

CHAPTER XIII

SPORTING EXPERIENCES

High and dry, but no clothes—In a three-decker pulpit—Faith in the British workmen—Undignified introduction to an editor—"Not a charitable institution"—Editor and author have a few words—All is well that ends well—A shooting expedition—Flies in the ointment—Author turns cook—Jam tart and burnt thumb—Port wine jelly for the cows—The keeper makes himself useful—An early cup of tea—Thunder in the air—The storm bursts—A dish of "cod sounds"—The butler's Grecian bend—Experiences in a bachelor establishment—Visitors in the night—A disturbed beauty sleep—An unpleasant swim—A joy ride in motor-trailer—A damaged countenance.

HAVE any of my readers ever been left high and dry on the seashore with no clothes to put on? I have. It happened in this way.

My husband was home on leave, and we were staying at a small seaside place on the Devonshire coast—a quiet, sleepy little place, where we could undress on the rocks and bathe from there.

My man had enjoyed his swim before breakfast, and was going, during the morning, to try a pony for a friend, so I told him I would go for a swim and be back in time to have luncheon with him.

I left my garments behind a rock, well above high-water mark, and went out to sea. On my return nowhere could I find my clothes; they had entirely disappeared. The tide not having been near them, I could only suppose they had been stolen; but I had not seen a soul, even on the horizon.

Here was an uncomfortable state of things. I could not stay indefinitely in the water, neither could I return to our lodgings in nothing but a wet, clinging

bathing dress, with low neck, no sleeves, and not much in the way of legs.

I could only hope that in course of time my man might be uneasy at my absence and come to look for me or my remains. So I sat on the rocks and bathed in the sea alternately to pass the time. Had I been on a desert island I felt sure I could have made some becoming dress out of fig-leaves, *à la* daisy chains, but here was nothing except a very little seaweed, and I was afraid of playing at being a mermaid.

After waiting what seemed an eternity, I heard the "Coo-ee!" with which we called one another when apart. Hastily I replied. My man seemed to regard the situation as a good joke—hoped I had not left any valuables with my clothes, and kept saying that I must walk back through the village as I was, in my bathing dress. After he thought he had teased me long enough, he agreed to go and bring me some more garments.

I told him exactly what I wanted and where to find everything. He was away an immense time—I believe he was heartlessly eating his luncheon—and when he did return only brought a part of what I wanted. I chided him. In return I was told that it was ridiculous the amount that women wear, and it was very bad for them. However, as he had had the sense to bring my mackintosh, it was possible for me to march through the village, and nobody seemed to notice anything unusual.

The local police were informed of my loss, but from that day to this I have never heard what became of my garments.

Among my experiences, one often comes back to my mind. It occurred when I was doing a good deal of speaking on a burning question of the moment, and had been honoured by being asked to address certain

Labour clubs in the North and West of England to tell them the truth of what was happening, which they could not gather from what they read.

I am not an orator, but people will kindly listen to me, and at that time I was in a position to know a good deal about the "burning question," more than did a good many who were writing about it. So I was welcomed to "Come and tell us the truth about it." I was booked to speak once on Saturday night, twice on Sunday, and once on Monday.

Having been speaking every day for some time and often in the open air, my voice played out on the Saturday, and I had to ask my son to represent me that night and on Sunday afternoon, promising to follow in time to speak on Sunday night.

When I arrived in the North I was met at the station by my son, who had a face a yard and a half long, and who greeted me with "I am thankful that you have come; I could not have stood another day of this." And I was hurried off to a big building, which was packed with people and where a service of some sort was being held. Before I knew where I was I was rushed up into a three-decker pulpit, my first close acquaintance with anything of the kind.

It was no use being embarrassed; the audience or congregation were there—and so was I! Therefore the only thing to be done was to go ahead.

The packed gathering of people were interested in what I told them, and inspired me. I warmed to my subject, and at once felt at home and among friends. The chapel was very hot, and as I spoke I patted the cushion in front of me to emphasise some of my statements, and then pushed my hair back from my face, being unaware for the moment that I was making black streaks all over my face with my dirty hands, for the cushion in front of me was very

dirty, and perhaps reserved so unaccustomed an occupant.

At the end of the meeting my son told me I looked like a zebra. I wondered that my audience had not laughed at me, but they were too good mannered. I never wish to speak to a nicer crowd.

I love speaking to the real workers; I have great faith in them, and they love justice when they know the truth, which unfortunately is so often kept from them. Of course I do not mean Communists and violent Socialists.

Before leaving the subject of absurd experiences I must mention an undignified introduction to an editor that I once had. He had asked me to write something for him, and I wished to discuss the matter with him, so wrote saying I would call on a certain date and at a certain hour if that would be convenient to him.

This being arranged, I sallied forth to keep the appointment, and wandered through various slums searching for the office, finding it at last up some dirty, paper-bestrewn stairs. I knocked at the door, but received no answer, then boldly opened the door and walked in.

A pimply youth asked my business. I said I wished to see the editor. He disappeared, returning to say the editor only saw people by appointment and was very busy. I said nothing, but presented him with my card, on which I wrote "By appointment at 3 p.m."

The youth disappeared once more, returning to say: "Will you walk this way, please, miss?" I followed him down a dark passage—he moved quickly, so I had to do the same—then, suddenly opening a dingy door in a dingy passage, he said: "Mind the step, please." His instructions came too

late, and I went headlong down the step, arriving, after some rotatory movements, in a sitting position in the middle of the editor's small office, with my hat over my eyes and my umbrella between my legs.

I was not much hurt, and considerably amused at my mode of entrance and introduction. The editor showed no signs of surprise, alarm, or regret, and did not come to pick me up, but went on talking to someone on the telephone in a snarly voice.

While endeavouring to regain the perpendicular, I heard him snap out on the phone, "Certainly not; this is not a charitable institution," and he banged up the receiver. By this time I was right side up and seated in a chair close to the grumpy man's desk.

Without getting up from his chair he ejaculated: "Sorry. Didn't you hear the boy tell you to mind the step?"

"Not until too late," I replied, laughing.

There was no vestige of a smile on the man's face; he sat looking at me with a sour mouth and codfish eyes. We then proceeded to talk business, and I agreed to write some articles for him on a subject I thoroughly understood and of a country in which I had travelled a great deal. Apparently he knew little of the subject and nothing of the country.

When the first of my articles appeared, it had been mutilated almost beyond recognition, and was utterly ridiculous. I was annoyed, as anyone knowing the country about which I had written would take me for an ignorant idiot, writing about things that I did not understand.

So wrath was I, that I paid another visit to the editor without falling down the step this time, and told him that not another word would I write for him, as I objected to my work being made ridiculous and not true to fact.

He was lofty, and told me everybody's work had to be blue pencilled. I replied, "Possibly, but it need not be made ridiculous, and you should have consulted me before publishing it in an altered state." I also asked him if by any chance he had ever been in the country I was writing about, and he acknowledged he had not, but one of his staff knew a good deal about it. I gathered that this individual had likewise never set foot in the country.

We parted feeling piqued with one another, and I stuck to it that I would not write another word for him on the subject, in spite of the fact that he had announced that there would be a series of these articles. So that was the end of that little arrangement.

However, a little later, the same individual asked me to write something for him, and would I mind if it did not appear under my name; he was prepared to pay well for it if it appeared as having been written by himself! I had no objection at all, and all went well this time.

I am glad to say that this is the only time I have ever had the smallest unpleasantness with editor or publisher. With that one exception all have shown me the greatest courtesy and kindness; some of them have been real good friends to me.

Moving about the world with a sporting husband, one sometimes finds oneself in tight corners; but what matter, they teach one self-reliance and other useful things. I found myself in one of these tight corners once soon after I was married, before I knew beef from mutton until it was cooked, and in some shape that I recognised.

This is what happened: My man wished to go and shoot in the wilds of the North, "Far from the madding crowd." We hired a cottage, and decided to

take only a keeper and a kitchen-maid to attend to our needs.

We set off in great spirits, as happy as two larks in the mating season, sitting hand-in-hand in the train, talking sport, all we were going to do, and not do. The first fly in our ointment of happiness was that, owing to the rooms in our cottage being very low, my man bumped his head badly, saw many stars, and had a headache for days. We heard afterwards that one year this cottage had been rented by a man six foot three inches. Perhaps he entered it on all fours.

The next fly in the ointment was a big one, for the maid we had brought with us took the opportunity to break her leg soon after our arrival; she slipped up on the pavement in the yard. We dare not move the unfortunate girl until a doctor could be found, fearing we might make a compound fracture of the leg; so while my husband galloped about the country looking for a doctor, the keeper and I wrapped her up, poked a pillow under her head, and had to leave her lying on the ground.

There was no hope of my finding anybody to cook for us, so perforce I must see what I could do, and I did not see why I should have less intelligence than a servant.

That night, after returning with a doctor and seeing the maid as comfortable as circumstances allowed, my poor, hungry man had to content himself with a cold ham dinner. Fortunately we had brought one of Fortnum and Mason's cooked hams with us. Not having anticipated any such catastrophe, no cookery book formed part of our luggage, as the maid was, when she had two legs to use, a very competent person.

Next day I had to stay with the invalid while my man and the keeper went off to enjoy their sport. I

thought I would make a jam tart as a surprise for my man's dinner on his return; with that and the ham he might be able to appease his appetite.

A jam tart was a simple thing to make, and, if the servants could do it, why should I not be equally clever? I worked very hard at that pastry; if I had been making a road I could not have worked harder. My frock, face, and hair also suffered, being covered with flour. All being ready I put the tart into the oven—and—burnt my thumb!

I regret to say the dish was not a success; it looked more like brown paper than pastry; there were no fluffy bits standing up waiting to be broken down with a fork; it looked as if a steam roller had been over it several times. I was depressed, and carried it to the broken-legged she-male to find out from her what I had done wrong with it.

She at once asked: "How much butter did you use in it?"

"None."

"What, madam, no fat of any kind?"

"No, I did not know that it was necessary."

A superior smile spread over her face, the first I had seen since her accident, so I was less annoyed than I should otherwise have been at her superiority.

However I had no intention of throwing the thing away after taking so much trouble over it—and—burning my thumb, so I covered the parchment-looking stuff up with a good coating of jam; it then looked more healthy, only the brown edge left showing; this I covered with powdered sugar. The effect was encouraging.

When my man came in and sat down to dinner, or perhaps I should say an apology of a dinner, I saw him eyeing the tart with interest—or it may have been suspicion. When the proper moment

arrived for the sweet, I asked him if he would like some jam tart.

He replied eagerly: "Yes, please."

I proceeded to sever a morsel, but it was not easy. Never did I remember pastry so difficult to manipulate; it was shockingly tough, and in my endeavours I somewhat spoilt the appearance of the tablecloth.

At last my husband held on to one end of the tart while I tore off a piece from the other end. Then I watched him furtively. Brave man; he ate it all up and said it was "not half bad." Greatly cheered, I pressed him to have some more, but was given to understand that he was no longer hungry, and he hoped I would try some. This I did, and thought it tasted strongly of flea-powder; not that I am in the habit of consuming that delicacy, but during our travels it had occasionally managed to mix itself up in our food, so I knew the flavour well.

A day or two later, having recovered from my disappointment over the tart, and my husband not having been ill after it, I thought I would try again—this time with a port wine jelly. That would be simple enough, and not such hard work as pastry; all I would have to do would be to mix the port wine, sugar, and sticky stuff together.

This time I asked the maid what the proper ingredients were, and found I was not far wrong. I succeeded in making a really beautiful thing, and it turned out of the mould quite kindly.

When my man beheld it at dinner he declared that I had become a chef of high degree. I was impatient to see him enjoy it. As it stood on the table in front of him he said he would manipulate it.

The first thing the silly jelly did and without undue provocation, was to bounce off the dish into my husband's lap, and from there on to the floor—where

it remained still intact. It was rescued, and in a superior manner I said: "Now I will help it," and began with a spoon, continued with a carving-knife, but no impression was made. I had put in far too much gelatine; it was like glue. I was being watched silently all the time by owl-like eyes. What was to be done? I could make no impression on the horrid thing, and felt certain I could never poke it down any drain and so see the last of it without further ignominy and shame.

My man came to the rescue with a brilliant idea. "What about the cows in the meadow outside? I am sure port wine jelly will be most salubrious for them." I jumped at the idea, never wishing to see the disappointing thing again. So the following morning we sallied forth with the jelly. It was thrown in front of the nearest cow of staid and matronly mien. She raised her head slowly, looked at it solemnly as it bounded along in front of her, then she followed it stealthily with protruding eyes and heavy breath.

Having satisfied herself that it was nothing harmful, she tried to taste it, but it bounded away again. By this time the whole harem of cows gathered up. One, more youthful and venturesome than the rest, followed the ball and smelt it, gave a loud snortle, humped up her back, kicked up her legs in a most unladylike way, and galloped off with her tail curled up into the shape of a note of interrogation. The rest of the harem followed suit, moving as fast as their natural and useful impedimenta permitted.

We were much amused, but regretted all the good port wine in the jelly. What eventually became of the thing I do not know. It may be there still. The last time I saw it, its complexion had suffered. Instead of being a beautiful rich red, it had turned grey.

After this, our keeper Campbell said he would do the cooking for us; he did not approve of his master dining off ham and brown paper, or off ham and glue.

We fared better for a while, but grew rather tired of eggs and bacon, also milk puddings. For a long time after this jaunt the sight of either of these forms of nourishment turned my husband a beautiful green—the colour of lily-of-the-valley leaves.

Campbell was a treasure and most anxious to make us comfortable. I believe if I had asked him to do my back hair he would have tried. It troubled him that there was nobody to wait on me and bring me my early cup of tea.

Being a very much married man of domestic nature, though he did not live with his wife because he said he did not like her, he one morning ventured into our bedroom bringing me a refreshing cup of tea. In my heart I blessed him, and with my lips I thanked him. Not so my lord, who began spluttering something about “What the devil,” but I suppressed him, sat on his head, and told him to pretend to be dead.

Campbell was tactful, pretended not to hear and moved about the room unperturbed. Various muffled protests and grumblings came from the direction of the eider-down, and my man’s head emerged just in time to see Campbell shaking out and folding some of my most intimate garments and putting them ready for me to wear.

The thunderstorm burst. I again kicked and tried to smother the grumbler. After Campbell had left the room, which he evidently thought would be a wise move on his part, I gave my man a severe lecture, telling him he would have thought nothing of it if we had been in China, or India, and it was absurd his giving himself airs just because we were in Great

Britain, and he ought to have been very grateful to the man for his kindness.

No more suitable reply came than, "But we are not in China." For about two minutes he was quite sulky; but that being foreign to his nature, he could not keep it up for long, and it ended in a hearty laugh from us both. I was obliged to descend from my lofty attitude, as he had been so good about having nothing much to eat, and so brilliant in disposing of the port wine jelly.

But all this was long ago, and I felt so humiliated at not having as much intelligence as the servants that the moment we returned home I made our dear old housekeeper teach me how to make dainty dishes. After that, during our travels we did not fare so badly.

Not many men would have been so patient and enduring as my man was over his scanty food. I know my dear old father would not; he was very fussy about the preparation of what he proposed eating. As I have already mentioned he was quick-tempered. Nevertheless everybody loved him, and the servants adored him—putting up with his little tempers; for when calm again, he would go round and apologise to the servants and give them little presents "to make it up."

One of his favourite dishes was some horrible looking stuff called "cod sounds," which looked like lumps of gristle covered up with white sauce. One day when this dish was handed to him, and it had not been prepared to his liking, he pushed it away from him with such violence that most of the horrible looking mixture left the dish and reposed on the waistcoat of the butler. All my father said was, "Take it to the cook, tell her to eat it herself, and I hope it will choke her."

Being accustomed to these little ebullitions from

the master he loved, all that Harrison the butler said was, "Very good, sir," and with a fine Grecian bend to prevent the sauce from trickling down his trousers, he left the room. The footman was so frightened that he followed suit, while we sat looking at one another, not being sure what was the proper thing to do under the circumstances.

Among my queer experiences, I remember an amusing visit my man and I paid to a cheery bachelor living in the South. He had promised us some shooting over a property which he had lately bought, and which he was putting in order, as he was shortly going to be married. He was anxious to show us the beauties of the place. What he called the house was in fact a ruin of some historic interest, which however did not add to its comfort I found, but we were told it was going to be made beautiful and comfortable for his bride.

We arrived late in the evening, having lost our way several times among lanes which all had high hedges and looked exactly alike. At last a man on the road told us to turn in at a white gate off its hinges a little further down the road. Having found the said gate, we entered an overgrown lane that had possibly once been a carriage drive; now branches of trees and creepers were hanging over it, and there were deep ruts filled in with wicked looking broken bricks and stones. In time, after many strong expressions from my partner, we arrived at our destination.

Our host was at the front door to greet us, and to tell us that dinner was waiting, and why were we so late? We ignored the latter, and said we were glad the grub was ready as we were famished. It was suggested that we should just throw off our coats and dine at once. We were conducted by our host to our rooms—up a really beautiful old oak staircase

wide enough to allow three or four people to walk abreast, but in a shocking state of dry rot—in places hardly safe.

The history of the place was poured into our ears as we ascended. It had once been a monastery. Had been bought by a miller as a ruin, thinking that, owing to the plentiful fall of water on the property, he could turn it to good account. The out-buildings were put into repair, and he had carried on his business there for some years. But they had said the house was haunted and his wife had died there, so he left, and the place had been unoccupied for years, except for the owls in an ivy-clad tower. Fifteen hundred acres went with the ruins.

Our room was very large and had a funny sort of powder cupboard, or it may have been a confessional, leading out of it. This, we were told, would do for my husband's dressing-room, no other room being available owing to either the roof having fallen in, or the floors given way! The room felt cold and damp. In the very middle of it stood what had once been a fine old four-poster bed, round which hung some antiquated curtains which had, I think, once been red; their appearance suggested that they had not been covered up the last time the ceiling had been whitewashed.

The big churchlike windows were wide open and refused to shut, owing to the ivy having grown up in unexpected places. The dressing-table had once been handsome—now it was down on one side, with a caster gone. On it stood an old Chippendale looking-glass, also on one side, and so mildewed that it was difficult to see oneself in it.

Our modest luggage not having been brought up, we washed and tidied ourselves and went down to dinner. Our food consisted of some very nice little

trout, and a not very nice under-cooked rabbit, still rather blue in places. Our host told us he meant to live entirely off what the estate produced.

Our orders were that we must be up early on the following day as we had some way to drive for our sport. Therefore, as soon as we could, with decency go to bed, we retired for the night. After wrestling for some time with the windows, my man made them fasten after a fashion, as now rain was pouring into the room. Everything smelt damp, and my man said we had better sleep in our greatcoats, which we did.

I was awakened out of my first beauty sleep by a curious scratching noise which came from the direction of one of the windows. I thought it must be rats, but it sounded more like someone tapping with their finger-tips. My man, judging by his heavy breathing, was in dreamland and undisturbed. Perhaps it was a loose piece of ivy or a branch tapping against the window, though I confess I thought of the miller's wife and the place being supposed to be haunted. I determined to be strongminded and take no notice.

The noise continued and was worrying, so I decided to be brave, go to the window, and find out the worst. I knew it would be useless to awaken my partner, for once when, during a storm at home, a chimney came crashing through the ceiling of our room, covering the bed with débris of sorts, and then continued its way partly through the floor, and my man had slept through the storm, I endeavoured to attract his attention to what had happened, and that I could see the sky through the roof, he had simply turned over, saying in a peevish voice, "Let the blooming thing rip," and went to sleep again unconcernedly.

On opening the window of our mouldy room, a tribe of small birds flew in, consisting of several starlings, sparrows, and one chaffinch. They settled

down at once on top of the bed and a big wardrobe. I left the window open so that, if so disposed, they could fly out again, but they remained until daylight. Presumably the windows had been left open for ages and the birds had made it a custom to roost in the room.

Our host called us the next morning, saying there were only menservants on the place, and he hoped we did not want hot water as there was not any; he always had a cold tub and we would find plenty of that in the bathroom at the end of the passage.

My man went scouting, returning to say there was no proper bathroom. No doubt it would be one in the coming by-and-by, but at present it was an empty room that had evidently once been used for stores, and in it was a primitive sort of trough, which looked as if it might have been used for pig killing. To this a cold-water pipe and tap had been fixed, and my man said that if he got in he would have a liver for days to come, and it was out of the question for me; but, of course, I could please myself about it. I did please myself by staying in my room and getting my man to run backwards and forwards to this impromptu bathroom with relays of cold water for my use. What he did himself about it I do not remember, beyond hearing some swear words and much splashing in the confessional.

Then came breakfast of porridge and boiled eggs. Our host ate four of the latter without a halt. We were then told to hurry up, put a couple of ginger-nuts into our pockets and fill our flasks from what was on the sideboard, as there was no saying when we should get back, probably not until late in the evening.

We drove some distance in an old waggonette over some very rough ground. I was shot about like a

cork; my man looked apprehensive, but made no remark of course. A capital day's sport, however, made up for any little defects in transport. By five o'clock we had tramped some miles, and so empty was I that I felt as if I were coming in two. As the men looked happy and comfortable I tried to do the same, but they were assisted by plentiful pulls at their flasks, so were better off than I was, as I disliked the taste of both brandy and whisky, only resorting to it when on the verge of collapse. They reminded me of unpleasant experiences on board ship.

Later we again stayed with this friend, but after he was married and the house was more comfortable. On this occasion we were taken a long journey for some pike fishing on a big lake. It was my first experience of that particular form of sport, and when a large one was hauled into the boat and had a good deal of kick still left in him, my husband shouted: "Look out for your feet, they are dangerous brutes." In my haste to protect my pedal extremities I fell backwards out of the boat, very nearly upsetting the whole show. Fortunately our host threw his weight in the right place and so averted a catastrophe.

I started to swim to the bank, but became entangled in the weeds and my man had to come to the rescue. I was invited back into the boat, but declined with thanks, saying I would walk back to where we had left the waggonette, dry my clothes, and wait for them.

Before leaving the subject of some of my awkward experiences, I must mention an exciting time I had once when going to a meet of hounds near Market Harborough. A certain young lordling staying in the same house with us was at the time much bitten with a motor and trailer; they were just becoming the fashion and still regarded as rather curiosities.

The lordling had lately purchased one of these means of locomotion and wished me to try its joys with him and see what wonders it could perform. This same individual is still alive though no longer young and venturesome, but I do not think that he will mind my relating what happened. He was very proud of his new purchase, and told me he went everywhere with it, packing his luggage into the trailer behind. The seat was not at the side as we see them to-day.

I must try and describe the machine in those early days. The part that I was to occupy was a cross between a Bath-chair and a perambulator, with a sort of pole attached to it and connecting it with the machine ridden and driven by the lordling. As I was eyeing the thing anxiously, he told me that his aged mother had been for a ride in it and had greatly enjoyed the experience. Liking new experiences, I agreed to be driven to the meet on the following day. Our horses were to be sent on.

I took the precaution to tie my hat on securely with a big gauze veil and was well wrapped up in rugs. I felt most insecure, as the trailer swayed about like a branch of a tree in a high wind. The owner in front of me evidently wished to show me the paces of his new toy and dashed along at break-neck speed.

It certainly was exciting and exhilarating being swished round corners, skidding alarmingly. My kind friend did not give a thought to what might happen should he meet another person travelling round the corners at the same rate of speed as he was adopting, but going in the opposite direction.

Presently we swished round a corner with an overhanging shaggy fence. A long briar caught my veil, tore it to pieces, and nearly pulled my head off during the process. Using both hands, which were badly

needed for holding on to my insecure seat, I managed to save my hat and face.

The lordling, oblivious of what was happening behind him, was thoroughly enjoying himself. I shouted to him to go a bit steady, but he never heard a word, and at the next corner, not allowing enough for the trailer and its passenger, I was toppled bodily out, wrapped up in rugs. The lordling went on gaily, unaware that his passenger was missing, though I thought that he would miss the weight behind him.

By the time I had recovered my breath and unrolled myself, the lordling was out of sight. I crawled to the side of the road and sat on the bank of a hedge feeling as if every bone in my body was broken. First I wagged one leg, to see if it would answer to the helm, and then the other. They obeyed orders slowly and painfully. So far so good. Then I wagged each arm in turn; they also did their duty, but still more painfully. So beyond a cut lip and blemished nose I was not much the worse—but—I was in a horrid mess from my bleeding nose and lip!

Some old friends coming past, driving to the meet, picked me up, and were preparing to drive me back to headquarters when the lordling, having at last missed me, came back to look for my remains. He wanted to drive me home in the trailer, but I declined, not feeling equal to balancing myself again in the same way as I had done.

I was, however, beginning to feel a little better and wanted to laugh at the absurdity of the situation, but found neither my nose nor lip would be any party to it. The lordling was very unhappy, and I did not look my best for some time! But a doctor soon patched me up, and it was one more experience to add to my many others.