

CHAPTER XIV

WHERE HAPPINESS IS FOUND

Nervous breakdowns—Where have they gone?—Collective courage—Tobacco as nerve soother—An officer's sufferings while learning to smoke—General Foch and his pipe—His dejected mien—Are sporting people brainless?—Advantages of outdoor life—Some of Nature's plays—An unsuccessful pigeon call—The Sabbath of the rooks—Happiness a question of temperament—Where happiness is found—A keeper's grumbles—A gun-shy retriever—Character in hounds—A row in the kennels—An old retainer's joys—And beliefs—A trunk full of treasures—The patois of children—judges and their humour—Sir Frank Lockwood meets a bore.

SINCE the war we have heard little about women having nervous breakdowns and requiring "rest cures," the result, in many cases, of too much to eat and too little to do. Why do we now suffer less from our nerves? Because during the war women found that they were not so delicate as they had imagined; they could do useful and often hard work and enjoy it.

We gain consciousness of ourselves and our powers soonest when with other people and in stressful moments, when we are not thinking of ourselves. We then find we can do all sorts of unimagined things. There is such a thing as collective courage. It is in our hours of idleness and solitude that our self-confidence is damped.

Most of us feel that we could be very brave if opportunity gave us the chance, but find it considerably easier to be brave and courageous in the company of other courageous people. We see this illustrated in horses. In cold blood and by themselves they will often refuse to jump a fence which in the company of other horses they will take eagerly and well.

I have noticed that the men and women who smoke have borne the strain of the war the best. Tobacco is a nerve soother, and the men who smoke are the easiest to live with. In everyday life a man can be left alone and be quite happy with a pipe; without one, or tobacco in some form, he is apt to get into mischief, be bored, or somewhere that he is not wanted.

When first I was engaged to my man he did not smoke. Having spent a good deal of my time with my father, who was a constant smoker, I felt that no house was homey that did not smell of baccy, so I told my man I really could not marry him until he had learned to smoke.

He promptly began, at first with a cigarette; the smoke got into his eyes, up his nose, down his throat, and all sorts of unexpected places. His fingers were dyed with nicotine, his moustache was burnt, and so on. He then tried a pipe, and was sick, and he suggested giving up the attempt; but I was adamant, and in the end he became a happy smoker and blessed me.

Being by nature a good-tempered and unnervy man, smoking was not as necessary for him as for many others, especially the irritable and highly strung people; but I found that when my man was on good terms with his smoke he did not want to hold my hand the whole time, and so I was set free to do other things—his smoke was company to him.

General Foch, who for a Frenchman was strangely imperturbable during the war, owing to the control he had over himself, did not smoke anything but an occasional cigarette until our General, Sir Henry Wilson, who was later so brutally murdered on his own doorstep, arrived in France, and he tried to initiate General Foch into the joys of a pipe, thinking it

would be a comfort to him in some of his anxious moments. With this object in view he presented the General with a pipe.

For some weeks General Foch struggled with it manfully, resulting in hiccups and a feeling of nausea. Once when our activities at the Front were looking very black he was found sitting in a dejected attitude, his head resting in his hands. All present were respectful and sympathetic, thinking he had broken down under the strain of his responsibilities.

Happily, it was discovered he was only struggling with his pipe, trying to make it draw. The ground around him was white with spent matches.

It is now an everyday matter to see women smoking. When first they began—at any rate in public—it was considered very shocking, bad form, etc. Nevertheless, it is now the fashion for women to smoke. Men like their women to smoke with them.

Silence between two people smoking is never irksome, but silence between two not smoking is, at times, awkward and uncomfortable.

Now that women wear sensible clothes and go in for sport and games, which necessitates being in the open air, they find they have neither the time nor the inclination for attacks of nerves.

I am always sorry for men who do not go in for any sort of sport. A dear old friend of mine, who hated sport of any kind but was a bookworm, used to come and sit with me a good deal at one time when I was tied to the sofa after a hunting accident. He used to tease me about my way of enjoying life, which he described as “never happy unless in jeopardy.” He scorned sport. What he loved was to froust all day in his study, digging things out of books, then wondered why he did not feel well and had the dumps.

There are quite a number of people who look down

upon their neighbours who indulge in sport, saying it is all very well for the brainless, and think they are being funny when they speak of hounds as barking dogs. This is partly because they are duffers at most forms of sport, and partly, I presume, because to some, no occupation that is not moneymaking, anything that cannot be floated into a company, is not approved by them.

Again, some think that all sport is cruel, which to some extent it is; but so is nature, much more cruel, so is life. We must try and keep our sense of proportion clearly balanced. Animals are spared the pain of introspection and anticipation, the searching for motives, questioning, and resenting the many injustices met with in life. They are spared seeing roads before they are made, for they make roads before they see them; this must always be kept in mind.

I do not mean to suggest that animals do not think to some extent, for they do, and have undoubtedly inherited instincts that warn them of danger, or why should a rabbit run away from us? Nevertheless, a rabbit, like ourselves, has to die some day; a neat shot in the head puts an end to its life, and all is over with a minimum of suffering. Surely this is a happier death than being caught in a poacher's trap, or being worried to death by a stoat or dog? Even here it has the better part, for it is not saying to itself: "What have I done to deserve this? How unjust! How cruel!"

We are much less cruel to animals in sport than they are to one another. A sick bird will be tormented and pecked at by its companions until it dies a wretched death; we sporting people would put it out of its pain at once.

I am not saying that people are not cruel sometimes, but this is generally when they have not been properly

taught and trained. There is no occasion, for instance, to shoot at birds out of killing range, and so on.

There are many advantages attached to sport beside its pleasure. In the first place, it means exercise in the open air, also early rising and frugal fare, for nobody can do themselves justice after a heavy meal. It also carries us away from all the petty worries and jealousies that form part of our daily surroundings; better still, it takes us out of ourselves, and clears the cobwebs from our brains and hearts.

Among our sporting friends and acquaintances I have found the cleanest minded and most straightforward of any people I have met, with nothing little and back-biting about them.

Besides, who can fail to be a better man or woman after a day in the glorious, beautiful country? It is well to cultivate a love of nature, keep alive our powers of observation, imagination, and feeling, otherwise, if we remain exclusively in the atmosphere of social rounds and money-grubbing, we are apt to wither and become sour, compounding the sins we are inclined to and damning those we have no mind for.

I have found few greater pleasures than to go out alone into some quiet corner of the woods, sit down, and await some of Nature's plays. Nothing to pay for the seat, no programme issued; therein lies the charm. You just wait quietly for the rise of the curtain, on what may be drama, tragedy, or comedy.

After a while you may hear a little drumming on the ground near—a rabbit, having discovered your whereabouts, is warning its companions under ground that an enemy is in sight.

I once watched a pretty, fragile-looking water wag-tail industriously feeding a bird many times its own

size, having reared a young cuckoo; and a very handsome bird it was. Think of the unceasing work for that little wagtail to satisfy the demands of a cuckoo.

Then a diligent beetle may be at your feet and attract your attention by rolling a ball of stuff it has collected for the benefit of its young, which it is slowly and laboriously trundling to its home in the ground. I made myself late for dinner one night through watching and trying to help a beetle that would try and push its ball of provisions over a big stump of a felled tree that was in a line with its hole in the ground, which represented home.

Time after time it succeeded in pushing the ball a little way up, then down it rolled again. So with a twig I gently guided it round the stump; but this was not approved, and the beetle trundled it patiently back into the first position, and began all over again. There I had to leave it, hoping its efforts and patience would be rewarded in time.

Well do I remember my first attempt to use a pigeon call in our woods, having been told that by using one I could collect all the pigeons in the neighbourhood round me. I hid myself amongst the ferns and brushwood and began to coo; instead of attracting all the pigeons, every bird fled for its life away from my direction, also the cows and an infirm old pony managed to get up a gallop, so terrified were they at the unearthly noise. It was some time before I could coo effectively and woo the pigeons.

Rooks are most interesting to watch. We had a large rookery close to the house—in fact, the largest I have ever seen—so I had plenty of opportunities for the study of their habits. I do not see how anybody could ever be dull when near a rookery; the birds are splendid company.

When building and nesting they used to set sentries

on top of the tallest trees to give warning of any danger. They knew Sunday as well as I did. On weekdays, if we went out with a gun, a stick, or umbrella, they would leave their search for food or nesting material at once, and fly round in an excited manner; but on Sunday, if we went out loaded with sticks, umbrellas, or any such weapons, the rooks took not the smallest notice, and continued to waddle about close to us as if we did not exist.

I used to call it the Sabbath of the rooks. Presumably instinct or experience had taught them that on a certain day that we called Sunday they would not be interfered with. Oh yes; there are endless joys in the country.

Yet to some people the country is unbearable; their hearts are out of tune in it. The cows moo at them, the sun mocks them, the sighing of the trees in the breeze drives them to the verge of madness, makes them feel desperately lonely. When folk are unhappy, some fly to the country to bear their grief or forget it; others fly to cities and crowds. To the latter the lambs, hiding their wet faces in the hedgerows, the owls with their silent flight, falling through the air like sheets of white blotting-paper, would only make them the more restless and unhappy.

To them the chimes of a city clock says what the thrush, river, and moon says to others. The chimes calling the passing hour, sweetly, soothingly, tells them in measured tones to look without regret on the past, without fear for the future, with firm and equal hearts. Yes, some I know find comfort there.

Others find it by the restless sea, with the gulls, ghosts of those who sleep. It has a fascination for them, with its awful power, changeableness, caprice, buried treasure, and tragedy.

Life is a huge puzzle, but each piece is meant to

fit into its proper place, and will in time. Where people find the greatest comfort and joy depends on their temperaments; the loneliness of the country and the loneliness of towns are two such different things, yet both are very real to certain temperaments.

I have found joy in both, and it is wonderful to think that all this great estate is ours, we who are so small and yet so great, ours by right of that great conveyancing deed—**BIRTH**.

Dear world, your beauty is very healing, and I love you so, yet what do you care for us? You, sun, moon, stars, will shine on just the same when I am gone. What is human life to you, with all its pleasures and pains? If we were all swept off the earth to-morrow, what would you care? But "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," and until we are all swept off the earth there will be others after us who will find the same pleasure and happiness in all the wonderful things of the earth.

Some folks are not satisfied even when they have chosen their own profession or mode of life, and find plenty to grumble about.

We had a very excellent keeper named Campbell, who, most people would have thought, ought to be happy; but he was full of grumbles, which I used to try and combat. He said he had so many enemies to contend with—rats, cats, lurchers, foxes, and poachers. Most of these grumbles were aimed at me, for I have an affection for some of the animals and birds that he regarded as his enemies, and I strongly protested against any traps being set.

In despair he used to say: "There's such a poorful lot of vermin about the place that I canna do joostice tae ma profeesion." I argued with him, pleading that some of the vermin were useful in other ways, while he kept up a running accompaniment of

“There’s cats and cats; there’s stoats, the dom things, and the life of a keeper on *our* estate, where the missus befriended everything, even the gipsies and poachers, was not worth living.”

One day we even had an argument about rats. I had suggested; as about the only thing I felt I could say about them, that even they served a useful purpose by eating up refuse and horrors best out of the way, and that we ought to be grateful to them, for the plague ceased in Western Europe from the time they became plentiful.

I could not help being rather amused at my own argument; but Campbell was all seriousness, and posed me by asking if I knew where the pests first came from. I was done, for I did not know; all I could say was that I believed they came over with the House of Hanover. This did not convey much to him, and I hoped I was out of the wood; but he still looked worried, then said: “I’ve been tole that the rats it was that brought the plague; anyway, they’s nasty beasts, what eats my eggs and kills my young game-birds. Maybe it matters not tiv yeu, madam, how mony ’ead of game we ’ave on the place, but it casts a reflection and suspecion on my character.”

This was too pitiful, so I tried a little flattery and blandishments by way of comfort, and repeated to him some of the flattering things I had heard our sporting friends say about him and his skill as a keeper.

Personally, I have a great affection for most animals and birds, and do not mind sharing the game with some of them. But one cannot expect keepers to have this feeling, and as a rule keepers are not animal lovers; and if they do perchance love their dogs, it is in the same curious way that some men love their wives—difficult to understand.

I would not allow a dog of mine to be broken in to gun by any keeper that I have yet met; in my opinion they have ruined more dogs than they have made. I have always broken in and trained my own sport dogs—in fact, all my dogs; it is one of the joys of the country that one can be surrounded by them.

At one time we had thirteen in the house and two packs of hounds in the kennels, so we have had our share of the joy. The following will show the amount of patience required in training dogs. An old gardener, who had been many years in our employ and was rather spoilt in consequence, used to love to come out with me when I was teaching the sport dogs. One day I took him with me when I was taking out a gun-shy retriever, but whose fears I hoped we had conquered.

Jenkins had her on a lead, and I told him that as soon as I fired he was to let her off the lead gently. I fired at and killed a bolting rabbit. The retriever was released, and fled for its life—home. We were speechless from disappointment. The old man stood gazing at the spot where he had last seen the dog.

I said: “Oh, Jenkins, she has gone again.” Turning slowly towards me apologetically, as though he were to blame, he said solemnly: “Aperiently so.”

On Sunday afternoons we used to go and sit in the kennels with the hounds for a bit, and then take them out and let them play and roam round us as we sat on the grass. They loved this, and it made them easier to manage when out on duty, for they obeyed from love and not from fear. One had to keep a watchful eye on them, for fear any should roam too far.

Hounds all have their own characters as we have, and are an interesting study. One old hound that we used when hunting both fox and hare, whenever

he ran into the latter he promptly lay down on it, defying any of the rest of the pack to come near him.

One day when hounds were out hunting and only a few were left in kennels, for various reasons, I heard a row going on, and hurried to see what it was all about. There was a fierce fight going on between two dog hounds, one of which, named Dancer, was a sulky fellow; the other, Monarch, was always quarrelsome. By the time I arrived the whitewashed walls of the kennels were well sprinkled with gore and the best part of Dancer's left ear was gone; they were holding on to one another like grim death.

I rated them soundly, but they were too busy and making too much noise to hear me. I then laid about me with my whip; that also was useless. Now the other two or three hounds, looking on, became so excited that they, too, joined in the row, and all were fighting one another; this was serious. I succeeded in whipping off the last contingent, and managed to get the handle end of my whip into Monarch's mouth. Using this as a lever, Dancer was liberated; he had had quite enough, and crawled away. I then shut both Monarch and Dancer up in different houses, and had time to attend to myself. I was in a shocking mess, my white kennel coat being chiefly red. I had also had a nip from Dancer while trying to separate them, so I hurried off to attend to it and make myself presentable again before my son returned with the pack.

When he came home and I told him what a row there had been and how I had at last succeeded in restoring order, instead of being patted on the back, as I expected, I was soundly scolded and told I was lucky to come out of it alive, and it was a very foolish thing to do.

I was then told that once a kennel huntsman went in the night to quell a disturbance in his kennels, and

that there was not much left of him in the morning; the hounds had made a good meal off him. Since that time I have heard that story elsewhere, but whether it is a fact or legend I do not know; anyway, it does not sound comfortable.

I have told you something about our old keeper and gardener. Now I must tell you how our old housekeeper found joy and refreshment. Her name was Mrs. Holmes; she was tall, thin, dignified, and adored us all. The children called her Bones, and the sobriquet stuck to her to the end of her days.

It was at all times difficult to make her go out, even for an afternoon's relaxation, as she was so nervous ~~as to~~ what would happen to us all during her absence. But occasionally, after much persuasion, she consented to take an afternoon off duty. She was old and very precious to us all, so she was allowed to have the children's pony and cart and drive herself where she liked, the pony being very confidential. Her great pleasure was to make straight for the nearest churchyard or cemetery, then sit on the tombstones in turn, ruminating on the past and shedding bitter tears.

Always before these debauches she spent some time in washing her legs, and this became a standing joke to the household. As Bones was a scrupulously clean person at all times, this ritual amused us, and both my brothers and son used to tease her about it. She always replied by saying there was no knowing what might happen when out and away from home, and what a disgrace it would be if her legs were not clean!

One Christmas my young brother bought in the Burlington Arcade some frisky looking red satin garters with cunning little bows; these were packed up in a pretty box and presented to Bones when all

the servants were assembled to receive their presents and our good wishes. She was told to undo her parcel, and see if she liked her present that my brother had chosen for her.

When the various papers had been removed and all were watching to see what the box contained, the smart garters stood out in bold relief. There was general amusement, for the whole house knew how particular the dear old soul was about her legs. My brother told her she must be sure to wear them the next time she went to have a jolly time among the tombstones, when possibly the long-expected something might happen. Poor Bones was covered with confusion and blushes, and said the young gentlemen were full of nonsense.

Another pleasure quite peculiar to herself was the occasional overhauling of a trunk that always stood at the foot of her bed. Whether we were in London, the country, or seaside, that mysterious trunk always had to accompany us. Once in a moment of confidence and emotion I was shown the contents.

Folded with care and sprinkled with lavender was what she described as her winding-sheet, a pair of white cotton gloves, a pair of white cotton stockings, and a card on which were written instructions explaining that she, when dead, was to be dressed in these things and then put into her coffin.

Poor dear old Bones had a wonderful and beautiful faith, and was firmly convinced that when she departed from this world she would in the next be rewarded for all her faithful services and her endeavours generally to help everybody. She was quite sure that she would wear a golden crown studded with "jewels."

Not one of us would have argued with her about the possibility of the golden crown and jewels; to

cast the smallest doubt upon that dazzling reward would have utterly shattered her faith and made her most unhappy. Servants, however, are not the only people who do funny things and express themselves quaintly. Children are delightful in this way, though sometimes embarrassing:

When the present Lady Clancarty took her little daughter to church for the first time, the child whispered to her mother: “What is that thing in the corner?”

“It is the organ where the music comes from.”

After studying it carefully for some time: “But, mother, where is the monkey?” All the organs she knew anything about had performing monkeys with them.

Presently Lady Clancarty said to the child: “Have you brought your Prayer-Book?”

“No, mother, but I have brought my Ancients and Morals.”

On her return from church she sought her grandmother, and asked her confidentially.

“Granny, who made God?”

“I don’t know, my dear.”

“Then you ought to know, granny”—spoken in a surprised and shocked voice.

As children grow older they are equally amusing, only in a different way. For instance, there was, we are told, an Eton boy who, when told to write an essay on Milton the poet, expressed himself thus: “Milton was a poet, who wrote ‘Paradise Lost,’ and when his wife died he wrote ‘Paradise Regained.’”

Judges hear a fair share of funny things and have curious experiences, but it is a calling that abounds in humour; were it not so, their work would be intolerable. During the Roger Tichborne trial a spinster who was present in court threw a piece of

paper at the Claimant, on which was written "Sinner, repent." Picking it up, he threw it across to the Judge, saying: "I think this is intended for Judge Hawkins, and not for me."

There are many amusing stories told about old Mr. Justice Wightman. Once when trying a notorious burglar at the Old Bailey he was rather upset at the long-winded speech made by Ribden, counsel for the burglar. After waiting patiently for some time, he said: "I suppose my turn will come presently."

This same Judge once sentenced a man called Isaacson to death for murder. Later in the day, when sitting on a bench watching a cricket match between members of the Bar, two young barristers came and seated themselves on the end of the same bench. One said to the other: "Do you think the old Judge really felt it this morning when condemning Isaacson, or was it all put on?"

Without waiting for the reply from the second young barrister, Mr. Wightman said in the drawling voice peculiar to him: "Gentlemen, he felt it very much; you evidently do not recognise me without my wig."

There was another Judge, whose name I will not give, who was a strong Conservative, but had a Radical son. This Judge was walking with a friend in London one day, and they passed the Radical son. The friend, turning to the Judge, said: "How came you to beget a Radical like that?"

"He was not a Radical when I beget him," replied the Judge.

The late Sir Frank Lockwood, one time Member for York, Solicitor-General, and Recorder for Sheffield to boot, loved a joke, which would be recognised by anyone seeing his sketches. He was having luncheon one day with a party of men at some hotel or restaurant. One of the individuals at the

party proved to be a bore, as he could not speak without bringing in the names of the dukes and big-wigs he had known or said he had known.

Presently Sir Frank said: "Do you know General Stores?"

"Oh yes," replied the bore. "He's a rare good sort."

"Ah," said Lockwood, "he lives over there"—pointing to the other side of the street, where there was a large emporium with a huge board over it bearing the words "General Stores."

When the same learned M.P. was defending that shocking scoundrel Charles Peace, during the trial the latter kept up such a flow of appalling language that his counsel said: "If you won't be quiet I will not defend you." In spite of Sir Frank Lockwood's eloquence, Peace was convicted and hung at Leeds.

It is well known that when counsel undertakes to defend a prisoner at the request of a Judge he receives no fee, which seems rather hard and an empty compliment.

After the trial just mentioned, someone speaking to Sir Frank Lockwood said how wonderfully he had defended the "blackguard," but presumably all that he was out for was "Peace at any price."

"Well, no," replied Lockwood, "all I got was Peace at no price."

I cannot leave the subject of *bon-mots* without repeating a club story that was told me some years ago. A friend of mine, who is a member of a well-known club, told me lately that during their annual cleaning the Carlton Club used to offer them hospitality, but so many of the members took the opportunity to commit suicide in the Carlton bathrooms that this hospitality is now discontinued. Probably this was only a joke, but it amused me.