason for this is that the correct method of doing this shot is to use No. 3, or the Ordinary Split Shot.

In order to do this stroke, your ball should be hit in the middle. Take care that your ball gets the whole weight of the mallet by being most careful to follow-through with *both the hands and mallet* together, AS IF THEY WERE ALL ONE; in fact, try to imagine that you are actually hitting your own ball with your hands.

As far as general tips in croquet go, this is one of the most valuable. I recommend it for almost every shot. The only exception to it is the Stop-Shot, which obviously should be entirely devoid of any "follow-through," otherwise your ball would clearly not stop. You need never be anxious about "following through," if you do this. It will be quite impossible not to. It is also the great secret of "sweeping," upon which I have laid great stress before.

For variations in the distance the two balls travel below the two-to-one ratio, hit further and further below the middle, standing more behind your ball.

For variations above it, hit above the middle standing slightly further forward.

With practice a wonderfully accurate proportion between the distance the two balls will travel can be obtained. Time spent in practising the above variations will be repaid several times over afterwards. Your chances of picking up a break from a difficult position will mostly depend on your ability to accurately estimate and regulate the distance the two balls travel in relation to one another in a croquet shot. I can hardly over-emphasize the importance of learning to do this. It is the nice regulation of these shots which most hall-marks a first-class player. The wider the angle you split, the more

ready is your own ball to run, because it has to "run through" LESS of the Pilot ball.

In other words, it will have less of the Pilot ball in front of it. When a wide angle of split has to be made, and both balls have to go a considerable distance, it will be found necessary to even play the shot with a considerable degree of Stop on it; what may be described as a half Stop-Shot, simply because considerable force is necessary, as you have to move two instead of one a given distance, but your own ball has practically none of the Pilot to run through at all. The shot is, in fact, almost a billiard screw shot.

It is possible to make balls split practically a right angle on a very fast court. Nothing like this angle of split can be made on a slow court, because of the importance of imparting sufficient side on your own ball. The "side" will be killed by the slowness of the court. Of course, it might be done with great force; but the chances are, that some accident would occur, and one ball or the other go off the boundary, owing to the loss of control. What usually happens is that your own ball goes off, for the afore-mentioned reasons. Always take the greatest care to see that your balls are aimed dead accurately. An error of a quarter of an inch or less in placing may easily amount to several feet, or even yards, at the other end of the court. Also take care that the balls are quite in contact; not merely "nearly so."

If they do not *actually touch*, all your ideas of strength will be wrong, and generally the angle as well, and in addition to this, a foul shot will generally result!!!

The following are the Standard Split-Shots, which should be thoroughly mastered. They are constantly occurring, and you will always be in difficulties until you get them right:

(1) The Split from the fourth corner to the first and second hoops; also from the first corner to the first and second hoops; also from boundary opposite winning peg to first and second hoops.

(2) The Split from the first corner to the second and third hoops; also from first hoop to second and third hoops. The turning peg is the halfway point for both.

(3) From the second corner to the third and fourth hoops; also the same shot from the boundary opposite the second hoop; also from the boundary opposite the turning peg to the third and fourth hoops; also from the third corner to the third and fourth hoops.

(4) From the third hoop to fourth and fifth.

Players generally find this particular shot the most difficult of all. The whole secret of doing it is "*sweeping*," and not *hitting*. Before practising it, read most carefully the chapter on "Roll and Pass-Roll." This shot is a "Pass-Roll Split." It is not nearly so difficult as most players contrive to make it! It is one that requires surprisingly little force to do. No difficulty whatever will be found after carefully practising the "Pass-Roll." You then only have to aim your balls dead accurately, and to find the "Half-way point," which is nearly always the winning peg. Do not be afraid of pushing your own ball well into and through the Pilot ball, in the mistaken idea that the Pilot will go too far.

Here, again, I remind you that the strength required is only enough to send the Pilot as far as the fifth hoop. The distance *your own ball* will travel will be regulated by how far above the middle you hit it. This varies with the strength of the court. If it is a very fast court, it will hardly be necessary to hit it above the middle at all; if the court is very slow, very much above the middle.

Again, I remind you that you are doing a Pass-Roll as well as a Split, and must not forget to obey the first rule of the Pass-Roll, which is to "stand well in front of your own ball." This is what everybody always forgets, or does not know. They try to make up for it by a kind of forcing shot, which nearly always ends in their own ball being very short, and the Pilot ball miles too far.

It is knowledge of the *method* which is required, and not *strength*. The lack of this knowledge is generally seen in the fondness of the clips for the fourth and fifth hoop!!

(5) From the fourth hoop to five and six; also from the fourth hoop to Two-back and fifth hoop. Also from the fourth corner to hoops five and six.