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THE BEST OF ENGLAND

THE BEST OF ENGLAND

BY

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

Author of *The Hill*; *Brothers*;
Quinneys'; *Virgin*; etc.

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TO
MY OLD FRIEND,
HERBERT JOHNSON
I DEDICATE
THIS BOOK

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CHAPTER I

THE BILL OF FARE

I

A SWEET singer has told us that 'a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things', an atrabiliary thought. Remembrance should be rosemary, not rue. On such a nice point of judgment, who dares to be didactic? For more than twenty years I stalked the tall red deer in Scotland; I have hunted fox and stag and fallow-buck; but last season I sold my horses; and if I stalk again I shall approach (if I can) my quarry with a camera, not a rifle; and I shall never again play polo, to me the most thrilling of all games; but, nevertheless and notwithstanding, the memories of 'days of fresh air in the wind and the sun' remain enchanting. Let it be inscribed on my tombstone: 'This dog had his day'.

To the captious critic, at ease in his armchair, I will whisper: 'This book is personal; it attempts to set forth what the writer holds to be "best" in England; it is not "The Badminton Library" boiled down; it is (I hope) informative, a labour of love and experience, holding between its covers an appeal to doer and dreamer, for the many things in life which I have not been able to do I have dreamed about in my waking dreams—and wanted to do them.'

To this, he may reply: 'Who are you to say what is "best"?' Who indeed? Probably there isn't a

chapter in this book that couldn't have been better written by an expert, who has given undivided energies to one sport or pastime, but I am not writing for experts. There are countless amateurs seeking general information who have not the leisure to read twenty books instead of one, men (and women) who 'want to know' details trifling in themselves but important in their sum. I call to mind Beckford's immortal treatise on hunting and old Izaak Walton's *Compleat Angler*, both incomparable, but essentially reading for the expert rather than the novice. The same can be said of books dealing exhaustively with any one of my different themes. They don't tell the novice what he wants to know, because they have not been written for novices.

But the expert knows, none better, how difficult it is to get reliable information about everything connected with sport. He takes infinite pains and (having taken them) admits in a sportsmanlike spirit how often he is disappointed. Some years ago, during what is termed the 'silly season' by journalists, correspondence was invited by an editor upon the theme: 'What would I do if I were rich?' One optimist wrote that he would buy twenty perfect hunters and take them to Melton. Obviously he was not a hunting man. The perfect hunter is as rare as the perfect man. The late Lord Willoughby de Broke and I laughed over a laudable aspiration. This supreme authority told me that any M.F H. who could affirm that he had owned two *perfect* hunters during a long lifetime devoted to hunting was exceptionally lucky. A would-be rich man might express a wish to take the best beats on some salmon river and kill a hundred fish. Such a man did take six

beats on a river I have fished and paid £600 for them. The poor fellow caught one fish. Conditions happened to be against him; his water, by the ill luck of things, was continuously out of order. This is an extreme case, but it is cited to emphasize the difficulties of making sure of any objective subject to climatic conditions. If a river is in spate, or too low, if the fish won't 'come up', the most skilful angler is doomed to disappointment. Taking a grouse-moor for *one* year is almost as big a gamble. For many years recently two famous moors in Yorkshire, Wemmergill and Bowes, commanding huge rentals, were decimated by disease. Last year big bags were once more obtained. Stalking is more of a certainty. If stags are on your ground, you can be sure of good stalking, rain or shine. Even then mists may defeat you.

Still, if it were easy, mere child's play, something to be had by planking down money, like a box at the Opera, how soon we should be bored. We all want what is difficult to get; and that is the true spirit of sportsmanship.

II

I am hoping that this book will be of service to men who lack experience, men who long to do what others do and don't know how to do it. Such sport as I have enjoyed during the past forty years used to be the privilege of the instructed few. A child on his or her pony was 'entered' to fox by a proud father, and learned, almost instinctively, the etiquette of the hunting-field. The family gamekeeper taught the young idea how to shoot and how to carry his gun. All the *minutiæ* connected with sport, the

right kit, the unwritten code of manners, the proper weapons and tackle, and the *patter* (so unintelligible to a foreigner) were, in a sense, inherited—falling upon eager youth like dew from above. Even before the War I noticed an enormous change, due, of course, to the impoverishment of the squirearchy and the enrichment of the many who had no affiliations with sport other than an ardent wish to become sportsmen. Masters of Hounds grumbled when grown men took the field mounted upon horses in complete control of riders in astonishing kits, who pressed hounds, and undertook, without any excuse save ignorance, the duties of hunt servants, who 'holloaed away' the wrong fox, popped their whips, and honoured every rule in its breach. They were trenchantly cursed and blessed. All said and done these 'thrusters' were supporting fox-hunting; they learnt in time the rigour of the game.

Since the War, it is safe to assert that half the men who hunt, shoot, stalk and fish were not 'entered' to these sports in childhood. More, it is as certain that there are thousands to-day who hang back from such pursuits, not from lack of means, but from lack of knowledge how to set about being sportsmen. Naturally enough they dread ridicule. It takes a wise young man not to be afraid of making a fool of himself; and the more sophisticated are well aware that they may interfere through ignorance with the comfort and safety of others.

It is becoming more and more evident that England is destined to be the playground of the civilized world. Americans come here in ever-increasing numbers because they can get better value for hard-earned money. One of these joy-seekers took a

grouse-moor for the season and was surprised to find no guns in the gun-room. He had invited a 'bunch' of his compatriots to what he called a 'butt-shoot', expecting to be able to supply them with a pair of guns apiece. He complained afterwards that he and his friends couldn't hit the 'incomers', grouse driven to them, and that his 'gas-pipe' got tangled up with the 'spinach' (heather) on the top of his butt. If it hadn't been for that, so he informed a friend of mine, he would have 'grassed' many a 'cockerel'.

Bless him!

He has acquired the right patter now; and he can hit the 'incomers'.

Thinking of his inexperience I shall attempt to stand in the shoes of the man who does enthusiastically want to do the right thing well; and thinking of him I glanced at many books in my possession in quest of the small hints to would-be sportsmen which in the better known treatises are conspicuously absent. Again and again I have been asked to write articles upon 'tips', 'snips' (tailors), and 'trips'. But such articles are read and forgotten. The word that remains must be set down in book form.

This is an unchristian world; and I am constrained in self-defence to declare my reluctance to mention, as I must do, names of famous tradesmen. The few I shall mention need no advertizement from me; and I, for my part, demand nothing from them. Indeed I shall keep out of their alluring shops till this book is published. But it is necessary to lay stress upon the supreme importance of going to the right people for the right things; and naturally I cannot include all. Very young men exclaim: 'I go to So-and-So for my boots; he's the only man'.

What nonsense! There are always—others. How many shippers are there of first-class vintage port? If I express a preference for Cockburn or Taylor, are the others—whose name is Legion—to take offence? In fine, I have no intention of 'advertizing' any firm at the expense of another firm. I write of those I happen to know personally. The diabolical twins, Conceit and Ignorance, are to be found in the shops of every petty tradesman in the provinces. Every local tailor believes that he can cut breeches like Tautz or Hammond; every shoemaker will assure the guileless traveller that his boots are as good as Peal's or Maxwell's at just half the price! But the sportsman knows that a badly cut pair of breeches or an ill-fitting boot may spoil the best day's hunting—and often they do. A badly dressed squire afoot, but perfectly appointed on horseback, said: 'I must be a credit to my gee'.

I shall present a varied bill of fare; and I want this to be a jolly book, to be read in the spirit in which it is written. I shall take it ill of the hypercritic if he reads it at all. Why should he? It is not intended for the likes of him, or for any man or woman not catholic in tastes and predilections. Most of us are too intolerant of what is not pleasing to us. I have heard shooting men indict hunting men as selfish, and vice-versa. The young cricketer contends that golf is a game for old men. Nearly all players of games that exact strength and agility are disdainful of croquet. Why? I have never been able to answer that question. To paraphrase a well-worn quotation:

> We bless the sports we are inclined to
> By damning games we have no mind to.

It may be said that this is a book for the idle rich. In rebuttal I would reply: 'Are books of travel and adventure written to appeal to the traveller and adventurer?' Most certainly not. I love such books the more, because my travelling days are over; I seek the companionship of men who have seen and done what I shall never see or do; I bless the author —and would fain crack a bottle with him—who leads me down untrodden ways; I follow him ardently to the Upper Waters of the Amazon and the coral islands of the Pacific; and I feel in all my tissues a lively sense of gratitude to my guide.

It is a pleasure, too, to reflect that I am sharing pleasures fresh to me without any disconcerting penalties, wallowing in adventures without suffering from misadventures. If I started to-morrow for New Papua, I might end in a cannibal's hot-pot. He would find me tough and tobaccony!

And so I hope that the busy poor may be entertained by the activities of the idle rich. As a boy I whiled away many an hour thinking of the ocean-going steam yacht in which I longed to make the sporting tour of the world. Glory be! I have never owned that yacht and never shall, but the fun I had in that fine vessel remains my inalienable possession.

III

This is going to be a *vade mecum*. I shall traverse ground familiar to me, the roads that I have travelled so lightheartedly. I promise not to wander from them, because immediately I should be bogged down in quagmires of inexperience. A glance at the table of 'Contents' will tell the reader what to expect, and arouse perhaps a sense of expectation not easy to

satisfy. At any rate there is food here for all; and I can only add that it is food which has agreed mighty well with me.

Long ago I asked a famous man, who had lived a full life and was nearing its close, if he had any regrets. He took time to answer me: 'Yes; I regret the pleasant things that I might have done and didn't.' He had done much. And he was a man of many facets and many friends. Ill health had forced him to give up field sports and games, but he reckoned this to be a disability for any Englishman in his position. So it is; but he happened to be the only highbrow of my acquaintance to admit it without any disingenuous excuses. Speaking as a sage (which he was) he regretted missed opportunities, things he might have done had he not devoted his life to politics and literature. He was the first man to make it plain that success—as most of us interpret the word—may be a colossal failure, if too much is sacrificed to it; and he spoke humorously of the seats of the mighty as being, in his experience, the most uneasy in the House of Life.

Throughout this book I must assume that inexperience wishes to buy experience and has means to do so. I have known many men who took to sport late in life after accumulating a fortune. The aptitudes of youth were denied to them, but perhaps they were the keener on that account. Incidentally they were able to give pleasure to others. I shall leave out of court the foolish persons who hunt and shoot and stalk and fish, because these expensive pursuits are the mode. They are past praying for, and subjects for pity or ridicule. Also I nail my flag to the mast over this: it is impossible to get the

'best' of anything *cheap*. Golf is supposed to be a poor man's game; and so it is if you stick to your own course and play without a caddy. But, if you wish to play on our finest seaside links—and you don't know what the Royal and Ancient Game is till you do—you must travel to them, pay their green fees, pay your hotel bills, and disburse cold cash which will not have time to get warm in your pocket. Coarse fishing, capital fun, can be had for the asking, but the expert with the dry fly who wants to wet his line upon the banks of the silvery Test or Itchen has to pay a king's ransom for a season's fishing in these entrancing streams. Games are more expensive than they used to be, if you wish to play in the 'best' company; and the looker-on is now charged in proportion for his seat.

From field sports I shall pass to games. It is not my mission to defend sportsmen against charges of cruelty brought against them by cranks who refuse to live or let live; nor do I propose to discuss the vexed question whether or not games are of too paramount importance in England. That is a matter for the individual conscience. I am trying to take what I have found of interest in my life *as I found it*, to present what has seemed to me the 'best' without more comment than is necessary. I am aware that my fellow-countrymen with many estimable qualities are lacking in the sense of proportion. Eminent publicists have deplored this. We don't take into account the relative values of life, but we do in the end muddle through in our insular fashion, believing what we want to believe; and we are intensely loyal, particularly the great middle class, to our traditions and conventions. Cricket is a national convention,

an institution, almost unintelligible to foreigners and to Americans of a get-there-quick complexion who refuse to sit still for three days. To them three hours are the limit.

To food and wine I propose to devote a chapter; and here again I must be careful in my use of names. The best food is necessarily expensive. Englishmen, so it is said, get the food they deserve. Some deserve the worst. To obey the apostolic injunction, to eat with humble and grateful heart whatever is set before you, to pay, perhaps, an exorbitant bill without protest, seems to me a misdemeanour, a sign of unintelligence, an offence against what a bishop has called God's Good Creatures. The thoughtless are unable to differentiate between the *gourmet* and the *gourmand*. One is an epicure, a taster and a sipper, the other is a glutton demanding quantity rather than quality. I have known some famous *chefs* and *restaurateurs* and had enlightening talks with them. A great *chef* is an artist; the proprietor of a restaurant is a man of business. He refuses to give his best to unappreciative customers. Of the tricks in his trade I shall have something to say when the time comes. But my sympathy is with him, because it must be heartbreaking work catering for an ignorant public who likes to eat to the accompaniment of jazz music, who jumps up to dance leaving exquisitely prepared food to grow cold. It is true that he has his revenge when the bill is presented, but what does he think of his *clientèle?* What does the wine waiter think, when some rich fool orders the noblest red wines of France to be gulped down —generally with the wrong food—after cocktails 'topped' with absinthe!

Good food and good wine (as apart from the best) can be served in any restaurant—and will be served—if the customer takes the trouble to make it plain to the proprietor that he is in a modest way a connoisseur. How few of us do that. The proprietor wants to tickle your palate, if you have a palate. Soho is a quarter where there are many small restaurants. I recall one in particular which happened to be conveniently close to a theatre where I was rehearsing a play. I was warned that the food was cheap and bad. But my leading lady and I rushed over to gobble what we could get. An Italian *padrone* welcomed us. We lunched in desperate haste, but before the end of the first meal the *padrone* apologized handsomely for the food (already prepared) which he set before us. He swore by the head of the Madonna that if we deigned to honour him by coming next day, he would see to it that a *risotto* and a *fritto misto*, specially cooked, would make us forget what we had just swallowed. During the hurried meal I had mentioned to him, as a sort of test, a *risotto* that used to be served in Donet's restaurant in Florence. We came next day; we came every day till the play was produced; and our little *padrone* never failed us. The amazing thing is that he made no extra charge. We were entitled to eat two dishes at a fixed price; he gave us two dishes that we could eat with entire satisfaction.

IV

It will be great fun writing a chapter on Society. Foreigners think that so-called smart society is the best society; Englishmen believe that Paris life, as depicted by French novelists, is a true picture of

French family life. This belief built upon ignorance does not do much harm to the Englishman and it amuses the Frenchman. As a matter of fact family life in France is conventional and respectable, particularly so in the houses of the nobility and gentry. The eternal triangle (of which we are so tired) serves the purpose of the playwright, but a distinguished French dramatist once said to me of it: '*Une bonne blague*——!' The French have a curious antipathy to hypocrisy, an antipathy carried to extremes They enjoy a liberty of speech which in Victorian days was denied to us, but license in private life is anathema. A Frenchman is a most domestic fowl, but he likes to pose as a 'bit of a bird'.

The best society in England is still exclusive, thank God! Long may it remain so. Smart society flings open its doors to all-comers who carry the credentials of banknotes in their pockets. 'If yo' ain't got no money, honey, yo' needn't come around!' Impoverished ladies with a handle to their name twirl that handle. Well—why not? A canny Scot accumulated an immense fortune in America. He returned to the bonny banks and braes of his native land. For some reason (obscure to me) he wanted to scrape acquaintance with the Duke of Sutherland of that day. He offered five thousand pounds to a man in smart society who—this is where the fun comes in—told the Duke of this modest ambition; and forthwith his Grace consented to make easy money for a friend. He did not ask for a share of the loot.

'A Lady of Title would like to meet a young gentlewoman who wishes to be introduced into the best society.'

This sort of advertisement gladdens the eyes of readers of the 'personal' columns in our daily newspapers.' Soon afterwards we may read in another column that 'Lady X, in white velvet and emeralds' gave a dinner at Claridge's in honour of her guest. Miss Z. paid for the dinner; and nobody cares. Again—why not?

The doors of the exclusive houses now open to admit brains and the bearers of letters of introduction other than letters of credit. Smart people have stigmatized these houses as dull. I have not found them so, but I may be reactionary in my tastes. Smart folk to me are often dull; and their frenzied activities in pursuit of amusement are most exhausting to all who prefer leisurely lives.

Sight-seeing.

How not to do it.

That will be a theme after my own heart. We see so much, there is so much to see, but what do we carry away with us after surveying Westminster Abbey, the Tower, St. James's Palace, and Hampton Court? What do we take to our national monuments? Often a guide book bought on the spot, the dullest reading in the world. And our paid guides with their monotonous, cut-and-dried patter——! Parrots all of them.

Sight-seeing is an art from the artistic point of view, a craft exacting technical knowledge. It is surprising that in London—where everything in the world can be bought—there is no school of trained guides. Each should be a specialist. How gladly the intelligent visitor would pay a fee of a couple of guineas to be taken round our National Gallery by an expert on pictures. Princess Mary, if she happens

to read these lines, might see to it that some of her Girl Guides are trained for such a profession. Young ladies who have served an apprenticeship to painting, who know the technique of their art, who can recognize at a glance an original from a copy, might earn a good living by showing pictures instead of painting them. 'Young Misses explain Old Masters'. The names of these accomplished guides would be known to every hotel proprietor and every *restaurateur*; and I venture to predict that the demand for such service would exceed the supply. When I go to London, I can commandeer a typewriting stenographer at five minutes' notice; but if I demanded a presentable young person saturated with entertaining information about the Hampton Court 'Beauties', able to pass an examination upon the Stuart period, would she answer the bell? And, if not, why not?

Inasmuch as she (or he) is not available, I must essay the congenial task of taking her place. I acquired the art of sight-seeing late in life. As a young man it never occurred to me that Mont St. Michel is romance in stone, love in stone, war in stone, prose and poetry exquisitely fused. Nor did I realize that it was impossible to appreciate the delicacy and science of the builders in later centuries till you had assimilated the work of the pioneers. From the Norman, if a sightseer has sufficient intelligence to grasp what has been accomplished, he can soar to the tip of the sixteenth-century *flèche* of Chartres Cathedral, and understand the Transition Period and all the glories and embellishments of Later Gothic.

To the collector of old furniture I shall offer, diffidently, a few hints. In the country towns one

may pick up at a modest price eighteenth-century *silhouettes*, samplers, pottery and the lesser *articles de vertu*. It is a solacing reflection that few provincial dealers possess more than general knowledge of antiques. They buy what is offered at sales, add a fair profit, and sell to the first comer. Such men make no pretence of being omniscient. They know that a 'bit' of porcelain may be Chelsea, Old Worcester, Bow or Derby; they do not know as a rule the names of decorators and modellers. In their shops the expert often finds what the French call *l'occasion*. I like to linger in front of trays piled with old jewellery. One may see a cameo delicately cut, or a quaint locket enshrining the hair of a dead-and-gone beauty, cunningly fashioned into the semblance of a posy, or a seal that once hung at the fob of a dandy. All these hardly-considered trifles have charm; some are 'charms'. In my wanderings I came across a snuff-box so unique that it ought to have been bought by the Nation. The price, five hundred guineas, was prohibitive to most collectors. It was made of rock crystal. Beneath the crystal were innumerable fairy braids of hair, each braid separated from the other by a tiny *fleur-de-lys* in diamonds. Inside the box, lined with gold, was a miniature of a princess who had lost her lovely head on the guillotine. Are such miracles of craftsmanship wrought to-day? And where is this snuff-box? Probably in America. There is not its like to be found among the snuff-boxes in the Wallace Collection. It is indeed the 'best' I ever saw.

CHAPTER II

HUNTING

I

During the Great War, many shrewd persons sincerely believed (and feared) that the chase of wild animals such as fox, stag, hare, and otter would soon cease to be; and a few, quite as sincerely, hoped that it would be so. Exactly the contrary has taken place, for good reasons which might have occurred to me at the time; but I can only say that they did not. The war, with all its terrible calamities and horrors, quickened a spirit of adventure and excitement, and it sent hundreds of thousands of men (and women) into the open air. I noticed incidentally that young men home on leave for a few days came out fox-hunting, often for the first time. They were treated with leniency by Masters of Hounds on that account. Nearly all were enthusiasts. I recall one naval hero mounted upon an unmanageable steed. He galloped into two bogs; and I helped to rescue him and to catch his horse. Later on, perceiving that he was likely to break his neck, I rejoiced to see him mounted upon a quieter animal, but he said to me, after admitting that he had never ridden to hounds before: 'I had no idea that this was such glorious fun!' We may presume that when he rejoined his ship, he became an ardent propagandist, and spread the good gospel of fox-hunting both fore and aft.

Immediately after the war, thousands of youngsters, boys and girls, appeared in the hunting-field, most of them wearing astounding kits. Motor-cars and chars-à-bancs, filled with persons who had never seen hounds, came to the meets. Hunting 'on wheels' became a popular amusement. Reactionaries resented this. Foxes were headed; good sport was imperilled; but the more enlightened followers soon realized that this public interest in hunting was a healthy sign of the times and likely to be a tremendous factor in support of a pastime which exists only on sufferance. Hunting in the United Kingdom and in disunited Ireland would share the fate of bull-baiting and cock-fighting if it became unpopular with the millions *who don't hunt.* The only fact that concerns the reader of these pages is that, as a pastime, it is more popular than ever; and—a humorous thought this—its popularity, the immense fields that appear with certain famous packs, is to-day a menace which conceivably might make first-rate sport impossible. It is relevant to mention this, inasmuch as less fashionable packs are beginning to take (and profit by) the overflow from the Shires.

II

Any man who has made up his mind that he wishes to hunt, must decide definitely how much cash he is able to spend upon this particular sport. In any case, the odds are about a thousand to three that he will spend more than he 'budgets' for; and it would be impossible here to quote exact figures. I shall attempt merely to indicate pitfalls that might entrap the inexperienced. Some years ago, I was asked to 'pilot' an American enthusiast, who had

come to England to hunt not with one but with many packs of hounds. He struck me as being a very shrewd man of business who expected to get 'value received' in exchange for his dollars. He had many dollars. In that sense the hunting world was his oyster. He could go where he pleased, but, very wisely, he began his sporting tour with our buck-hounds, mounted on a hireling, in the middle of July. He asked me innumerable questions which I answered as best I could, slightly disconcerted by his ignorance. For instance, of the etiquette of the hunting-field he knew nothing; and he had everything as yet to learn about equipment. His assets, as contrasted with such grievous disabilities, were reassuringly these. He had an eye for a good horse and he could ride. I gathered that at some time in his life—he was a man of nearly forty—he had served an apprenticeship on a cattle range, as I had. That was a link between us. Little did I think, when I invited him to dine with me, that he would serve as a peg whereon I could hang advice to other would-be Nimrods, but what I said to him then can be repeated now. I told him that he was wise to begin, as he had done, to hunt *inexpensively* in the summer. Long before November I predicted that he would feel more at his ease in English pigskin, picking up here and there essential knowledge of a new game. That he did so I have no doubt whatever. He was going on from us to the Devon and Somerset Staghounds. I think I persuaded him to buy no horses during his first season, to wear 'rat-catcher' kit, to stay at local hotels, to keep a hunting diary, and to hunt, later on, with as many packs as possible, beginning with the less fashionable. I told him

where to buy his hunting clothes. . . .

Like most intelligent Americans, he 'wanted to know' all that I could tell him. It was difficult to 'place' him; obviously he didn't belong to the 'idle-rich class; he had no affiliations with the smart cosmopolitans who are as much at home in London and Paris as in New York; he carried no credentials other than a jolly face and a disarming smile; he could and did laugh heartily at his own ignorance of English ways. Very promising material!

I had to explain to him that it was customary to lift one's hat (he wore a golfing cap) to the Master of Hounds by virtue of his high office, a tribute to Diana; I entreated him to seek out the honorary secretary of the Hunt and pay his 'cap' before he was asked for it; I begged him to keep the stern end of his hireling away from hounds, never to press them, and to sit still and hold his tongue when they happened to be at fault; I impressed upon him that there must be no 'back-chat', if the Master cursed him in the presence of the field, even if he felt that censure was ill-timed and undeserved. He pledged himself to await patiently his turn when riding through gaps and gates, not to let a gate slam in the nose of the horse behind his, and generally to show consideration to others. He absorbed all this greedily. Of his subsequent adventures in the hunting-field I know nothing, but I'm reasonably sure that he attained his objectives.

III

Novices should begin by hunting inexpensively on hirelings in countries easy to ride across. Nine times out of ten, a dealer can be trusted to 'mount'

the novice on a reasonably safe 'conveyance'. He does that in his own interests. Horses can be hired by the day, week, or season. Let it be remembered that horsemanship is acquired by riding many horses. On the other hand, a horse that knows its rider and whom its rider knows is a greater pleasure to bestride. All horses have their idiosyncracies. In the New Forest, where I hunted for so many seasons, long seasons including nine months out of each year, the hirelings become 'forest-wise', distrustful of boggy places, warily alive to the dangers of rabbit-holes and ruts hidden by heather, and often gifted with a sense of direction denied to the rider. They can hear hounds in thick woodlands, when we hear nothing; they can find their way back to stables when the stranger may be helplessly lost.

Dealers are quick to take the measure of customers. They know the 'swanker' before he opens his mouth. They *do* take advantage of inexperience masquerading as experience—and quite justifiably so. But I repeat, stressing the point, that it is to the dealer's interest to please his customers. A novice on friendly terms with his hireling is an advertisement. And so—tell the dealer frankly that you put yourself into his hands, and he will do the best he can for you. If he has a 'schooling-ground' you might do worse than take a few lessons over various 'leps'. A novice nearing middle age shrinks from such schooling, but it will give him, at negligible expense, confidence in himself and his horse. Let him ride that horse leisurely to the meet, and ride him even more leisurely back to stables after the day's sport. That is the time, too, to scrape acquaintance with members of the hunt, *not* when hounds

are running. Talkative strangers are unpopular in the hunting-field during business hours.

Hirelings, good, bad, and indifferent, can be hired for the day at prices varying from thirty shillings to possibly four or even five pounds. The 'cap' may be one sovereign or three. With some fashionable packs it is designedly almost prohibitive. Full information on these matters will be gladly given to the novice by the dealer. With many packs, a small donation is accepted in lieu of the 'cap'. There is no hard-and-fast rule. Any stranger, intending to hunt for a month or two with the local pack, should call upon the secretary and get the right information at first hand from him. Such a call is altogether expedient, however brief the interview may be. At the meet, the secretary will probably make it his business to introduce a courteous stranger to the Master and other members of the hunt. Thus the ways are soaped to a more intimate acquaintance with your fellow-sportsmen. If they decide that you *are* a sportsman, you will speedily be made welcome.

IV

What shall I say about kit?

It is important to wear the right kit in the hunting-field, because—quite apart from physical comfort—you will be uneasily conscious that critical eyes are upon you, and that you will be judged inexorably by what you wear and how you wear it. No novice will ever regret getting the right 'things' from the right tradesmen; they are the cheapest in the end. I have seldom seen a good man to hounds improperly turned out. The exceptions are so few as to be negligible. What is called 'ratcatcher' kit should be

in its way as workmanlike as the 'pink' of perfection. If the novice happens to know one hunting man who can be trusted upon these sartorial matters, let him put himself unreservedly in his capable hands. The veteran will tell the novice where to go, and, if he is a friend, see to it that the kit is right, *cap à pie*. A hunting whip—improperly termed a 'crop'—will last half a lifetime, if it comes from the right shop. A 'Billy Coke' hunting hat, fashioned by Lock of St. James's Street, may save the rider severe injuries to his head. I have seen hatless followers of the chase, reckless fellows. Hounds seemed to me to run mute when they saw them. The art of tying a hunting scarf must be acquired by practice. Let it be held in place by a stout gold safety-pin. Let the spurs of the novice be blunted. Ratcatcher kit should be inconspicuous; cut counts, not colour. A hunting coat must give plenty of play beneath the arms. Both coat and breeches should be tried on in the saddle. Beware of cloth light in colour or texture; the one is too easily stained; the other loses its shape. It is better to be too warm out hunting than too cold. A light mackintosh apron is to be commended in wet weather, but the heavy hunting mackintosh is (to me) anathema, except upon days when the wise man would do well to remain at home. You get insufferably warm in it when hounds are running, and are liable to take a severe chill when hounds check. Still, it is foolish to dogmatize upon this difficult subject. I know a veteran of sixty seasons who confesses ruefully that he has not yet made up his mind upon what is exactly right as a general hunting kit; he is terrified of being too heavily or too lightly clad.

To the novice who has no mentor I can only say this: go to any famous maker of breeches for your nether garments, and object strenuously to them if they pinch you about the knee. Boots, if too tight, are instruments of torture; and it is a weakness on the part of the most famous bootmakers to sacrifice comfort to smartness. A tight boot interferes with the circulation, and is quite likely to cause varicose veins. Gloves are important accessories. Carry an extra pair under the flap of your saddle. Your bootmaker will teach you how to put on your boots and spurs, and how to buckle the leather garter, so that the buckle does not abrade the skin. Don't carry a flat hunting-flask in your breast-pocket, for it may break a rib if you take a toss. Personally I think the less eaten and drunk out hunting the better. A second horseman can carry many sandwiches and a big flask, but I dislike leather cases attached to saddles upon which I am sitting.

The number of buttons worn by a man in full hunting kit is astonishing. I amused myself one day by counting them, an even sixty, with thirty-two on the breeches (with continuations) alone. It seems absurd, but it would be difficult to do with less. Many of these buttons may be sources of irritation and even injury. To obviate this, laces are often substituted, but such breeches appear to my reactionary eye 'wrong'. Still, they have become common since the war.

Leaving out the cost of a silver flask, a man in perfect ratcatcher kit, including whip and spurs, will get on to his horse wearing 'goods' that have cost some thirty guineas more or less. It is likely that I have understated the exact amount, allowing for a

cash discount of ten per cent. The novice could equip himself in a provincial town in a somewhat similar kit for about twenty guineas, but it would look less well and last about half as long. I have not included shirt and underclothes.

V

To tell the novice where to hunt would be a waste of time. It is assumed that he will go where fancy leads him. Nearly all hunting countries have their centres, where hotel-proprietors cater (or think they do) to the tastes of sportsmen. It is also assumed that the novice will select an 'easy' country, till he has served his apprenticeship to horse and hound. Houndwork should engross his attention from the first. If he has an eye for a good horse, he will soon acquire an eye for a staunch hound. To the veteran, who rides less boldly at formidable obstacles, houndwork has an ever-increasing fascination. To the novice all hounds look alike. He sees two and twenty couples of 'dogs', and cannot tell t'other from which. But it is safe to assert that no two hounds in any pack are exactly alike either in shape, colour, or characteristics. To know a pack of hounds well is a liberal education. It has always been amazing to me that many men, hard to follow or beat over any country, are so ignorant of hound work. The Cut-me-down Captains are intent, of course, upon 'hanging up to dry' their competitors in what to them is a Point-to-Point race; and the more timid followers, availing themselves of gaps and broken-down fences, seldom are near enough to watch hounds; but I am speaking of the ordinary fox-hunter who might get so much more pleasure out of

the sport of kings, if he studied individual hounds. In every pack there are skirters and slackers; in every pack there are hounds that can be trusted, and these are the hounds to notice and watch, when scent fails and Reynard is too crafty for his pursuers.

The novice, wherever he hunts, will be well advised not to 'ride his own line' till he knows something of the country and the obstacles ahead of him. Let him follow, if he can, and not too closely, some quiet gentleman who means business.

This hunting on hirelings with the less fashionable packs is comparatively inexpensive. A season's hunting might be compassed for three hundred guineas —money well-spent. To start a stable, buy valuable hunters, keep them in proper condition, and set up, even in a modest way, a small establishment in one of our crack countries is no ha'-penny matter. I heard a millionaire say, not long ago, that his hunting worked out, all in, at about fifty pounds a day——! One hundred days cost him £5,000. Of course, such a man would have two horses out each day, pay large subscriptions to three packs, and incur heavy entraining expenses when he travelled to distant meets. If he mounted a large family his expenses might be doubled or trebled. Between these two extremes are the others, men, for the most part, who cannot afford lavish expenditure. Probably they see more foxes broken up than our millionaire. The point to emphasize is: cut your coat according to your cloth, an ancient tag, time-worn but serviceable, A man of moderate means, who sets up a small hunting establishment, will be wise if he keeps out of the crack countries. He will pay infinitely less for his horses, although their upkeep will be much the

same. He will pay less rent for his hunting-box and a reasonable subscription to one pack of hounds.

It will be well with him, if he secures the services of an experienced and honest groom. A few pounds added to a groom's salary will be more than offset by the condition of the horses and the buying of first-rate fodder and corn. One competent, hard-working man, with a very little help now and again, can look after three horses if, a big 'if', they are hunted regularly. But, in such a case, the master cannot expect his man to ride a horse on to the meet and attend properly to the two left in the stable; and, on occasion, he must help to exercise his horses when they happen to be short of work. Beware of engaging any groom without gilt-edged references. A dishonest groom is a most expensive luxury. To the novice an experienced man is a necessity. If he boards and lodges himself, he is cheap at three pounds a week. A stud-groom, in charge of a large stable, will demand much more. Indeed, upon this vexed question of expenditure it is quite impossible to dogmatize, so much depends upon where you hunt and how you hunt. It pays to buy the very best hay and oats; it pays to buy the best saddles and bridles procurable; it pays to call in promptly the best veterinary surgeon when his services are required.

I am of the opinion that a novice should engage a groom before he buys his horses.

VI

This buying of horses may be the most delightful or the most humiliating of experiences. Personally speaking, I have been lucky in my buying of hunters, but my good luck had a sound policy behind it. I

paused long over what appeared to be a big bargain; I had every horse vetted; and I never grudged an extra tenner if my hunter had 'manners'. Further, I never bought any horse without trying him with hounds; and I sought (and found) horses already known to me in the hunting-field. Many men, I am well aware, despise such cautionary measures—and I can sympathize with them. They don't buy horses to keep as trusted friends, but to sell at a profit after the season. The 'coping' instinct is in their blood; they love a 'deal'; and if they are 'landed' with a 'wrong 'un' they 'swap' him off again at the first opportunity. All this is great fun, but it exacts experience of men and horses.

The novice must try to realize that 'swapping' means not only pecuniary loss over the deal, but a very likely probability that an exchange may be for the worse. On that account he ought to take particular pains to suit himself with the right animal. What is the right animal? A fine horseman can buy a 'young 'un', and 'make' him, a task which exacts great patience. Young horses are an unknown quantity. Therefore it is better for the novice to buy a seasoned hunter. His price, which may vary from one to five hundred pounds, depends upon his performance across country. A horse that is seven years old, sound as a bell, a first-class fencer, and fast, with good manners, is a very expensive article. I have seldom seen such valuable horses out with the less fashionable packs. As a rule, a horse can be described as good and serviceable if it can do the work that its rider expects it to do. To take a hunter from a 'flying' country, and then to ask him to negotiate big banks and ditches means reschooling

—and vice-versa. And I venture to stress the point that it is expedient for a stranger to buy horses in the country where he intends to hunt. That is almost the only way to get a safe conveyance.

VII

In April mighty fox-hunters adventure to the New Forest so as to secure one more month of the chase. At a meet of foxhounds or buckhounds I have seen 'out' nearly a score of Masters of Hounds, all deeply interested in hound work, which can be studied here more easily (and safely) than elsewhere. Inasmuch as the procedure of buck-hunting is not familiar to the ordinary reader, I propose to describe a 'day' in the Forest at the end of April, when the larches are in full beauty, the beeches displaying the tenderest green, and the oaks and ashes not yet obscured by their full foliage. The appeal of the chase may be dominant, but there is so much more of interest to beguile the stranger, even if he 'loses' hounds.

Legally speaking, I think I am right in saying that there should be no deer in the Forest; they live on sufferance, both red and fallow, destructive creatures, quite as destructive as Reynard. If it were not for hunting, they would have ceased to be long ago.

Hounds meet at Bramshaw Telegraph at twelve.

Our Master, one of the great gentlemen riders of England, will be observed at once, because he will be wearing a green coat and a black velvet cap. He is sure to be busy talking with two or three Forest keepers in their picturesque livery of brown velveteen. From them he is gleaning information of

supreme importance to the day's sport. We are going to hunt the fallow buck, not the lordly red stag. The keepers, early in the morning, have *harboured* more than one. The point at issue is—which buck to hunt first? It is necessary to know where the bucks are feeding or lying down so that, if you fail with the first (and lose him), a second is within reasonable distance. The novice may get impatient, as precious minutes slip by, but he can solace himself with the reflection that the Master knows his business and is as keen to 'cut the cackle' as any 'thruster' in the field.

Having made his plans for the day's sport, the Master jogs off, followed by the 'tufters', two or three couples of hounds who can be trusted to 'find' the harboured buck, and then to separate him as quickly as possible from other deer who may be with him or close to him. It is impossible to hunt more than one quarry.

You can go a-tufting or not as you please. Sometimes the field—the followers of the chase—are requested to remain with the main pack, who will be 'laid on' when the buck has been successfully 'tufted'. 'Tufting' may be difficult or easy, according to circumstances, but it is an axiom that a well-tufted buck will, when the pack is laid on, show better sport. If he is properly harried by the 'tufters', bustled here and there, he is more likely to break clean away from ground familiar to him and make his 'point', which may be many miles distant. A fallow buck is quite as artful as a fox; before he leaves cover he will do his best to baffle the tufters by joining fresh deer, when his 'scent' may be lost, or taking to water, which holds no scent, or rousing

another and less experienced buck, who may be constrained to take his place. A good 'tuft' is well worth watching on account of the houndwork, but it is hardly intelligible to the visitor.

Ultimately, the buck breaks away in the right direction, and then the chase proper begins. The 'tufters' are coupled up; the pack is laid on. As they hit the line, they throw their tongues, a glad chorus of approval. The better the scent, the more vocal the hounds.

The novice will do well to follow, at a discreet distance, some veteran of the Forest. It is a certainty that he will be bogged, or lose hounds, if he doesn't.

Forrard awa-a-ay!

The buck, viewed by the field, has taken a southerly direction. Scent being breast-high, hounds race over the heather, for we are on high ground above the oaks planted by William of Orange to make the wooden walls of England. It is good firm going on the moor, with nothing to daunt the novice save hidden ruts or rabbit-holes. His hireling knows what to do—and does it gallantly. He is aware that scent is good, that he and his rider are 'in' for a rousing gallop. . . .

Hounds check for the first time at the brook which runs through Island Thorns. The novice sits quietly on his horse and watches an expert casting hounds, covering the ground on each side of the brook. Stragglers come up, among them jolly children on small shaggy ponies born and bred in the Forest. Being Foresters they know enough to hold their tongues.

Armlet has it.

That staunch hound hits the line three hundred

yards below where hounds checked. Obviously the buck has trotted down the water that distance. He might have turned back, but he hasn't. . . .

We are out of the enclosure and on heather again, trying desperately to keep on terms with hounds. A distant 'view holloa' floats to our ears. . . .

Forrar-r-rd!

The going is not quite so good—boggy patches, more ruts and rabbit-holes, as we gallop down hill towards Dockens' water and Hollyhatch. Probably we shall check again here. We do. The novice is more blown than his horse, but he is thinking perhaps: 'This is worth a guinea a minute!' And so it is.

A veteran growls out: 'We are into fresh deer.'

The novice is emboldened to ask, in a low tone of voice, for information. He may be enjoined to watch certain hounds, rarely at fault. The Master has his eye on them. But time is slipping by. Once more a distant 'holloa' saves the situation. But—is it our hunted buck? That is a question to be answered later. Happily it is. By this time everybody knows that we are hunting a straight-going beast, not a contemptible 'ringer'. Far and fast will he go with these big slashing hounds behind him. To the right flows the placid Avon. He may 'diddle' us, if he reaches that broad deep stream. . . .

No; he is heading due south again. If we were hunting a red deer, a stag, we should know that his point was blue water—the Solent. A buck won't travel quite as far. He is likely to cross the Ringwood road, and seek the woods that lie to the west of Lyndhurst. In these we may lose hounds.

We press on and on over crisp heather and burnt patches till we come to the Ringwood road. To the

right is Picket Post, where Auburon Herbert, a true Forest lover, lived for many years, making a notable collection of New Forest flints. We leave behind Hardy Cross Pond, and soon afterwards the field splits in two; some making for one crossing of a bad bog; some for another. The novice follows the veteran, who has judged aright, but, toiling up the steep ascent beyond the bog, we have lost sight of hounds. We find them at fault as we plunge into more woodland just below the crest of the hill. The veteran slides from his horse, to ease it, and the novice follows this good example. The veteran becomes more communicative. Evidently, he is a bird-lover. The novice learns that the rare Dartford warbler nests in some gorse near the Ringwood Road; and in a fir tree close by are a few dried sticks placed there by a crossbill. . . .

A reassuring note from the Master's horn.

Up—and away!

Five minutes rest has revitalized the hireling. He takes hold a bit down a steep slope. Hounds are not travelling quite so fast; the buck is a long way ahead. Still the pace must have told on him; he will seek a cooling stream and be beguiled to linger too long in it.

On and on——!

The chase veers slightly to the left, up-wind. If the buck turns down-wind, scent will be less good, and may fail altogether if the buck is too far ahead. He is now speeding towards Brinton Toll-bar, and may pass close to that hoary monarch, the Knightwood Oak. Water is his objective.

There are not many followers in sight. The veteran says pleasantly: 'Don't ride in my pocket,

but stick to me as reasonably close as you can. It's tricky going here.'

It is impossible to follow hounds across these treacherous enclosures. There are deep ditches and gullies, bogs inpenetrable thickets; and it is quicker, besides being infinitely safer, to stick to the rides. And then, so often, one takes the wrong ride and loses hounds.

But the veteran knows where to go. Presently he makes up his mind to cut across an enclosure. Our pilgrim follows till they come to a deep ditch bordered by rotten banks. 'Beastly place,' exclaims the veteran. 'But that old horse of yours can do it, if you can.' Our visitor is not quite sure whether he can or he can't, but he says that he is willing to try. The veteran gives him a lead over; the novice follows, conscious that his performance is not impeccable. Nevertheless, the veteran is obviously pleased with him.

Forrar-r-rd!

We skirt Brinton Toll-bar to the right, and have a glimpse of hounds streaming over grass in the direction of Brockenhurst. The Master, the hunt-servants, and a few followers are with them.

Once more hounds check at the water.

'They may take him here,' says the veteran.

They don't. After too long a delay, Armlet once more hits the line; and the pack race after him. A gypsy informs the Master that the buck is not far ahead. Evidently he has lingered too long in the cooling stream; but being spent he gives less scent.

'There he is,' exclaims the veteran.

The novice can only see some dim object about half a mile away. He is beginning to think that he

won't be too sorry if this gallant buck does 'diddle' his pursuers. As this thought passes through his mind, his horse puts his foot into a rabbit-hole, hidden by the heather, pecks, and falls. The novice lands clear and picks himself up.

'All right?'

'Yes.'

'Good!'

Up and on again till we find ourselves once more in woodlands not a mile from Brockenhurst. Here are fresh deer and another check. Presently the veteran is of opinion that we are on a fresh buck; and so it proves. The more experienced hounds hang back; the youngsters press on till they are whipped off. The odds now are greatly in favour of our quarry escaping. Fortunately, a woodcutter has seen him; and once more the hounds hit the right line; but they are out of scent.

The hunt, hitherto fast enough even for the gentlemen from the Shires, becomes a potter for nearly twenty minutes, till the buck 'soils' for the last time. His head is seen just above water under a thick bush. As the leading hounds approach, he makes a valiant effort, galloping off in full view. He is taken in the open within a quarter of a mile of Brockenhurst.

'Who—hooooop!'

The veteran has a word with the Master; and the novice is presented with a slot.

'Your first hunt in the Forest?'

'Yes; it won't be my last.'

CHAPTER III

SHOOTING

I

I HAVE shot in many parts of the world, under all sorts of conditions (and restrictions), and I am firmly of opinion that the 'best' shooting is more or less confined to England and Scotland; and I use the superlative in its widest sense, well aware that the biggest shoot may be very far from being the best. To-day, quality ranks high above quantity. Public opinion has had its say on that. A colossal slaughter of hand-reared pheasants flying low over 'guns' is now *anathema*. There are still a few well-meaning persons who stultify themselves by affirming that game should be 'walked up', with dogs, as of yore, instead of being 'driven', regardless of the fact that our closely clipped stubble fields make walking up partridges impossible, regardless also of the fact that any bird flying away from a 'gun' presents an easy shot when within reasonable range and is certain to be wounded if almost out of range. It is true that when I was a boy setters and pointers added enormously to the pleasures of a day's shooting. To-day, the highly-trained retriever has taken —and holds firmly—their place in the field. But even to-day, there are rough 'shoots' in remote parts of the kingdom where setters and pointers are invaluable, and where the birds must be 'walked up',

as they were sixty years ago. During many consecutive seasons I shot grouse over dogs in a part of Sutherland where 'driving' was impracticable. It was glorious fun, and very hard work for men and dogs. Nobody denies that. To me the dog-work, like hound-work, afforded the liveliest interest and satisfaction. But, in nine cases out of ten, the 'bags' on such moors diminished in size (they were never large), because the old birds, strong of wing, escaped, and the young birds were killed.

Happily, I am not concerned here with the ethics of shooting. It is my business to set forth, if I can, the *modus operandi*, to tell the would-be lessee of a 'shoot' what to do and how to do it. As with hunting, so with shooting. There are innumerable persons who are taking big and small shootings, who never owned a gun (let alone a pair) till they were nearing middle age. Some of them unfortunately, are not aware that a gun is a weapon lethal to their fellow-creatures. To these I would say: 'Go to some school of shooting and put yourself unreservedly in the hands of a competent instructor.' He may or he may not teach you how to hit clay pigeons, but he will (in his own interests) insist that your weapon shall not be pointed at his head; he will, if you pay attention to him, make you a 'safe' shot in the field; and he will, if you ask him, lay down for your benefit the unwritten laws and etiquette of shooting.

II

Inexpensive rough shooting is to be found in the New Forest. A Forest License costs twenty pounds. For that small sum a man can shoot three days a week from the 1st of October to the 31st of January.

He is allowed to engage one 'beater' and to use two dogs, generally spaniels. He is not permitted to shoot blackgame (now almost, if not quite extinct) and hen pheasants. The 'beater' must be forest-wise with a knowledge (almost uncanny in some of them) of where game can be found. When the late Mr. Gerald Lascelles was Deputy Surveyor of the New Forest, it was no uncommon thing for a 'licensee' to bag a thousand head of game during one season. Perhaps he is lucky to-day if he gets half that number. The season's bag will include woodcock, snipe, duck, wood pigeons, cock pheasants, an occasional partridge and hare, and rabbits. The wives and children of licensees used to complain that rabbit was unduly featured upon the domestic bill of fare. Pigeons, in excess, are nauseating food. Still, it must be admitted that the licensee pays but little—call it fifty pounds in all—for his fun. Two licensees can join forces and shoot together. It is not considered unsportsmanlike to stalk a wily old cock pheasant and shoot him 'on the floor'.

In all our remoter rural districts, it is possible to take a rough shooting at a modest price, if the sportsman likes to shoot alone, or with an occasional friend. Upon such 'shoots' he will get plenty of fresh air and exercise and food for the pot; he will train his dogs; he will be doing, in fine, what our grandfathers did—walking up his game. Between such rough shooting and the modern methods of driving yawns an Atlantic.

To take a small shoot is an easy matter on paper; but it exacts time and patience. I am speaking now of a shoot where game is driven to the guns. In England these, for the most part, are partridge

shootings with possibly a few wild pheasants found in November in the hedge-rows. I know of nothing more difficult than to get reliable information about the head of game on a small property, which may be —and often is—at the mercy of local poachers. Small shoots are largely advertized; and the civil gentleman who attempts to answer your questions in London is confined to his office. The 'shoot' is on his books; he knows nothing about it except what the lessor has told him. To take such a shoot without more ado is to buy a pig in a poke. Further enquiries must be made locally, on the spot. There is no other way. And this, mark you, is an intimate business exacting tact and some humorous knowledge of human nature. In any case, the man who seeks inexpensive shooting will have to stay at the village inn *when he is shooting*, and in the bar parlour, over a lip-opening tankard, he may glean the information he needs from the gaffers who know every inch of the ground. It is further assumed that there is a game-keeper, but what he says must be salted because he is in the pay of the lessor. He won't cry 'stinking fish'. If a game-book has been kept, ask to see it. Find out what is the local wage for beaters, and upon what days they are most available. Nearly all these cheap shoots are 'mixed': the probable bag will include partridges, pheasants, hares and rabbits (very few of them because farmers see to it that the bunnies do not increase and multiply). It is important to find out something about the adjacent properties, bearing in mind that a sportsman does not slaughter his neighbour's pheasants if they happen to stray from their own feeding-grounds. It is even more important to find out the probable flight of partridges

when disturbed. If they fly off your ground, you can't follow them; they are lost for that day's shooting, although they may return to their own ground later on.

These small shootings can be leased at a cost, exclusive of keeper's wages, varying between £50 and £150. Add to this the keeper's wages, probably £2 10s., or £3, a week, the wages of beaters, say 7s. 6d. a day for each, and you will know roughly where you are. You won't have much game to sell, unless you are exceptionally lucky; and these figures do not include travelling expenses and board and lodging.

For the novice prepared to spend, say, £200, it would be wiser to join a syndicate, managed by an experienced sportsman. Then all trouble would be taken from his shoulders. He would supply himself, his cartridges, his loader (if he shoots with a pair of guns), and his dog (if he owns a reliable dog). He won't own his shoot; it will own (or disown) him. You can't have it both ways. More, it goes without saying that a novice, even if the chance presented itself, would feel shy and ill at ease in a syndicate whose members were unknown to him. One recalls the story—probably apocryphal—of the man who advertized for a companion to shoot with him in darkest Africa. At about two in the morning his slumbers were disturbed by a furious knocking on the front door of his flat in London. He opened that door to behold a big bearded fellow who asked curtly: 'Are you the cove who advertized for a pal to go with you to darkest Africa? You are. Well, I've just dropped in to tell you that I'm damned if I'll go with you. Good-night!'

III

A big shoot is a big business involving big expenditure and careful organization. If there is much game to be shot, guests must be asked to shoot it, a long succession and procession of visitors. This means an establishment, a competent staff of house servants—quite apart from the men who are directly concerned with the 'shoot'. If a millionaire takes a big place, the keepers, as a rule, remain on it; but he brings with him his own house-servants. He can spend what he pleases on the rearing of pheasants. There is an old tag which deals roughly with the cost of such shooting: 'Up gets a sovereign, bang goes a penny, down comes half-a-crown!' This, in plain English, signified that every pheasant, after it was sold, cost the owner about 17s. 6d., but this cost was inclusive. In other words, if a man reared and killed five thousand pheasants, his total expenses, including the rental of the property and general costs of living on it and entertaining would come to £5,000. I have talked with men who disputed these figures and with others who did not. They merely serve to indicate a sort of average. An old friend of mine had a large house in London, a still larger house in the country, and a shooting lodge in Scotland situate upon a grouse moor with a deer forest hard by. His 'limit' on the Highland property was sixty stags and one thousand brace of grouse. Upon his English property, he killed some two thousand pheasants and about as many partridges. He told me, not once but a dozen times, that, year in and year out, the total expenses of the place in the Highlands averaged about £5,000; and, oddly enough, the English place

cost him almost exactly the same. On both places, without any ostentation, everything was well done and economically done, inasmuch as my friend was a man of business. He considered that he had 'value received'. His lucky guests shared that opinion. It is unnecessary to add that he paid handsomely a competent agent to attend to details.

It is generally agreed that it is a mistake to take any big 'shoot' for one season. The affair then becomes a gamble, because the season may be bad for the birds, whether grouse or partridges. On the right soil, the rearing of pheasants is more of a certainty. A millionaire may, quite rightly, take a shoot with the definite purpose of entertaining his friends, but if he is interested in shooting, that interest will increase with his knowledge of the land over which he shoots. Such knowledge is a delightful possession. During the past forty years I can recall at least a dozen shootings where pheasants from the nature of the ground flew low to the guns. As a rule this does not distress the head-keeper. He, good worthy fellow, after taking infinite pains in rearing his birds, wishes to see them killed *quocunque modo*. More, he likes to walk in the old time-honoured ruts. He knows his *terrain;* he has studied for years the flight of birds; he is desperately afraid—and who can blame him—of losing them if they fly off his ground. But the proprietor has other objectives; he wishes to put his pheasants high over the guns, presenting every variety of difficult shot. I believe it was the late Lord Leicester who was the first to discover that pheasants in flat country can be coaxed by careful beaters away from their feeding-places. From such places they fly low and slowly; but they return

home flying fast and high. This happy discovery has revolutionized modern shooting.

What applies to pheasants applies also to partridges. They can be driven well or badly over guns. Much depends upon the prevailing wind. I venture to affirm that the partridge of to-day is a more educated bird than he used to be. Upon a shooting where year after year the same 'drives' follow each other in monotonous succession, regardless of varying conditions, the old birds, who lead the way, seem to know where danger lies. They refuse to fly according to plan, swerving to right or left as they approach the guns. To defeat this instinct of self-preservation the proprietor of the shooting must exercise his wits and experience; he must make it plain to his head-keeper that the old ways must be abandoned even at the last moment if there is a change of wind. Partridges never fly well against a strong wind. On the other hand, flying gloriously down wind they may sail into safety across the boundary and be lost for that day's sport. Against these and other difficulties the owner of the shoot has to contend as best he may. Enough has been said here to indicate the necessity of intimate knowledge of ground and game. To many owners of shootings such knowledge never comes. They leave everything to the head-keeper, and then wonder why his plans have gone agley.

IV

I know one fortunate man, a marvel, who has had the 'best' of shooting and hunting for some thirty years upon an income under four figures.

How did he do it?

He happened to be a fine horseman and a good shot; and he was also what the Spanish call 'a man of many friends'. He began by making his hunting pay expenses. He rode young horses, schooled them carefully, and sold them at a handsome profit. In due time he was offered the mastership of a pack of hounds, a subscription pack. He accepted this joyfully, and then found, to his dismay, that his country was short of foxes. Without hesitating he took two big shootings, formed two big syndicates, and saw to it that there were foxes as well as pheasants in his covers. He had the best of shooting and hunting for many years which never cost him a farthing! But he possessed rare powers of organization and gave his undivided energies and attention to what to him was the business of his life. I cite him as an instance of what can be done, if you *know* how to do it.

Cribbed and confined by the little space at my disposal, I have indicated roughly the cost of small and big shoots. Of the moderate shoot there remains something to say. Speaking in general terms, the cost of a moderate shoot, well within the means of the well-to-do sportsman, depends upon its accessibility. Obviously, members of the Stock Exchange, and men in business, take shootings within fairly easy reach of London. To a visitor distance from London is not a disability. If he travels far afield, he will find living cheaper, fewer poachers, and wages less exorbitant. He is more likely, too, to make friends with his neighbours who will shoot with him and invite him to shoot with them, provided, of course, that he preserves foxes. The outsider who takes a shooting and winks at the destruction of Reynard is not likely to be popular. To the Tiber

with him——!

The expenses of a moderate shoot, apart from actual living expenses, will range from five hundred to a thousand pounds. There will be no big days, but a pleasant succession of small days. Guests will not be urged to shoot with two guns. To my mind, a moderate shoot is the 'best'. There is more fun and less competition. In Germany, in pre-war days, a big shoot with a 'personage' present verged perilously upon comic opera. Guns were placed too near together, and the personage occupied the place of honour. He might be a hopeless duffer, but to him was accredited the lion's share of the total bag. Count was kept by officials of what each guest killed, but—the total bag on paper was invariably greatly in excess of the bag as it was spread out upon the ground.

Big shoots in England and Scotland often include a gun headache. To fire off five hundred cartridges in one day is no job for a weakling. I have known famous 'shots' who have fired off thirty thousand cartridges in one season——! Incredible, but true. I regard such men as professional slaughterers rather than sportsmen. They provoke attacks in the press and elsewhere upon shooting as a pastime. Is it a pastime under such conditions?

The standard of shooting is much higher than it used to be thirty years ago. To-day, the difference between a good shot and a 'top-notcher' is that of speed. With a highly trained loader, the expert will fire off four barrels when the other fellow is firing off three. So far as marksmanship is concerned they are about equal. It was said of the late Heatly Noble that he could have four pheasants dead *in the air*.

I shot with him more than once, but I never saw him achieve this remarkable feat. Unlike some of our shooting experts, he picked deliberately difficult rather than easy shots, caring nothing about his 'average'. He was a famous collector of birds' eggs which he collected himself.

V

The best grouse moors in England and Scotland are rarely in the market; and nearly all of them, if leased, are leased for a term of years. Impoverished Highland chieftains can pick and choose their tenants. They are well aware that a greedy syndicate, taking a moor for one season, might strip it of birds; and so they impose a limit. Moors, large and small, are advertised in *The Field* and other sporting papers; and the stranger to our shores, even at short notice, can always find *something* which sounds alluring. Again he will be wise to investigate shrewdly on the spot, and he ought to have little difficulty in finding out the bags of previous seasons. Then, if there is no disease, and if a fair stock of old birds have been left, he can go ahead and sign his lease. Some canny souls put off the leasing of a moor till the last moment, waiting till they get reliable information about the young birds. Owing to a death in the family or for some other valid reason, a few good moors can be so snapped up, even as seats at a popular play can be bought now and again five minutes before the curtain rises. It is possible to take a 'driving' moor for one month either from the 11th of August to the 11th of September, or from the 11th of September to the 11th of October. If the moor is 'dogged', and if no dogs go with it, the

question of securing properly trained setters is a hard nut to crack. They can be hired—at a price. Upon a 'driving' moor, if it lies far from a town, the question of getting beaters is even more insistent. It may be necessary to send a car to collect them. I have often seen stout lassies serving as beaters and 'keeping line' better than men or boys.

The actual rentals vary tremendously. The cheapest are the most inaccessible. They were very cheap before the advent of the motor-car. A moor within easy reach of the railroad, within reach too of a golf-course, anywhere, let us say in the neighbourhood of Deeside and all its social amenities, would command at least twice as much as a similar moor, where an equal number of birds might be killed, in the wilds of Ross or Sutherland. This is the poor man's chance. If he is prepared to rough it in a country inn with a companion of like kidney and three or four dogs, he can have a lot of fun for very little money. An ever increasing number of good sportsmen are satisfied with this. The rigour of the game is imposed. If the birds are wild, two men may have to walk hard for eight hours to secure ten brace of grouse. For a month's such sport they would have to pay a rental of one hundred pounds, or more. Loch-fishing for trouties might be thrown in.

'Driving' calls for much greater expenditure. Roughly speaking, the cost of rental, including a lodge large enough to entertain suitably your guests and all living expenses for six weeks or two months, *plus* the wages of keepers and ghillies, would come under the old estimate of a sovereign a bird. Nobody will agree about such vague figures, because so much depends upon how the thing is done. Do you pro-

pose to give your guests champagne or the wine of the country? Is it your ambition to do them 'top-hole' regardless of weekly bills? Will your guests bring maids and valets? Are you going to keep open house for your neighbours? Each would-be lessee of a grouse moor must answer these questions for himself. Grouse shooting is a cheap pastime for the men who own moors and live upon them all the year round. They, of course, are outside our consideration.

VI

I will attempt to describe a day's grouse-driving upon a good moor in the Highlands, trying to place myself in the shoes of guest and host. As guest I am happily free from any anxiety; as host I am not so free, inasmuch as bad weather, mist, wind or rain, may upset all my carefully laid plans for a successful campaign.

Eight men (and their loaders) meet at a given place, which may be close to or far from the first line of butts. The head-keeper will be there to shake hands with old friends. The ghillie with the pony is also there to take charge of the cartridges. Half-a-dozen retrievers scrape acquaintance with each other. Perhaps, far away on the sky-line, the beaters may be seen awaiting a signal to march. This first beat is of great importance. It is primarily a 'feeding' beat. Grouse are to be driven over the butts on to ground where there are other grouse and other butts. After bad weather the birds may be 'packed'. To break up these packs is easy enough if the birds are driven and redriven on to ground not too familiar to them.

Lots are drawn for the butts—an exciting ritual, because the guests who have shot this moor before

will know immediately what butts they will occupy during the day. Certain butts are, curiously enough, avoided by grouse; shooting may be comparatively easy in one butt and extremely difficult in another. Other things being equal, the men in the outside butts can hardly expect to kill as many birds as the men in the centre. Happily, things are not equal. I have often seen grouse swerving away from the centre and flying over the outside butts. Between drives, each gun changes the number of his butt. It is a general rule to 'go up' two. If you have drawn Number One at the first drive, you will stand in Number Three at the second drive, and in Number Five at the third—and so on.

As host, I should instruct myself as guest to walk quietly to my butt and to refrain from loud chatter. These butts are built up of peat, surmounted by heather; they are drained, and a fixed seat may be provided. They are some eighty yards apart and, nine times out of ten, in a straight line. An old cock, approaching a butt, will see the head of his mortal enemy, and catch a glint from his gun barrels. Let your headgear, therefore, be as inconspicuous as possible.

After a long or short walk, invariably up-hill, you take your place in your butt, and make careful note of the ground within a radius of forty yards in front of and behind you. Novices wait too long before pulling the trigger. It is wise to mark some stone or clump of heather which will serve as a landmark. When the grouse is over or parallel with that, you can shoot at him. Meanwhile your loader has joined you, and the ghillie with the pony has handed to him a bag full of cartridges. You lay one gun upon

the top of the butt; your loader stands ready with the other. You may have to wait twenty minutes before the first birds cross the line. Experts differ upon the vexed question of rising ground in front of a butt; they agree that if it rises too abruptly and too close to you the difficulties of shooting are enhanced. On the other hand, if you can see grouse coming from afar over a flat expanse of heather, you are likely to 'poke' at them, which is fatal not to them but to you. A novice will be well advised to pick his bird before he raises his gun to his shoulder. *He should look at that bird and no other.* If it falls to the shot, he can swiftly swing upon another, change guns, and deal, if he can, with the grouse that are now flying from him. Under no circumstances will he fire at any bird that is crossing the line of butts. If I, as guest, committed this unpardonable sin, as host I should politely invite myself to walk back to the lodge.

This picking of the right bird is entirely a matter of practice and experience. It is far better to pick the wrong bird, and stick to him, rather than to change at the last moment. A veteran will automatically select the *first* bird within reasonable range. A duffer, sorely 'rattled', fires into the 'brown'. He may wound two or three birds, but they carry on.

If there is no rising ground in front of you, you will see black specks in the far distance, rapidly approaching. Wait till they are close to your marked stone or clump of heather, raise your gun, and shoot quickly. If you miss, don't follow the bird as he crosses the line. Pick another in front of you. If the bird is flying apparently straight at your head, flick your barrels upward at the moment when you

sight him, and as you pull the trigger. This is a knack, not too difficult to acquire. If you fire point blank at him, you will shoot under him. He is rising, although you think that he isn't. The same bird, flying just over your head and going away in a straight line from you, will fall to the shot if you slightly drop your barrels, because he is no longer rising but nearer to the heather. To the expert, who has mastered this knack, these two shots invariably the same are 'sitters'. Apart from them one may affirm that no other shots are exactly the same.

If the birds favour you, you will be busy with them; if not, you can keep one eye on the performances of others. Now and again a 'workman' kills two crossing birds with one shot—another knack, not easily acquired. An old cock swerves and comes down the line, so high up that it is safe to fire at him. The man above you in the next butt misses him with both barrels; you follow suit thinking that he must be out of shot. But the man below you crumples him up, taking him well in the beak. You touch your cap to him and cheer. A shrill whistle warns you that the beaters are approaching. No more shooting in front of the butts. In a minute the drive is over, and the pick-up begins. This is not the least part of the entertainment, if you own a well-trained retriever. You pick up your own birds, and then help your neighbour to pick up his. There may be a friendly dispute over a bird shared, each sportsman affirming that it belongs to the other fellow.

As host, the head-keeper reports to me, gleaning this information from the beaters, that too many birds have gone back, which is disappointing, but sport is likely to be fairly good because the wind is in

the right quarter and not blowing too strongly.

We walk gaily to the next line of butts, crossing a deep ravine, and trudging up the steep slope beyond. The highest butts are two thousand feet above sea level, and presently we shall glimpse the North Sea, a thin bar of silver in the east. No shooting between drives. The view from these high tops is panoramic, a vast expanse of undulating heather with blue mountains to the west. Not a shieling in sight! We are far from the madding crowd of trippers. This is not a deer forest, but puckles of hinds are on it, grazing quietly in secluded glens. The lordly stags will come to them later on. There are many sheep, which makes stalking impracticable. Apart from the grouse there is a singular absence of bird life. An old blackcock flutters out of the bracken as we cross the deep ravine, and wings his way to his home in the woods below, where capercailsie roost in the fir trees. An occasional eagle or a hawk may be seen, both inimical to grouse-driving.

We reach our butts and have a long wait, for this is another feeding drive. After luncheon with any luck we shall kill two birds to the preprandial one.

As guest, I am told by the pony-ghillie that I stand in a good butt. He adds, with sly malice, that a certain gentleman established a record here. There is no earthly chance of my doing this, as he is well aware. Nevertheless I am in the centre, and must acquit myself as best I may. My loader, not my own servant, but the son of the head-keeper, informs me that grouse have a nasty habit of swerving as they approach my butt.

They do, drat 'em!

I miss three in succession before I get the hang of

the swerve. Then I miss a couple of easy shots, because the beggars don't swerve. Very exasperating but fine discipline. However, at the end of the drive I feel that I have not disgraced myself.

And so to lunch, beside a burn whose peat-stained waters are the colour of a cairngorm. The ladies from the lodge join us. One makes coffee upon a camp fire *à la Mexicaine*, and receives the thanks and congratulations of the others. We drink whisky and water out of horn cups; we can eat cold grouse with our fingers, if we like to do so. With the coffee is served a *chasse* of sloe gin. . . .

After this excellent luncheon we have a fearsome walk. The wind has dropped; midges pester us. As host I am alarmed at the possibility of mist later on when we come to the lower ground. As guest, I am mopping my brow and attempting to keep the midges away from me with the aid of Nicotina. It is so hot and stuffy that the ladies decline to accompany us.

Before we reach our butts, it has begun to drizzle, as so often happens in this bonny land of melting mists and rain. If I slip on a light mackintosh, which my loader carries, I shall get insufferably hot. I don't put it on.

It looks as if we were in for a wet afternoon.

We have three more drives under absurdly varying conditions of climate. But, blessed compensation! there are plenty of birds. On the lower ground, the drizzle transmutes itself into mist, and the grouse look big as pheasants. More of them fall behind the butts than in front of them. The beaters have great difficulty to keep in line; many birds escape over the flags of the flankers. These are the 'rubs of the green', accepted as such by sportsmen.

All in all a typical day. At the end of it we have slain nearly two hundred brace. Under perfect conditions we should have bagged another hundred brace. They remain for another day.

Most of us are drenched to the skin, but what of it? One never catches cold on a moor. If the day had been less warm, we should have protected ourselves against the rain; and then the shooting would have been less straight.

As host, I exclaim: 'Better luck next time.'

As guest, I reply cheerfully: 'No complaints.

VII

I am often asked by beginners: 'How do you judge the pace of crossing birds?' I don't. We know that partridges fly less fast than grouse, that pheasants fly faster, and that a mallard, well on the wing, is the speediest of all. To the 'gun' the bird sets its own pace. You get 'on to it'; you swing with it (*and swing through*); you hold a little ahead—and pull the trigger. How much should you hold ahead? The answer is: that if you swing through, if your gun is travelling at the pace set by the bird the right distance will establish itself by practice and practice alone. With high pheasants, you must direct your aim at the tip of the topmost wing; with low partridges you can concentrate on the beak. Swinging through is all important, as it is at golf. A curving bird is the most difficult to kill handsomely. If he happens to be curving towards you, you may shoot ahead of him, or under him, or above him. I once saw one of the finest shots in the kingdom miss nine consecutive curving pheasants. He dealt faithfully with the rest.

have been asked to say a few words about 'kit'. What applies to hunting applies to shooting. Go to a tailor who specializes in sporting clothes. Men love their old shooting coats because they are easy under the arms. Shooting boots or shoes should be waterproof. I can never hold straight if my fingers and toes are cold. Soft pure wool homespuns, of inconspicuous colour, are the 'best'. On a pouring wet day, wear light waterproofed boots that reach to the knees. It is difficult to shoot well in thick gloves or in a heavy mackintosh. Upon all such not unimportant matters, a novice should consult a veteran.

Never buy cheap guns.

Never buy choked bores.

You will need a brace of stout leather cartridge bags, a shooting-stick, and waterproof gun covers. Don't forget a cartridge extractor, a true friend in need. On cold days I wear leather mittens lined with wool.

Tips——!

If your host supplies your loader, give him ten shillings at the end of the day with a pleasant word of thanks if he has served you well. The head-keeper will expect a sovereign if many birds are killed. At a modest shoot half that will suffice; and at a rough 'walking-up' shoot, where the bag is small, five shillings is about the right fee, and a florin to the man who carries your cartridges. Bigger tips than these may be given by the ignoramus and the *nouveau riche*. Probably, the man who pockets them with a slightly derisive grin ranks the donor amongst the fools.

You must be fitted by an expert with guns which are suitable to your physical configuration.

CHAPTER IV

STALKING

I

It is curious how few persons, outside those who have done it, know anything definite about stalking, either as it is practised 'in the wild', or in deer forests. The big game hunter, who has never stalked in Scotland, is apt to be slightly contemptuous of what he may call (in his ignorance) 'tame' deer-stalking. I have done both, and I have talked with dozens of men who have done both, and I submit that stalking in Scotland is the more difficult and, if you know your ground, more interesting because the stags in Scotland are so alert and the ground over which you stalk is so limited in area. If a stag crosses the march between you and your neighbour, he is lost, and you may have spent a long day in vain. The evidence of men who have had an occasional day's stalking is not worth much. They can testify, truly enough, that they took the hill with a forester and a ghillie, that they followed the forester as a spaniel follows his master, that they tried to obey somewhat unintelligible injunctions, that they hardly saw the quarry till a rifle was thrust into their hands with the peremptory command to shoot and shoot quickly. Hit or miss, there doesn't seem to be much fun or sport about that. And there isn't much fun for you when you take a tennis racket or a cricket bat into

your hand for the first time. Possibly, of all field sports stalking exacts the longest apprenticeship, *if you stalk in Scotland.*

The essential difference between stalking 'in the wild' and in the Highlands is this: the difficulty that confronts the big game hunter is to find the game. Wapiti, for example, are great travellers; they roam over immense tracts of country; and I have had to 'trek' perhaps a hundred miles in Wyoming or British Columbia before I found 'sign' of them. When found, this magnificent stag falls an easy victim even to the rifle of a novice. Probably Wapiti are less easy to approach to-day, but men who have shot them recently confirm my experience of long ago—they can be stalked and killed more easily than their kinsmen in Scotland. Any big game hunter of experience can kill game when he finds it; but the same man turned loose in a deer-forest without a professional stalker would be almost certain to return home with no 'blood on the knife'. Big game hunters, who have tried this experiment of pitting their skill against the *inherited* wariness and artfulness of the tall red deer, have admitted to me frankly that 'they couldn't get in'. I am assuming, of course, that they have never stalked in Scotland before.

On a deer-forest, the stalker knows that the 'beasts' are there. All that concerns him is to get within reasonable range of them, a distance which may vary between eighty and two hundred yards.

How does he do this?

Writing as I am for novices, I must explain what a deer-forest is. Deer love woodlands; they thrive best in woodlands; they 'winter' best in woodlands; but a 'forest' in the Highlands is bare of timber. It can be

described as sheep ground from which sheep are excluded, heather, for the most part, with here and there patches of grass, bleak 'tops', peat hags, granite stones and boulders, bubbling burns (sometimes impassable when in spate), marsh and bog, innumerable 'lochies', glens, 'corries', and ravines—mountain, hill and strath. . . .

Much of this stalking ground is too wild and desolate for sheep-grazing, especially in winter. Crofters have attempted to make a living off it—and have failed. Those who have the best interests of Scotland at heart are unanimous in their contention that such ground is only profitable when used for the preservation of red deer.

II

The leasing of a forest, for one season, is less of a gamble than taking a grouse-moor or a salmon river. The novice can serve his apprenticeship 'to the hill' inexpensively, if (once more) he is prepared to rough it. There are many grouse moors which carry with them the privilege of shooting a few stags. The stags come to these very late in September in search of the hinds. This is not the most sporting moment to stalk them, but the hinds, not their lords, make the actual 'getting in' difficult. And again there will be grouse and sheep on the ground, who act as sentinels. So, all in all, the novice will find the game worth the candle. The men who have been shooting grouse are on their way south, and often the lessee of a moor will sublet his right to kill, say, five or ten stags. The novice can buy such a right at a modest price, anything between fifty and a hundred pounds. In such a case, the services of a professional stalker

will be included, the visitor will have to pay for his board and lodging at an inn, and the wages of two gillies and the hire of a pony during the three weeks when he will be stalking. This is doing it 'on the cheap'. More, he can hire a rifle from any London gunmaker instead of buying it. Many men begin their stalking experiences after this fashion. Such opportunities are advertised in the sporting papers, and any reputable agent for Highland shootings will try to find a customer what he wants. He will get valuable experience if he gets little else. He must see to it that his stalking clothes and cap are of the right colour. In Sutherland, I found a 'greenery-yallery' homespun inconspicuous and almost rainproof. A spyglass is necessary. This can be hired also, or borrowed. Probably the forester has a spare glass, which he will lend to his 'gentleman'.

To lease a forest for the season, with the intention of stalking regularly from mid-August up to mid-October is another matter entirely. That can never be done cheaply. Some big forests, where a hundred stags are killed in the season, command immense rentals. On a few stalking is made too easy. Pony paths are built, enabling a man to ride to within short distance of his quarry, and to ride home again. The rigour of the game has ceased to be. I will leave out of court these facile hunting-grounds and with them forests where deer are driven. To have deer driven to you, as you sit at ease in a coign of vantage, is slaughter not sport. It is unfair, too, in my opinion, to use telescopic sights, except in the case of failing eyesight. If field sports in this country are put down by public opinion, it will be because they have been made too easy of accomplishment. There

is a disconcerting tendency to make them so, a tendency not fostered by Scotsmen but by rich aliens who think that spot cash can smooth away difficulties. Unhappily it can.

It used to be said that every stag killed in a forest cost about forty pounds, the same rule of thumb which deals roughly with pheasants. This means that a forest, with a suitable lodge to entertain guests, with an establishment of foresters and ghillies, with every reasonable convenience provided, upon which one hundred stags could be killed, would cost, all in, for one season, about £4,000. Again, such rough estimates will vary greatly according to what is spent upon living expenses, entertaining, and the accessibility of the forest. I am told on good authority that deer-forests, as apart from grouse-moors, are less expensive than they were. It is likely that forests situate within easy reach of Deeside are more expensive.

III

We will go stalking on a forest, in the far north, where the dice are loaded against the hunter, where he will be lucky if he averages one stag for every two days' stalking. In a word the odds are two to one against his getting a beast. A beast is a shootable stag which will weigh, when gralloched (with its 'insides' removed), at least thirteen stone. A 'monster' weighs about eighteen stone. 'Staggies', as they are termed, are spared; barren hinds are killed, generally by the forester, in the winter.

We shall take the hill upon a morning in early September, when the stags have not yet sought the company of the hinds. Some of them are still in the

'sanctuary', the place where, as the name implies, they are left in peace. Every forest has its sanctuary, and the stags, canny beasts, seem to be well aware that no profane foot violates it.

We make an early start for we have a five mile tramp before we come to the first spying-ground. The professional stalker takes the lead, carrying the rifle unloaded in its cover; his 'gentleman' follows; a ghillie brings up the rear. Another ghillie, with the 'powny', has gone on. We shall find him at the spying place, and there, if we spy a shootable beast, he will receive further instructions from the forester. We shall assume that the 'gentleman' is not a novice, that he knows the ground, that he is on friendly terms with his forester, and that together they will talk over the plan of campaign. Early that morning, the forester may have spied a stag quietly feeding by himself or with other stags.

As we trudge along, slowly—for there may be bellows to mend later—we discuss wind and weather. Mist is our deadly enemy. Fortunately, the wind is blowing steadily from the south-east. Such a wind may be *le vent du soleil*, the protean wind that follows the sun; we hope that it will not be so. With such a wind there will be no mist. We may have rain. If the wind drops, the stags will seek the higher ground inasmuch as they dislike midges as much as we do. The forester is not too hopeful 'about the day'. He ventures no predictions; he is a 'wait and see' philosopher. You may be sure that what he does not see will not be worth seeing. Living much alone he has acquired a habit of silence, but he will talk with an old friend of his winter reading, and you may be surprised to discover that he has read much and

assimilated his reading. The ghillie is his son, a boy with the eye of a hawk, who will step into his sire's shoes some day.

We reach the first spying-ground, pull our glasses from their stout leather covers, lie on our backs, and —resting the telescope between our crossed knees—survey the face of a big hill in front of us. . . .

The novice is astounded at two things: the seemingly interminable time spent upon spying, and the skill of the professional in 'picking up' deer or anything else concerned with the prospective stalk. He, wonderful man, will put 'horns' (antlers is a word not used in the Highlands) on a beast hardly visible to the novice; he will mark some trespassing sheep and curse them under his breath; he will descry, miles away, a puckle of hinds which to the untrained eye are a mere blur of pink against purple heather; he will stigmatize as 'rubbish' a staggie which to the novice seems shootable.

Presently the forester shuts up his spy-glass and announces that the hill is full of deer. Obviously he means to trudge on. On our homeward journey, if we have no luck elsewhere, we may essay the difficult task of getting to deer through deer. At this hour of the day we should set the whole lot a-galloping and invite disaster. Further on we hope to find a beast more or less by himself, lying down, perhaps, with no guardian angels near him. To disturb deer is a serious offence against the unwritten laws of the forest.

Accordingly, we leave them tranquilly grazing.

At the second spying-place, luck favours us. Young Davie's youthful eye detects a shootable beast lying in a peat hag, so peat-stained, that his

father has overlooked him. One up to Davie. Old Davie is of opinion that this stag is an old acquaintance who has defeated him before. He has a deformity of the horn, due probably to a wound when fighting with some rival. After such encounters, a stag may be fat as butter the next season, but the growth of the new horns is affected.

I will take the place of the 'gentleman', and continue in the first person.

'I can't put horns on him,' I observe.

Old Davie grunts; Young Davie smiles. Is it likely that any Sassenach could put horns on a beast at such a distance? They are surprised that I can see him at all, but too polite to say so.

'There's a staggie below him,' says Young Davie.

'Aye.'

I try to pick up the staggie and fail ignominiously. I am told that he is near a big grey stone; and I see twenty grey stones. He is on the edge of a patch of yellow moss; I see forty such patches. Finally, after focussing my glass upon the intersection of two burnlets, I move it vertically upwards, and see something which might be a deer. The two Davies satisfy themselves that nothing else 'with hair on' is in sight. Three rousing cheers!

We spy the ground, all the approaches to our quarry. This is where the supreme experience of the professional puts to the blush the inexperience of the amateur. Try to conceive and envisage this meticulous series of observations. The captious critic may exclaim: 'The pro knows his ground'. But he is looking at that ground from a long distance, looking across an intervening strath at a hill which seemingly is a smooth surface of heather. The stag occupies a

commanding position facing us. It will be impossible to get within range of him from below. We shall have to cross the strath, which looks like a strip of meadow grass, out of his sight, inasmuch as he would 'pick us up' if we didn't. Then we must ascend the steep hill and, approaching our beast from above, keep out of ken of that alert sentinel, the staggie. I know this hill well; I have killed several stags on it, but I am at a loss to know how to 'get in'. Old Davie says to his son:

'Ye see yon hummock above the beast?'

'Aye.'

'He'll be some ninety yards from that.'

'Aye.'

'We'il be moving on, sir.'

We do so, slowly as before. Young Davie has a word or two with the pony-ghillie, who remains where he is, with strict injunctions to keep his glass upon stag and staggie. Later on, if they move, he will signal to us.

As we walk, Old Davie stops suddenly, wetting a finger and holding it up. The wind is changing, blowing from the south. If it moves another point or two in a westerly direction we are 'diddled'.

Presently we spy again, although the stag and staggie are out of sight. Upon ground not yet spied there may be more deer. To our dismay we discover a small puckle of hinds feeding low down where the grass is sweet. They are likely to remain there.

We sit down, and I fill a pipe. Apparently we have the choice of two evils: we can attempt to move the hinds, or to circumvent them. If we try the latter course we shall give the hinds our wind after we have passed them. I take out my glass.

One old hind, with her broad back to us, is snuffing the breeze, conscious as we are of an impending change in conditions. She moves slowly away, pausing to look back, plainly inviting the other ladies to follow her.

'Rain in two hours,' says Old Davie. 'The auld hind knows that; she'll be seeking better shelter. As they're moving theirsels we'll no try to move them.'

Within ten minutes they are out of sight.

We cross a burn wherein the water is clear and pure, and stop to slake an increasing thirst. As we begin to ascend the slope beyond the narrow valley, we come in sight of the pony-ghillie. We spy him and see that his glass is on us. No signals. Our beasts have not moved. The hinds may be directly between us and our quarry. If we get higher up, we shall see them.

So far, we have found the walking easy enough. But the great hill at close quarters is no longer a smooth expanse of heather as seen from a distance. The old heather reaches to our knees and beneath it are ugly boulders upon any one of which a novice might sprain his ankle. We have to walk delicately, prodding about with our sticks. We are nearing a spot where I missed a stag two seasons previously. How vividly that stalk comes back to me! Foolishly, I shot through a tuft of grass waving about the fore-sight of my rifle. Fortune denied me a second chance. I returned to the lodge footsore and fagged out; and my genial host prescribed champagne for dinner, bless him!

I fall upon my face, crossing a slippery peat hag, and hear a suppressed chuckle from Young Davie. Just as well that I was not carrying the rifle——!

We pause to recover breath before we come into sight of our beast and I try to wipe the black mud from my knickerbockers.

'Ye'll smoke anither pipe,' commands old Davie.

He leaves me with his son, and advances cautiously. Young Davie turns his glass upon the pony-ghillie, who is signalling, waving a red bandana in his left hand.

'It's they blarsted hinds,' growls young Davie.

He explains to me that if the bandana had been in the right hand our stag would have moved. Old Davie has vanished. Young Davie refuses a pipeful of my 'baccy; he prefers his own villainous black plug, which he scrapes lovingly into the palm of his hand, taking what was left from a previous smoke out of a twist of paper. We have an argument about the distance that a stag can see tobacco smoke.

After an interminable wait old Davie comes back, pulling at his beard and shaking his head. He sits down and fills his pipe with exasperating deliberation. Nevertheless, he deigns to tell me what has happened. Our stag is up and 'restless'. The change of wind has disturbed him. Whatever he does, the staggie will do likewise. 'They hinds' are feeding towards us, also 'restless'.

I gather that we are trapped. If the hinds move past us, we can go on. By that time our stag may have shifted his quarters. Old Davie suggests that I should see for myself the situation. I do so, crawling through the deep heather. When deer are 'restless', it behoves the man stalking them to be 'restless'. If I stay where I am, the hinds will see me in less than ten minutes. I slither back to my companion. Old Davie is smoking leisurely, sucking enjoyment out of

tobacco which to him is an expensive luxury. We are lying in a tiny hollow, but, after more talk, it is agreed that it might be safer to crawl into a burn on a peat hag, both within easy distance. We achieve this without any misadventure other than getting wet to the knee. Standing in the burn, we can peer through some tussocky grass and just see the heads of the hinds, but we can't see our stag.

We put out our pipes. Old Davie takes the rifle from its cover and slips the cartridges into the magazine. This is a thrilling moment, but it means little, a precautionary measure, because our stag may cross above us. The odds are greatly against his doing so; a restless beast moves up wind. The wind at the moment is blowing from the hinds to us.

Old Davie suggests that I make an early luncheon while he keeps his eye on the hinds. Young Davie hands me my 'piece', good Scots' beef, bread and butter and cheese. I have whisky in my flask. By the time I have swallowed my provand, Old Davie announces that the hinds have wandered up-wind and are out of sight, possibly within five hundred yards of our stag, if he is anywhere near the spot where we saw him last.

We take the hill again at a snail's pace. The father motions to the son to go first—rather a pathetic incident, a tacit acknowledgment that the boy's eyes are better than his own. We may be close to the hinds. *We are*——! Young Davie crouches and lies down; we do the same. I find myself in a back-breaking position, horribly cramped. We dare not budge an inch. Young Davie has wriggled into the high heather as if he were a snake. Old Davie seems to have shrunk. I am conscious of being the most con-

spicuous blot upon the landscape with a boulder under my little Mary and my knees in a patch of wet moss. I can see the heads of the hinds, but their eyes and noses are up-wind. . . .

As they disappear, we slide down hill and mark time.

A whispered discussion follows. A novice would not be allowed to take part in this, but Old Davie is well aware that his 'gentleman' is keenly interested and slightly impatient. We can remain where we are, hoping for the best, or crawl up a burn. The professional loves a policy of masterly inactivity; he knows that time is his friend when deer are disturbed; at the moment he is distressed because he is ignorant of the movements of the hinds. I am allowed to have my way with him.

On and up!

We dare not get out of the burn, because the great hill is bare of cover as we near the crest. From the edge of the burn we can see neither horns nor hair. At long last, we catch a glimpse of our stag. He has moved higher as we have. The staggie and the hinds are out of sight.

We lie still and watch the stag, a big switch-horn, almost a 'monster' in weight. Old Davie eyes him calmly; he would be unable to suppress excitement if our quarry carried a fine head. As it is, being a deformity, he is 'better deid'. Still, he will add to the larder 'average'.

Can we 'get in'? Will 'they blarsted hinds and the staggie' allow us to 'get in'?

I whisper to Old Davie that if we try and fail, no complaints shall leak from my lips; I hint that we may be more fortunate with the deer nearer home; I

emphasize the point that the 'switch-horn' ought to be slain. The old fellow pulls at his beard and says nothing. Meanwhile a few drops of rain have fallen; obviously we may expect a wettish afternoon.

Compromise is achieved. Young Davie is despatched upon a reconnaisance. Ten minutes later he reports that the hinds are below us, sheltering in a hollow; the staggie is between them and the stag. Old Davie grunts. A blinding shower blots out our stag. So much the better! We hurry on till we reach the crest of the hill and peer over it into the sanctuary of the forest. Old Davie breaks into a dog-trot, scuttling along; he means business. Heavy rain may lure our beast into the sanctuary, or he may lie down in some hole. If he crosses the crest, we must be in a position to have a shot at him. I get my second thrill, as I scuttle after old Davie, and am conscious that my heart is thumping against my ribs. I am not suffering from what is called in Wyoming 'buck-fever', but the old boyish excitement grips me. . . .

We reach a cairn, a landmark for miles, and pause behind it. Cautiously old Davie crawls round the cairn and pulls out his glass. Presently he turns and beckons to me. I join him and peer below. Yes; the big 'switch' has curled himself up in a hole. I can see his horns clearly defined against a peat-hag and nothing more. Old Davie points a menacing forefinger to the left. The staggie is 'on sentry go'. At any moment he may get our wind; he *will* get it if we crawl nearer to the stag.

We scurry back under the crest of the hill, till the danger of giving our wind to the staggie is over; but we are once more constrained to sit still and

watch the staggie's movements. He is looking down the hill and across the strath, with his eyes probably on the hinds now invisible to us. A whiff of our taint may have reached their sensitive nostrils.

The heavy shower ceased before we reached the cairn. Of a sudden visibility becomes superb, the sun breaks out of the clouds. With my naked eye I can see the pony grazing where we left him more than three hours ago. The heather is resplendently purple; every wet grey rock shines like polished silver; the landscape is so spacious, so grand in its rugged desolation that awe creeps into me. Two great forests, belonging to two dukes, extend almost from the Atlantic to the North Sea. We seem to be far above the work-a-day world in an empyrean of splendour.

This is not the least part of the fascination of stalking in the Highlands. I can see that Old Davie, who has spent all his life in these solitudes is beneath the curious spell imposed by them. He has forgotten the deer for a brief moment; he is inhaling, as I am, the rejuvenating freshness of the air, peering into the blue distances. . . .

He wrings the wet out of his baggy knicker-bockers; he is afraid of crippling rheumatism which may keep him from his beloved hills. In silence I offer him my flask; he carries one of his own; but he accepts gratefully a 'tot' out of mine. We are crouching behind a huge rock. Old Davie takes some dried cotton grass from his pocket, and allows it to float away. Reassuringly, it is wafted along the crest of the hill. The hinds must be far below the staggie, sheltering in some small corrie.

What will the staggie do?

He remains on duty with his stern to us, little recking that danger to his senior lurks above him. He seems now to be interested in our pony, whom he may have seen before. Now and again he nibbles a few blades of grass. Our stag may have fallen asleep.

It is very cold on these high tops and my clothes are wet through. Young Davie carries my 'slip-on', but I have forgotten all about it. An older ghillie would have remembered to give it to me. Both he and his father disdain such garments.

The staggie moves nearer to the stag, walking slowly down hill. Old Davie makes a sign to his son to remain where he is. The opportunity to 'get in' has come, and must be seized. The stag is about four hundred yards from us. Between us and him lies bare ground covered with rocks. Our one chance is to creep from rock to rock. Old Davie is pulling at his grizzled beard. He whispers:

'Ye'd better go in by yersel.'

I nod and take the rifle, still in its cover, from him. With a finger old Davie indicates a zig-zag course to a hummock about a hundred yards from the stag. But my attention will have to be concentrated not on the hummock but on the staggie.

If he turns and catches me between rocks, the game is up.

I crawl over the crest, and make my first halting-place. A downhill stalk is in my opinion the most exciting of all ways of approaching deer. On this occasion I am not so afraid of being seen as of being heard. A deer's sense of hearing is as acute as his sense of smell. Of his eyesight we know little. At a long distance deer appear to be curious rather than

alarmed when they see a man. I have lain on my back and stuck my heels into the air on the plains of Wyoming, and watched antelope approach to within two hundred and fifty yards of me, impelled by nothing except curiosity.

I progress, with my eyes on the stern of the staggie. If I disturb a loose stone, I am lost. When the staggie lifts his head I lie perfectly still.

At the next boulder I draw the rifle from its cover, and, as noiselessly as possible, click a cartridge into the barrel. I am using a beautiful Mannlicher, adapted to sporting uses. The stag is now three hundred yards distant; if he jumps up, he may come towards me. Pushing the rifle in front of me, I crawl on till eventually I reach the hummock, where I am out of sight. I pause to recover breath, I peer round it. The staggie is invisible, but I can see my stag's head, a small object at a hundred yards or more. If Old Davie were with me, he would insist on waiting till the stag rose; and we might have to wait an hour, possibly two. During that time, I should get chilled to the bone. My fingers and toes are far from warm as it is; so I take a nip of whisky. In pre-war days I have poured whisky into my boots during these tedious waits. I lay the rifle in line with the stag, and glance at my watch. He shall have a quarter of an hour's grace—no more, not a second. Then, I shall whistle him up, as I have often done before, not always successfully. At sound of a low whistle, a stag, as a rule, rises and stands still, presenting a big target if he is broadside on. He may jump up and vanish in a jiffy. Then, if you try a shot as he is racing down hill, you may wound him, a horrible thought!

By the luck of things I don't have to wait the appointed time. Old Davie, knowing his 'gentleman', has imitated to perfection the short, sharp 'woof' of a hind, something between a bark and a grunt. It comes faintly to the ears of the stag. He rises, and slowly turns.

I pull the trigger, hear the thud of the bullet, see the stag bound into the air and vanish. Have I wounded him? As I reload, I hear a shout, from Young Davie. The big 'switch' is lying dead some twenty yards down the hill. Whilst Old Davie is performing the last rites, I smoke a pipe, and cut one more notch on my stalking stick. After a libation, we have a job in getting the stag down a precipitous hill to a place where he can be packed on the pony. Young Davie seizes a horn; Old Davie and I each take a hind leg, and steer our quarry through stones and heather, across boggy patches and peat hags, till we meet the 'powny'.

Old Davie is of opinion that he will weigh sixteen and a half stone.

Ave et vale!

IV

This has been an account of an actual 'stalk' on a forest in the Reay country, as yet virgin of so-called 'improvements'. Pony paths have been cut, it is true, but only for the purpose of getting stags to the larder. Stags die, as we do, when their time comes, after at least six years of free and unrestricted life. There are few deer fences in the Highlands. The stags can roam where they please. Their death, in most cases, is painlessly sudden. *Apropos*, no novice should take the hill—and seldom is he allowed to do

so—till he has acquired some mastery of his weapon. With it he should practise diligently till he can smash a bottle with the bullet at a hundred yards. Then, he will do well to test his markmanship at other ranges, shooting uphill and downhill. Rifles vary slightly. Confidence in one's own weapon comes only with practice. A miss—and the best shots miss sometimes—is negligible; to wound a stag, or to 'haunch' him, is catastrophe, a crime!

The fascination of stalking is cumulative. It is a significant fact that the owners of forests, men born and bred in the Highlands, rank stalking first. And, oddly enough, few of these gentlemen take the hill without a forester. His knowledge and experience add enormously to the amateur's pleasure. An expert delights in the company of another expert when he visits a great picture gallery. There is so much to discuss, so many technical points to challenge attention. But the spell of the lonely hills lies deeper than this. During many hours, the stalker is alone with nature, alone with his own thoughts, immune from idle chatter, subject only to the discipline of the ground he has to traverse and the changing conditions which confront him so unexpectedly. It is hard work; it tests severely limbs, lungs, heart and mind; it is an epitome of life. No stalker, however cunningly he may use his spy-glass, knows what may await him 'round the corner'. What appears at first sight to be easy of accomplishment may be difficult or impossible. The 'luck' of the hill is proverbial. Often, as a blank day draws to its close, after the cartridges have been taken from the rifle, a 'restless' stag comes swiftly into sight.

CHAPTER V

SALMON AND TROUT FISHING

I

FISHING has much in common with stalking. As a rule the man who stalks in Scotland fishes for salmon. It used to be esteemed a notable feat to kill a stag, a salmon, and an eagle in one day. Eagles are now protected. At one time they were pests—ruthless slayers of lambs and grouse. It is a feat to-day to kill a stag, a salmon, and a brace of grouse within twenty-four hours. I have never done it, but it has been achieved by three at least of my friends, and in the order named.

Stalking and fishing are beloved by those who are never less alone than when alone. Nor do they measure their love for these field-sports by the weight of the 'bag'. Many a man has said to me: 'I had a glorious day on the hill, but I couldn't get in'; and many a fisherman has enjoyed himself on a noble river with 'never a pull'.

I will deal as faithfully as I can with salmon-fishing first, although dry-fly fishing for big trout on such streams as Itchen, Test, and Kennet is a finer art. That art, alas, I have never been able to practice because my eyesight is defective. I fail to see a tiny fly on the water; I belong to the 'chuck and chance it' school. Nevertheless, I have watched experts at work on Test and Itchen and can testify with enthu-

siasm that they are worth watching.

To the visitor to the United Kingdom who seeks the best salmon-fishing, one is constrained to say regretfully: 'Don't you wish you may get it?' Upon certain magnificent rivers, there are long waiting lists of anglers eager to step into the brogues of lessees and sub-lessees. The rentals are prohibitive to the poor man, if he wishes to take, say, two or three miles of fishing for the season. To the less ambitious, contented with a week, or even a day now and again, there are many opportunities fraught too often with disappointment. The river may be out of order: in spate, discoloured, too little water (and what there is crystal clear), or—for some inscrutable reason—the fish are 'stiff'. Upon many rivers in England and Scotland, it is possible to buy one day's fishing at prices varying from one guinea to three. There are hotels which advertise such privileges. One busy man of my acquaintance has killed clean-run salmon on the famous Wye at small cost. What he does, others may do—if they can. I cite him as an example. He has a friend 'on the river', who lets him know by telegraph when conditions are favourable. Upon receipt of the telegram, my friend jumps into his car early next morning, and is 'awa'. He pays two guineas for his day's fishing, and he knows his water, which happens to be public to those who can afford two guineas, and therefore over-fished. The odds are against him, but he doesn't mind that. I repeat, he catches many fish during the season, but the point to bear in mind is that he cheerfully sacrifices other interests to his fishing. That is his affair. Business men, slaves to their business, may have a fortnight's holiday which they propose to

devote to salmon-fishing. If conditions are unfavourable, they fish in vain. Angler's luck is proverbial. Upon Tay and Tweed (and many others) there is 'public' fishing overfished by local experts; but I have known a novice, blessed with beginner's luck, who has caught salmon in these troubled waters.

For the stranger in London in search of salmon-fishing there is only one course to pursue, if his purse is not too well-lined. He can walk into such shops as Hardy's or Farlow's and ask for information which will be gladly given; he can read the advertising columns of any well-known sporting newspaper, preferably *The Field*. Once more, if he is prepared to rough it, if he is willing to endure hardships, he can get inexpensive fishing in February on many rivers in the far north of Scotland. He will stop at an inn, engage one ghillie, who knows the pools, and it is certain that he will catch fish. He will have to risk catching cold. Wading in icy water is no job for the weakling; sitting in a boat with icicles dangling from one's cap is 'not good enough' for some of us.

March, April and May are the best months for spring fishing. When you hear, as you will, of a fortunate angler who has killed two hundred salmon in *one* season, you can make sure that he has fished hard all day and every day whether conditions were favourable or not. He is living on or near his river. If he fails with the fly, he disdains not the minnow, the spoon, the prawn, or even the worm. Of 'worming' I shall have something to say later. It is an art, quite as difficult as any other form of bait-fishing, and in my opinion quite as exciting. On some rivers it is forbidden.

II

Upon many of the rivers that flow into the English Channel, such as Avon and Dart, a few days' salmon fishing can be had inexpensively. To the enthusiast, his 'sport' depends upon the character of the pools he fishes. Catching salmon in sluggish pools has been compared with 'hauling dead cats out of a ditch'. In heavy rapid water in Canada, there is real peril to life and limb if you have to follow your hooked fish down a boiling rapid. At Christchurch, in Hampshire, you can't expect such excitements from the placid Avon, but the fish are magnificent for the table. Unhappily they prefer bait to the fly, and most of them are captured in nets.

The stranger might, if he is lucky, join a syndicate. The man who has wit enough to secure first-class fishing on a good river, and who is able to get together a syndicate, has his fishing cheaply, but he must be a man of experience.

In fine, salmon fishing is very hard to come by, if you attempt to do it, 'on the cheap'.

Probably, to the man with time and money at his disposal, Ireland offers to-day better opportunities than Scotland. Poaching, the curse of the Emerald Isle, is now regarded by those in authority as a serious offence. They know what English gold means to a country greatly impoverished; and they are doing everything in their power to encourage English sportsmen to come back to Erin to hunt and shoot and fish as of yore. I was fishing on the Slaney a few months ago. The son of the proprietor of our fishing saw a poacher upon the farther side of

the river. He plunged in, swam the river, and pursued the man. Public opinion, so far as I could gather, was against the poacher. Four years ago I was fishing the famous Carysville beat on the Blackwater. The proprietor, an Irishman, told me that his part of the river was snagged to prevent poaching by drawing a seine, but he added that his troubles with ordinary poachers were almost at an end, because, for the first time in his experience, public opinion sustained the law. Whether my experience on these two rivers applies to other rivers in Ireland, I cannot say, but I should think it likely. At any rate it is safe to assert that salmon fishing in Ireland, of the same 'quality', is less expensive than in England or Scotland. Again, as with hunting and shooting, the less accessible rivers command lesser rentals. It is possible to leave Paddington after business hours, to dine on the train, to cross from Fishguard to Rosslare, and to start fishing on the Slaney or Blackwater at nine-thirty the next morning. An enthusiast from the London Stock Exchange can leave Paddington at eight p.m. on Friday night, fish hard all Saturday and Sunday, and be back at his office on Monday morning——!

The rental of such fishing, enough, let us say, for four 'rods', not including other expenses such as hire of ghillies, living, and house rental (if no house is 'thrown in')—would vary between two and four hundred pounds for April, or March. Four men, therefore, would get a month's fishing for one hundred pounds apiece, probably for much less if the river was not so accessible. It is important to acquire the fishing on both banks of the river, otherwise the bank opposite to you may be mercilessly over-fished.

If your rival on the other bank, getting up perhaps earlier than you do, uses a prawn, you, following him down the pools, will be severely handicapped if you use a fly.

Salmon fishing, if a river is properly fished, can be done from a boat, or wading, or from the bank. As I am writing for novices I am asked to deal briefly with the ordinary procedure. On taking a fishing, the lessee will inform himself of its character. He ought to find out what tackle is necessary. He will need a fly-rod and a spinning rod fitted with reels and lines suitable to the water to be fished; he will need waders, if wading is necessary. In heavy water, and on wide rivers, he will use heavier rods and lines. Exact information on these important matters can be gleaned from text books, or from the local ghillies. Nearly all enthusiasts overload themselves with tackle. Some men seem to collect salmon flies as if they were collecting butterflies. Each river is supposed to have its favourite flies; and these, nine times out of ten, can be bought locally. If I were constrained to fish with one fly I should select a Jock Scott, of three different sizes. The brighter and clearer the water, the finer should be line and cast, and the smaller the fly. Again there is a tag: 'A bright fly for a bright day; a dark fly for a dark day'. The novice will consult his ghillie; and he will be well advised to learn all he can from him. There are tricks which can only be acquired even by the expert from the man who knows the pools. To the veteran there is nothing so disconcerting as to throw his fly perfectly across a river against a stiffish breeze and then to find it at his feet on a back eddy. From long experience the ghillie knows how to deal with these

exasperating contingencies. He knows, too, every rock, snag, and weed which may cause the loss of spinning tackle. He knows when to reel up quickly or slowly; and his knowledge is invaluable to a stranger. The novice may be enjoined to practice 'getting out line against a wind' on a lawn—good practice so far as it goes, but the line, when extended on the grass, can be picked up easily. It is not so easy on water; it is confoundedly difficult when there are high banks or bushes behind the caster. From the first, he should learn to cast over each shoulder reversing the position of the hands. *The rod must do the work.* In the hands of an expert it seems to do the work automatically. The novice makes three blunders: he carries the point of his rod too far back and finishes the cast with the point too low down, too near the water; he forgets to keep his butt hand rigidly in one place, close to his belt, if he wears a belt; then as the point comes forward he is certain to jerk, often snapping off the fly. His ghillie, if he is asked to do so will take pains to correct these more obvious faults—the rest comes with constant practice.

Your object is to fish every inch of the river where fish may be lying. They may be lying under the bank opposite. In that case you endeavour to drop the fly as reasonably near to the bank as possible. It is carried away by a swiftly flowing stream and slowly crosses the river. The angler advances a yard, and casts again. The ghillie will know the right angle. You may have to cast the fly at right angles to the bank on which you stand; you may be enjoined to cast more down stream. You can't learn too soon how to 'shoot' your line. As the fly approaches

your bank, you draw in with your hand some two or three yards of line, which hang between the reel and the first ring. You hold this line with your forefinger against the butt, as the rod goes back. At the moment when the point comes forward, you release the line which does 'shoot' through the rings and become taut if this manœuvre is properly carried out. If you make a bad cast, make another instantly, or, if necessary, a third. The line and cast should go out *straight*. Watch the fly as it drops upon the water and sinks. You can't see it when it has sunk, but you ought to know where it is. Nine times out of ten, fishing with a fly, a salmon hooks himself. If you strike too hard, you may tear the fly out of his mouth or break it off. If fish come persistently 'short' at the lure, try a smaller fly.

Casting with minnow, sprat, spoon or prawn, demands great skill and knowledge of your reel, whether you use a 'Silex', a 'Malloch', or the old 'Nottingham'. The river has to be fished just as carefully, yard by yard, as with a fly, but you can increase the difference between casts, because salmon see a bait more easily than they see a fly. When spinning, I take three yards between each cast if the water is clear. It is customary to work the rod, moving the point up and down, whilst the fly is crossing the river. With bait, it is an open question whether 'working' the rod is effective. An old ghillie on the Tweed, when told that another ghillie put no faith in 'working', consigned him to the nethermost depths of Hades. Standing upon a high bank, when a friend was spinning with a prawn, I have watched the bait in a clear pool. My friend has worked the rod and then not worked it. I could detect no difference in

the movement of the bait.

When you hook a fish you go ashore as soon as you can, if you are wading or casting from a boat. Whatever your fish does, you must attempt (1) to keep a steady strain on the fish, (2) to keep opposite to him. If he breaks water, lower the point of your rod instantly; if he races down stream or across the river, give him line. Let him tire himself. Some anglers are 'hard' on a fish; some are too 'easy'. In regard to the actual time spent in playing him, there is the rule of thumb—worth very little—of a minute to the pound. This means that a twenty pounder should be ripe for the gaff or net in twenty minutes. All depends upon your tackle. A novice of my acquaintance, fortified by the knowledge that his tackle was of the best and strongest, and desperately keen not to lose his first salmon, put his rod on his shoulder, turned his back to the river, marched up a gentle slope, and the salmon followed him like a spaniel! He 'landed' his first fish without gaff or net or ghillie—no mean achievement, but not to be commended.

Perhaps the best advice that can be given to a novice is: 'fish with a short line till you have learned to throw a long line.' In low clear water you must use a light line and cast. You can try greasing the line and oiling the fly, which should be as small as possible. A man with immense experience told me this year, to my astonishment, that he had caught fish between high noon and three, when the sun was blazing overhead on to low clear water. At such a time, when most anglers are comfortably snoozing (if they have got up early), the rod and line cast less shadow on the water. I suspected that liberties were

being taken with my leg, but my informant spoke in good faith.

When everything else has failed—and not till then—the angler can essay 'worming'. For this nefarious procedure, *tabu* on many rivers, you require some well-scoured fat lob worms. You thread three upon an ordinary hook of the same size as a medium fly hook; these three dangle from the gut attached to the hook; the fourth is then used to cover and hide the hook, and the point is left inside the worm. A little lead is placed on the gut cast about four feet from the hook. You cast it gently across the river and the bunch of worms wobbles over the bed of the river. When it travels no farther, you count twenty seconds before you cast again. If a salmon sees it, he may nose and nibble it. He takes it gingerly in his mouth. You will see the line move. The thrill comes when he first nibbles. You draw from your reel a yard of line, and hold that line between your fingers. By touch you can know what the fish is doing. Let him take out plenty of line before you strike. All this sounds easy, but in practice it isn't. The novice strikes too soon. If there are many eels in the river, he may catch one of them. If he casts violently, he loses his worms. There is one more trick which will be of service to the novice when bait-fishing. He may be standing in a position where it is difficult to cast at all, under a bank or bushes; he may be unable to fling his bait where the fish are lying under the farther bank. Let him try this dodge. The ghillie takes the bait lightly between finger and thumb and stands some thirty yards behind the angler, who has the point of his rod at an angle of forty-five degrees behind him. The angler asks:

'Are you ready?' The ghillie replies in the affirmative. 'One, two, three—and away!' The angler makes a vigorous cast; the bait whistles over his head and falls in a spot unattainable by ordinary casting. I must admit that when I have practised this, I have wondered what would happen if a prawn bristling with sharp hooks hit my head instead of whistling just over it——!

III

Trout fishing, but not the 'best', is within reach of most anglers. In England, Scotland and Wales, men like myself, the 'chuck and chance it' fellows, can wander anywhere and everywhere with fair prospects of moderate sport. I have been accused of not being a dyed-in-the-wool angler, because catching trouties does not excite me. To whip them, two at a time (when they are greedy), out of a small stream or lochie is monotonous work. My fancy dwells upon big fish, but I'm not such a megalomaniac as the American angler who could not recall the name of the big fish which he had caught, but did remember that he baited for them with whales! Anyway, I would sooner essay the capture of a Thames trout, even if I failed to hook him, than come home with a basket full of 'little 'uns'. Nevertheless, I make exception of trouties that take a lot of catching. In some of our streams even the babies seem to be highly educated. If you have to pit your skill against their acute sense of self-preservation, all is very well. I recall a tiny stream in Hampshire, overhung by bushes, very shallow but with, here and there, deep holes. It was quite impossible to throw a fly, but sizable trout came to the lure of a grasshopper

impaled upon a thin hook, and then dropped upon the water from behind a bush. Once hooked, the trout put up a game fight, and, as often as not, broke loose in weeds or snags. As a boy I tried to 'tickle' trout, but with no success. I have seen it done in California. Apropos, the wonderful sport that my brother and I had in California and British Columbia with several varieties of trout—steelhead, rainbow, cut-throat, and brook—may have sated my ardour. Nor have I tried as yet what must be a fascinating form of trouting, fishing with a long rod, a silk blow-line and a daddy-long-legs on an Irish lough.

It is impossible to enumerate the trout streams in England and Wales where fair fishing can be enjoyed at small expense; and my publisher, if he were at my elbow, would remind me politely that I am supposed to be dealing with what is 'best'. The 'best' is admittedly the dry-fly fishing on such silvery streams as Itchen and Test. Both rivers I know well, but not intimately for the reason already given. Except during the duffers' fortnight, when the May-fly is 'up', we 'chuck and chance it' gentlemen have no chance; the trout are too sophisticated.

Trout under two pounds are put back.

From their cradle, a hatch, to their grave in the angler's creel, these big trout are familiar with the sight of man. In the ditches near the main river, they are fed daily upon evil-smelling food. For this reason I have never eaten a big Test trout. I have taken two-pounders in a bucket from these ditches and introduced them to their future habitat, selecting a spot likely to please them. Next day, as often as not, you will see them head up stream, waggling a

contented tail in the place where you left them. This becomes that particular trout's 'pitch'. He will make excursions from it in search of food, fresh water shrimps and so forth, but he returns, like a homing hound, to his kennel.

The difference between dry-fly and ordinary wet-fly fishing is this: you cast upstream, and fish upstream with a tiny fly at the end of a finely tapered cast. This minute bait floats because it is oiled. If it gets wet it is dried by flicking it to and fro in the breeze. The dry-fly fisherman waits till he sees a trout rise at a natural fly on the water. Then he drops his 'floater' just above the circle made by the rising fish. If he hooks him, he has to play a three or four pounder with the lightest tackle, on a cast that will break if you attempt to lift half a pound dead weight with it. If the fish comes short, the angler waits and tries again. If the fish disdains notice of the artificial bait, the angler 'bides a wee' till he marks another rising fish. As the trout is lying head up stream he cannot see his enemy. In wet-fly fishing, you fish down stream, much as you fish for salmon; and you fish on patiently whether you see fish rising or not with a fly that sinks. The two schools of fishermen are as Tweedledum and Tweedledee. There is not much to choose between the real experts, but a dry-fly fisherman must be an expert both in hooking and playing his fish. An Atlantic yawns between the dry-fly professor and the wet-fly duffer. I hold no special brief for either school, but—granting great skill to each—I am of opinion that the dry-fly expert, when fishing for big trout, has the odds in his favour. He knows that the fish are in his water; he knows where they lie; he sees to it, if he is a wise man, that

his water is more or less free from weeds and snags. These amenities are not granted to the wet-fly man fishing, perhaps, a stream not familiar to him, not rigorously preserved, not heavily stocked with trout, not cleared of weeds and roots. Accordingly, an impartial sportsman must admit that dry-fly fishing is the more artificial pastime even as stalking in Scotland differs from stalking 'in the wild'.

To take such a fishing on Test or Itchen for one season is expensive and difficult, almost impossible. Speaking roughly again, the annual rental of a suitable bungalow on Test, with good fishing for two 'rods', would be in the neighbourhood of five hundred pounds, more or less. Such happy fishing grounds are snapped up before they come into the open market. Fortunately there are others, which will be found in the advertizing columns, but none—if the water is properly stocked—is cheap. You have to pay through your nose for the 'best'.

I return to the wet-fly fisherman.

Some of us prefer to fish water long familiar to us; some seek pastures new and green where uncertainty lurks beneath an overhanging bush and in the tail of a mill-stream. I can sit on a fence and survey the two prospects whilst I smoke a meditative pipe. The one, the familiar stream, carries on its placid surface happy memories of the past; the other holds glorious possibilities in the future. Most anglers are optimists if they have wandered in the wilderness, they look forward to the Canaan of their dreams, some unfrequented river where wading is practicable, where trout are still innocent. There are such streams in the remoter parts of the kingdom. And there is, *Dei gratia*, wonderful sea-trout fishing

on the West Coast of Scotland to be found for the seeking, a notable quest. Here again reliable information must come from a man on the spot, and such magnificent sport, need it be added, is not given away with a pound of tea. The 'best' of sea-trout fishing is generally in the ownership of magnates, who may be engrossed with their stags and grouse. A courteous letter to the factor of some Highland chieftain might achieve its ends. I have known it to be so. For anything short of the 'best', application can be made to any agent of fishings, or to the well-known firms who sell fishing tackle.

Loch-fishing is passably good, but it lacks the thrill of river and stream. The big trout, wicked cannibals, take the minnow rather than the fly. Harling is not to my fancy, something of a mug's game. You sit in the stern of a boat, with two rods out, and possess your soul in patience; no skill is exacted; having hooked himself the trout comes too easily to the net.

Everybody knows that the smell of whisky is upon anglers and that the truth is not in them. Accurate information is hard to come by. Still it is often found in unexpected places. Let information about fishing be verified, a task which exacts time and trouble, and much tongue-wagging. In every village blessed by reason of a trout stream rippling by it or through it, you will find some knowledgable man, generally a 'character', who knows what you want to know. He may be a bit of a poacher and not held in too high esteem by the '*unco guid*', but he is a lover of the dappled beauties. *And he knows where they lie*. Tap him! At many hotels, which advertise fishing rights, a glance at the fishing book, recording

what is caught during the season, is illuminating, particularly if the entries are made by the angler, often with enlightening comments. If made by the proprietor, you can besprinkle his entries with salt. The text books tell the novice much, but they deal with what to do rather than with where to go. Only the more recently published are up-to-date. Perhaps the most reliable information can be gleaned from the papers which publish actual 'results' from week to week. But these papers are mainly concerned with the more famous rivers and streams.

IV

The angler for trout and salmon in this country will never be confronted with the difficulty of disposing of the catch. In British Columbia my brother and I presented our surplus trout to the Siwash Indians, who dried them after a process known to them, but unknown to us, some form of kippering. A fat rainbow trout thus treated is excellent eating. In the United Kingdom and Ireland there is no hamlet so remote where salmon cannot be sent to the nearest market; and the villagers accept gratefully gifts of trout.

Of tackle I have said nothing, because the text books deal exhaustively with that important theme. Let the novice test new lines and casts before using them. When buying flies, whether for salmon or trout, the salesman, if he knows his business, will tell a stranger what to use on different rivers and streams. It is important to buy these flies of different sizes. Fish as 'fine' as you can, when you can. It doesn't improve either your cap or a salmon fly to bring the two together. Sun and wind take colour from both.

On the other hand, no fly should be put back into its japanned tin case till it is dry. Lines should be dried carefully as soon as you get home from the river.

No novice should wade in heavy water without a stick. This should be attached to his belt by a yard or two of stout whipcord. When he is casting the stick floats in front of him. The stick is not only a support when stumbling over slippery boulders, but it serves to reveal unsuspected holes.

A tight line, ladies and gentlemen, to all of you.

CHAPTER VI

SEA FISHING AND COARSE FISHING

I

I HAD no idea of the fascination of sea-fishing till I spent two seasons at Avalon in the island of Catalina, off the coast of California. It was—and is—the sea-angler's paradise, where fish of all sizes and varieties come swiftly to the lure. We captured shark, the gigantic black bass, tuna, yellow-tail, albicore, sea-bass, bonito, and baracuda: and for each fish to use the lightest tackle possible was a point of honour with self-respecting anglers. They were Halcyon days spent on the sea and in the sea beneath cloudless skies. I am proud to be an original member of the now famous Tuna Club.

At Avalon the tang of those summer seas entered into my blood. Fain would I go back there, and have one more season, but time and space forbid.

We caught the bonitos—big horse mackerel—with trout tackle, using a split-cane rod; we used tarpon rods, reels, and lines for the jumping tuna, the king of the mackerel tribe, even as the tarpon is chieftain of the herring family. When a big tuna struck the bait, a flying fish trolled astern, I thought I was hitched to a shooting star. Quite frequently the fish carried out two hundred yards of line before he stayed his first mad rush. It might take two hours to bring him to the gaff.

Our English waters offer no such sport. *Minora canamus.* When I was a boy sea-fishing was confined to hand-lines, and the stoutest tackle was used. To-day, the rod and light tackle have come into their own. In bad weather the professional fisherman uses the hand-line, and he uses it still in fine weather because his objective is quantity; and with stout tackle he can haul in his fish much more quickly. From the sporting point of view there is no comparison between the old methods and the new.

The 'best' sea-fishing for bass, in the English Channel, begins at Weymouth and ends at the farthest point of Cornwall. You can fish from a pier, a boat, or from rocks.

I have in mind one house by the sea which I greatly covet. Upon the red rocks above the swirling tides of Devon the owner of the domain has cut 'stands' for the angler from which he can cast a fly with the agreeable conviction that it will be taken if conditions are right. Having hooked and played a game bass, it is a somewhat perilous achievement to net or gaff him, assuredly not work for a novice who cannot swim. A salmon rod and a long line are necessary. This is sea-fishing *de luxe*; but all along the Devon and Cornish seaboard rocks may be found, many of them confoundedly slippery and steep, from which a fly may be cast successfully. If the fly fails, the angler can essay bottom fishing with a paternoster. Or, he can try to lure the crab and prawn into his basket. There is always something to be done during these summer months and the baits used are innumerable. Each place specializes in these, particularly in groundbait. Both from rocks, piers and bridges across estuaries casting with a

spinning rod is an art not too easily mastered. Mr. Bickerdyke is of opinion that the Nottingham tackle, float and bait is the most deadly form known when used from rocky points beyond the surf, or worked along quays and harbour walls. Any local fisherman can be trusted to take the novice in hand and teach him the tricks of his trade. They are many—and most ingenious.

It is important to find some spot that is not overfished, where the trippers in July and August have failed to secure board and lodging. Nevertheless many of them are enthusiastic anglers and knowledgable. Fishing in a crowd has its humours, but I object to being hooked myself. It would be ideal to hire a motor caravan, and wander leisurely along the coast of Devon and Cornwall, camping out in secluded coves, gleaning information concerning the best fishing grounds by the way. You can always fish for bass with a fly, *if you can see them.* If you can't see them you must try other methods. Early morning, when the water is not too clear, is the best time. They can be caught at dusk, too, with that old familiar friend, the Coachman. It is impossible to overstress the quality of the sport when fly-fishing or casting. Like everything else connected with field sports, the 'best' is not lightly come by. The invaluable information given in the more recently published text books, which should be consulted, is subject, as all information is, to changing conditions. The angler may know how to catch certain fish, but he never knows exactly where they are. That precious knowledge must be picked up on the spot. And I cannot write from personal experience of sea-fishing on our east and west coasts. The English

Channel ought to be good enough to satisfy any angler, and it is fairly easy of access. On the other hand, in July and August, both Devon and Cornwall are popular with the crowd, although they for the most part go to the larger towns. Plans therefore should be made ahead. If the stranger visits Devon in June, he will find the west country at its best with rooms swept and garnished for the holiday visitors, but as yet empty of them. He might do worse than begin at Dartmouth.

II

Ground fishing is less exciting, but it exacts special knowledge of 'bottoms' and tides. You must find out where your bait is going, and where, ultimately, it will rest, if it does rest. Ground fishing in our streams is a simpler business, as every village urchin knows. In both cases ground-baiting increases the catch. You must know when to strike and how to strike.

Pollack are caught in March, April, and May, either by casting with the fly if they are near the surface, by spinning if they are in mid-water, or by ground fishing if they are on the bottom during the daytime. You can fish for them from rocks, or, better still, from a boat rowed here and there within reach of rocks. Sunken rocks at some distance from the mainland are the favourite haunt of the big pollack, which have been taken up to twenty pounds in weight. The smaller fish can be captured from pier-heads. Mr. Bickerdyke is insistent that a pollack must never be allowed much line after he is hooked. He plunges doggedly into rocks or weeds where he can free himself. With the old hand line, he was

hauled swiftly to his doom. When fishing for pollack near the bottom, only experience can teach you how much lead to use on the line. The fish seem to ignore the bait if it is moving too slowly or too quickly through the water. All this, the *minutiæ* of the craft, constitutes the great charm of sea-fishing. The professional veteran seems to know instinctively what his bait is doing and governs himself accordingly; the amateur trusts too much to luck. I admit frankly that I, too, believed in luck till it became plain to me how much skill counted when fishing in tideways. Pollack bite best in a flowing tide, and a baby conger eel is their *bonne-bouche*.

Grey mullet take greedily soft baits and may be tempted by the fly at night. Local fishermen will supply the necessary ground bait. They are shy fish, easily alarmed by any disturbance. When I was at Plymouth two years ago, the season was over, but many are caught there fishing from the breakwater. I am told, but I do not know from personal experience, that successful mullet fishing is in a class by itself. Fresh out of the sea the mullet is delicious to eat.

Mackerel are caught everywhere during the summer months. Trolling from a boat they hook themselves. If two men are fishing for them, it adds to the fun to have a shilling or sixpence upon each line astern. If two fish are on, the first pulled into the boat takes the modest pool. If the fish are biting freely the fun is fast and furious, but if they are 'stiff' you must content yourself with the pleasures of sailing and keep a sharp eye upon the gulls, who follow the shoals. Mackerel fishing is popular because it is easy. I have never caught a mackerel with the fly, but it can be done.

On occasion, the mackerel, when following too eagerly the shoals of fry, invade such harbours as may be found at Looe and Fowey. Then every man, woman, and child goes a-fishing. Both Looe and Fowey may be commended to the angler, but not in the summer holidays. Fowey has been immortalized by 'Q', in his novel, *Troy Town*.

Let the boat be sailed or rowed slowly and across the tide.

Conger-fishing, if you capture a monster, has its perils and its humours. I was fishing for conger some years ago hard by another boat filled to the gunwale with an angling family. Probably Materfamilias and the girls were fishing for small fry, but Paterfamilias, no doubt, had set his heart upon capturing a monster. He did. My brother and I heard encouraging applause, and we watched with interest what seemed to be a desperate encounter. Suddenly, with a mighty effort, a huge conger was jerked into the small boat, where he snapped like a vicious dog. The women screamed and jumped on to the thwarts; the man belaboured the big conger with a stick; the boat rocked violently and came within an ace of upsetting. If Frank Reynolds had been there to draw in his inimitable way the scene as we saw it——! Happily, all ended well; the conger was slain; no tender legs were lacerated; but Paterfamilias passed the remark that we could have all the conger left in the briny seas; he, for his part, had no further interest in them.

Conger take best at night. The best fishing grounds are known to the boatman; and he can be trusted to 'despatch' an awkward customer before he is hauled into the boat. Squid is the best bait, if pro-

curable. Mr. Bickerdyke hints that there are vendors of turtle soup who make large purchases of conger. It is, of course, the main item in that wonderful compound, *bouillabaisse*, never eaten in perfection far from Provence.

Of dab, whiting, smelt, and many other fish which may be caught at the right time and season, there is no space to write. The great charm of sea-fishing lies in its infinite variety. If you fail with one, you may succeed beyond expectation with another. Use the rod whenever possible, and light tackle. Remember that salt water is injurious to both.

I must add regretfully that in my experience wherever you go, between Weymouth and Land's End, you will hear of wonderful fishing elsewhere; but the patient and *intelligent* angler will have his reward. It is recognized now that sea-fishing is in its way as delicate an art as dry-fly fishing for trout. Certainly it exacts great knowledge of the habits of fish, of their feeding-grounds, of baits, and of tackle. There is always something new to learn, some 'tip' which may fall from the lips of youth or age. It would be wearisome and disappointing work to go to Devon with the intention of fishing only for bass, as a man goes to Test to fish for big trout. A sea-angler should be catholic in his tastes and predilections, disdainful of no lure which may serve to fill his basket. Getting your own bait is great fun, if you put yourself unreservedly in the hands of a knowledgable boy. You are in the fresh air from dawn till nightfall, and after nightfall; you will learn much about sea-fowl as well as sea-fish; you will enjoy the simplest food and sleep sound o' nights.

And—compared with other sports—it is an inexpensive pastime.

III

The lover of coarse-fishing in our lakes, rivers, and streams must have a tincture of old Izaak Walton in his veins. I have been glancing at my copy of *The Compleat Angler, or the Contemplative Man's Recreation*, which I bought in 1889, the book which Sheridan declared to be the best companion in a post-chaise, the book dearer to anglers than all the rest put together. I envy any man the pleasure of reading old Izaak for the first time. He answers, in his own inimitable fashion, the captious critics who indict field sports and sportsmen. Whatever his origin may have been—and who cares about that?—he was essentially a great gentleman, and his love of his sport was, we may be sure, subservient to higher things. He killed many fish, but he did not kill them to kill time.

His spirit lingers still in the hearts of anglers to whom the excitements of fly-fishing for salmon and big trout are denied. Every village with a stream running through it holds an angler with something of Izaak in him, the love of nature, of secluded reaches and pools, of fancy-free meditation, and an honest love too of a good fish properly cooked and served. Izaak lays great stress upon honesty, and we have to accept him as honest, a hater of humbug and pretension, a seeker after truth wherever we may find it.

Coarse-fishing is to be had nearly everywhere. You can wet your line in Father Thames and all lesser rivers. My brothers and I had wonderful

sport, many years ago, in the humble Rother, which flowed sluggishly past an old manor house in Sussex taken for a term of years by my mother. In our gardens were ponds full of coarse fish, to the capturing of which we served a long and eager apprenticeship.

We regarded the pike as the biggest and 'best' of coarse fish. I pulled one big fellow out of a lake belonging to my uncle with a boat-hook. He was impotent, because another pike, about a third as big as himself, was between his sharp teeth. The two fish weighed together just under fifteen pounds.

Pike-fishing is at its best in the winter. I recall a Figaro of a haircutter, who lived in Newmarket. He came to my uncle's house to cut our hair; he had cut the hair of every famous jockey of that day; he lived close to the classic heath, but he loved to talk about fishing; and he provided us with live bait, the most deadly lure for the big pike. He was a mine of information about everything connected with fishing and shooting, but some of his stories required salting. As boys we believed every word that fell from his voluble lips. I remember, too, that my uncle had a recipe for stuffing and roasting pike, which might have been in the possession of old Izaak. At one time in our history this coarse fish was esteemed more highly than salmon and fetched a bigger price.

The mighty luce is an ugly customer till life is hammered out of him and he may weigh anything up to forty pounds, or more. For full details about him, the angler can read Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell's *The Book of the Pike*.

Pike are now carefully preserved in many meres and broads, and fish under a certain weight are

returned to the water. They are fed much as trout are fed. The visitor will have to pay for the privilege of fishing in such preserves; and any local seller of tackle will tell him where they are and what fee is demanded for a day's spinning or live-baiting. In summer the pike lie close to weeds into which they dash to free themselves. Nearly all pike-fishing is best done from a punt or boat. It is said that pike, alone amongst fish, has no fear of man or of the sight of man, but they take better when a steady breeze is ruffling the water. In winter, after a sharp frost, they feed most voraciously. Winter or summer they take best in the early morning or evening. Dace and Gudgeon are generally used for bait. In preserved waters, such bait is easily procurable, and the boatman knows where and how to fish. On the right water, in the company of the right boatman, an angler is almost certain to catch pike. Like the deer-stalker or the Test fisherman, he knows that the quarry is there, to be captured if he can be captured.

In water unpreserved, there may be few fish and no professional Mentor to instruct the novice. He may have to catch his own dace, before he begins fishing for the pike. He can try spinning, if there are few weeds, or trolling, or drop a paternoster into likely pools near the weeds. What he can do successfully depends upon the water he is fishing. To play a fish properly, the angler must have elbow room.

What 'law' to give pike, before striking home, depends upon what you are doing. Fishing with a paternoster a few seconds should be allowed. When spinning you can strike quickly but not too hard. All experienced pike fishermen are unanimous in saying that 'striking' is not the least part of their craft.

No river in England is entirely free from pike, but they prefer the quiet, sedge-encircled pools. To fish these accurately and thoroughly demands great skill in casting. I have met men who prefer pike-fishing to any other form of angling, simply because they affirm that weeds, overhanging boughs, and hidden snags are difficulties that only supreme skill can overcome. My own experience has been in the winter, when water is clear of weeds. In many places now pike-fishing does not begin till chill October. I have tried to shoot pike in a trout stream, but with no success.

The pike is the big game fish of our coarse fishing. Of the smaller fish the perch, perhaps, is as popular as any, because he is a born fighter. Paternostering with mixed bait on three hooks, a gudgeon, a minnow and a well-scoured worm, is likely to be successful. The perch frequents running water and a clear bottom; you can fish for him from June to December. They are much heavier in France than in England. With us a pound fish is a good fish. They are to be found nearly everywhere, but they are very 'stiff' in water that is much fished. I am beginning to believe that all fish, not merely the big trout of Test and Itchen, are becoming 'educated' where fishermen are many. Of recent years I have seen innumerable anglers patiently fishing the Thames between Walton and Sonning. It has been an event to me (and possibly to them) when I have seen them catching fish. To such enthusiasts you will not engratiate yourself if you ask how many perch or roach they have in their basket. Above Sonning, you can ask this question without giving offence. Mr. Boulenger says: 'Play and secure your perch; it is

fatal to sport if one or two escape after being hooked, for they have a means of communicating to the others that there is "something wrong going on", and the shoal will move elsewhere.'

The great carp family is represented by some 1,300 species. In this family, dear to anglers, are included rudd, roach, dace, tench, bream, chub and barbel. Barbel take best in July, August and September, but Mr. Bickerdyke rightly indicts them as shy and capricious. They are heavy fish, and a 'monster' may tip the scale at ten pounds. On the Thames, where 'legering' is practised, local boatmen know where the fish are and where the punt should be moored. Lacking such knowledge, the novice will wet his line in vain. The leger is used for fishing on and just off the bottom without a float. The lead must be light or heavy according to the strength of the stream; the hook with a yard of gut attached to it is below the lead; the lead goes to the bottom and the bait at the end of the hook moves with the current.

To catch barbel in the Thames, it is necessary to use ground-bait twenty-four hours previously, to fish early in the morning, and to fish when the water is discoloured after rain.

Roach-fishing has thousands of devotees, partly because it is common everywhere and affords excellent sport on fine tackle. Big roach, weighing two pounds or more, are rarely taken. I caught one, when I was a boy, in a small pond belonging to us, that weighed more than two pounds, but was not aware of my good fortune till years afterwards. We ate the fish, duly weighed by our cook, instead of having it sent to a taxidermist.

Roach are in the best condition in the autumn and

winter. You bait, as a rule, with red or white paste, use a long rod, the very finest cast and line, and strike at the first 'knock'. The novice loses two fish out of three because he does not strike quickly enough. I have never had much roach fishing, but I can testify to the enthusiasm of those who have, and who acclaim it as being in a high class by itself. In hot weather these game fish will take the fly, particularly the may-fly in June, much, so Mr. Marston says, to the annoyance of trout.

Chub take the fly greedily when conditions are favourable. You can use a paraffined 'black gnat', or a bumble bee, or a Red Palmer. The fly must be drawn upon or under the surface by a series of gentle jerks. Apart from flies, they will take almost any other bait: frogs, slugs, crayfish-tail, worms, paste and what not. Izaak speaks of them as the 'fearfullest of fish', and so they are. It is hopeless to remain long in one spot; it is hopeless if they catch sight of you. They take most readily baits which seem to drop upon the water, when the angler, who knows where they feed, is hidden by a bush. A big chub will weigh five or six pounds, and he fights desperately when hooked, but he cannot be commended to the epicure.

My brothers and I caught many bream in the daytime, but big catches are made at night. What is done with the fish I don't know. I ate them as a boy, but never since. Perhaps it is the poor man's fish. Men at work in the fields all day long, spend their nights catching bream by the hundredweight. My friend, Shirley-Fox, in his *Angling Adventures of an Artist*, describes a bream carnival on the Ouse. Rival anglers cast lavishly into the water, as ground-bait,

such delicacies as 'great balls of bread and bran, chopped up worms, boiled potatoes, and bags of brewers' grains'. Upon the night, when Shirley-Fox was, so to speak, 'entered' to bream, expectation was whetted because a wheelbarrow, to be used in carting home the catch, was wheeled to a spot near the 'swim'. During the night's entertainment that followed, the big bream were not netted, or gaffed. When the fish was alongside the boat, piscator slid his left hand gently down the line until he felt the bream's head; and then, by getting finger and thumb into the eye sockets, lifted the monster into the boat, despatched him, and heaved him ashore! The total catch was over 130 lbs.

Tench fishing affords good sport, when the fish are of a good size, two, three and four pounds, as you find them, in the Hampshire Avon. They can be killed in spring and summer, and take the worm early in the morning and late in the evening. Indeed, the angler for coarse fish will do well to acquire the foreign habit of the siesta in the middle of the day, unless he happens to be a lepidopterist. Both my brother and I were ardent collectors of British butterflies, and the two pursuits march hand in hand. It adds, too, enormously to the pleasures of angling, if you take note of all the birds you may happen to see, and jot down in a notebook any rare plants likely to escape the eye of the ordinary foot-passenger. An angler, who is a Gallio in regard to such things, will find time hang heavy on his hands when the fish are not taking.

What is called the common carp (*cyprinus carpio*) is perhaps of all coarse fish the most difficult to capture. They love ponds rather than rivers and attain

to a great size, particularly in Germany, where carp-culture is an industry. Old Izaak quotes from Sir Richard Baker:

> 'Hops and turkeys, Carps and Beer,
> Came into England all in a year.'

Izaak observes farther on: 'If you will fish for a Carp, you must put on a very large measure of patience'. His recipe for what he calls 'dressing', or cooking a fine carp, has tickled my fancy and my palate. I shall try to coax my cook, who is an enthusiastic angler, to serve this dish.

'Take a Carp, alive if possible, scour him, and rub him clean with water and salt, but scale him not; then open him, and put him with his blood and his liver, which you must save when you open him, into a small pot or kettle; then take sweet-marjoram, thyme, and parsley, of each half-a-handful; a sprig of rosemary, and another of savory; bind them into two or three small bundles, and put them to your carp, with four or five whole onions, twenty pickled oysters, and three anchovies. Then pour upon your Carp as much claret wine as will only cover him; and season your claret well with salt, cloves and mace, and the rinds of oranges and lemons. That done, cover your pot and set it on a quick fire, till it be sufficiently boiled; then take out the Carp, and lay it with the broth into the dish, and pour upon it a quarter of a pound of the best fresh butter, melted and beaten with half-a-dozen spoonfuls of the broth, the yolks of two or three eggs, and some of the herbs shred; garnish your dish with lemons, and so serve it up, and much good do you!'

My brother's remark, when I read this recipe to him, was: 'I think that my old leather gaiters, if

treated so kindly, might be quite palatable.'

But--you must catch your carp first.

I have never caught a big carp in England. At this moment, some good fish are lying in the ponds of this small manor, but I despair of catching them unless I let the water out, and then use a net. Mr. Marston says that carp have the largest brains of any fish, which accounts for the cunning manner in which they will avoid taking the most dainty bait.' The same high authority describes how Mr. Overbeck, of Grimsby, captured a monster of seventeen pounds. The catching of this great carp is worthy of old Izaak's 'dressing'.

Mr. Overbeck baited with paste, using an 8-oz. fly-rod, a dirty, light-green, weed-like line of a hundred yards, stained undrawn gut for a cast with a lead at the end of it, and exactly one foot from the lead a small triangle hook on a foot of fine gut. After baiting the hook with the paste, it was dipped into pure honey. The bait is then cast gently into a likely spot, and where it falls the angler next throws in ground-bait, made of a mixture of boiled potatoes and mud and brewers' grains. The rod, after the cast is made, should lie with its whole length on the bank. The angler does the same—and waits for a bite. He may have to wait—so Mr. Overbeck declares—for three days!

CHAPTER VII

RACING AND POLO

I

To a rich man who comes to England with the intention of starting a racing stable, I can only wish him the best of luck and a first-class trainer. If I could tell such a man what to do—which I cannot—I should be assuming a responsibility from which even Lord Derby might well shrink. Indeed, it may be taken for granted that no stranger would attempt to breed racehorses in England, unless he had served some sort of apprenticeship elsewhere. It is true that there are many men in England who own a horse or two and 'race' inexpensively. These are not the gentlemen who aspire to carry off the great prizes of the turf. Now and again, a famous horse begins by being the property of some humble individual, possibly a tradesman. Then a rich man offers to buy the horse at a fancy price, and the poor man, if he is wise, takes a thumping profit. Priory Park belonged to a butcher in Chichester; he belongs now to Mr. Joel, and has won for his owner the Royal Hunt Cup at Ascot. . . .

I am concerned here not with the man who wants to win races, but with the man who wishes to go a-racing.

Horse-racing, greyhound-racing, boat-racing, and foot-racing count their devotees by the million. Let

us begin with the Point-to-Points which take place in the bleak month of March.

I can remember when these country meetings were, so to speak, family affairs. They are now steeplechases across country, with the course flagged and the 'leps' made up. Horses can be entered for the different events who have been hunted regularly with the local packs of hounds. Some are hunted irregularly, and are steered to victory by gentlemen riders seldom seen in the hunting-field. In a word the professional element is not, as it should be, conspicuously absent. Nevertheless these are county gatherings, largely attended, and great fun. The visitor will not regret 'assisting' at one or two. He will enjoy himself twice as much, if he is staying at a country-house in the neighbourhood with a genial fox-hunting host who knows his neighbours, particularly the farmers. Their race is not the least exciting.

In this month, too, we have the Grand National at Aintree, near Liverpool, the National Hunt meeting at Cheltenham, and the Grand Military at Sandown. To a stranger a Point-to-Point meeting will be a pleasant introduction to any of these great events. I happen to be one of the privileged few who have been allowed to walk round the formidable course at Aintree, examining in turn each of the obstacles. The two where so many come to grief at Aintree are Becher's Brook and Valentine's Brook. There are fifteen jumps to be negotiated twice. I recall one race in which no fewer than eleven horses fell out of sixteen starters. Looking at these obstacles from the stands one can form no idea how big and solid they are; and they must be taken at racing pace. The

distance to be travelled is four and a half miles Sergeant Murphy, I think, holds the record with nine minutes and thirty-six seconds. Manifesto was the only horse to win it twice at Aintree.

In 1928, two horses, out of a field of forty-two, passed the winning-post; Tipperary Tim alone kept his feet throughout, a despised, broken-winded plater, who started with the immense odds of a hundred to one laid against him. Disaster overtook the others at the two brooks, Becher's and Valentine's, where—owing to the softness of the ground—horses and jockeys were piled up *en masse*. And yet there was only one casualty! Thirty horses were involved in chaos.

Unless our pilgrim is venturesome enough to fly from London and back to witness this 'best' of steeplechases, he will do well to book his bedroom at the Midland Adelphi several weeks before the race. If he backs a loser, he can console himself with some Château Lafite, 1912, which is still to be found in the cellars of this excellent house of entertainment. Before leaving Liverpool, he ought to see the docks, particularly the Gladstone Dock, the biggest (if not the 'best') in the world.

II

Upon the eve of the great boat race takes place the competition between Oxford and Cambridge at Athletic Sports, which includes putting the shot, throwing the hammer, hurdling, and the usual foot-races. This meeting may be described as the 'best' of its kind, if we exclude the Olympic Games. No visitor interested in the youth of this country should miss it. Records are now and again established, and

I can remember when C. B. Fry broke the record for the broad jump; but then as now such a tremendous feat was not regarded by the British Public as a leap to fame equivalent to being head, let us say, of the batting averages for the year or playing football for England. C. B. Fry was the Admirable Crichton of his generation, an all-round athlete, who would have been immortalized in stone two thousand years ago. I should like to ask him what he considers his greatest achievement. Perhaps I shall, if I get the opportunity.

The boat race between Oxford and Cambridge follows. I have heard men say that it ought to be seen once, like the Montmartre *cafés* in Paris, so that the visitor can assure himself that he never wishes to see it again; these hypercritics are not Oxonians or Cantabs. Unless one is privileged to follow the rival crews in a launch it is difficult to see much of the race. Two boats glide past, and really they seem to the inexperienced eye to be travelling slowly. But the excitement and enthusiasm are contagious. It was first rowed in 1836 from Westminster to Putney; it is now rowed from Putney to Mortlake.

An apocryphal story has been going the rounds to the effect that King Amanullah expressed a wish to see the race, but insisted upon going first——! Alas! I heard the same story told of the Shah of Persia years ago.

A foreigner must wonder what lures the great British public to the boat race. One answer to such a question is that both crews are certain to do their utmost to secure victory, and that out of eighteen young men taking part in the contest not one could be beguiled by love or money to 'sell' the race.

I recall dimly some play in which one of the crews was beguiled by love; and this provoked such a popular outcry of indignation that the ·lay was withdrawn. Then again most of the spect..tors have a modest bet on the result. It is affirmed that a wise man can bet on what is almost a certainty by consulting some professional Thames waterman who has watched the crews at practice. Why shouldn't the public bet? Another difficult question. Life is a gamble from cradle to grave. If a man bets more than he can afford to lose he is imprudent and pays the penalty for his imprudence. The *unco guid* regard all forms of gambling as sinful, but is there a bigger gambler in all the world than the farmer? Isn't Holy Matrimony a dip into the lucky bag—a lottery? Nonconformists, generally speaking, condemn betting even for negligible sums; but the Nonconformist Divine who buys our 'industrials' for a rise is betting. In his heart he must know that. To affirm that betting in sixpences leads to betting in pounds, is a poor argument with which to bolster up admonitions conflicting with human nature. If we refuse to eat in moderation, we become gluttons. Are we, on that account, to confine ourselves to a crust of bread and a raw onion?

Anyway, I make bold to suggest to our pilgrim that he should do what others do and have a small bet upon all these big events. My limit is one pound. If I lose, I have paid a little extra for a day's entertainment; if I win I have paid expenses. A small bet adds a zest to one's interest in every race at a Point-to-Point. I must add, regretfully, that as a rule I lose. Betting—so say the heavy losers—is a mug's game; and it is if you lose more than you can

afford. Otherwise, surely, it comes under the head of harmless diversions.

III

In March, Newmarket has two Spring race-meetings. As a fitting preparation for Epsom our pilgrim in search of the 'best' should attend one of them. James I built a house at Newmarket, occupied later on by the Merry Monarch, who was an enthusiastic patron of the Turf. Quite recently it has been said that England will never become a republic so long as horse-racing is popular. An uncle of mine owned the famous Lime Kiln Gallops (just outside the town) and a big house with a double avenue of trees nearly three miles long. Down this avenue I used to gallop on a thoroughbred to see the strings of famous horses at exercise early in the morning, returning with a voracious appetite. I can remember Admiral Rous, Lord Falmouth, Captain Machell, Fred Archer, the Duchess of Montrose, and many other racing celebrities of fifty years ago. The 'Captain' played a trick on my uncle. He presented him with a couple of swans, which my uncle innocently accepted and placed upon a large lake in the park, up to that time a haunt and breeding place of wild-fowl. The swans drove away the wild-duck to the Captain's ponds, which he was well aware they would do.

At Newmarket, in 1750, took place the Great Carriage Race of £1,000 a side. The bet was made that four horses should draw a carriage with four running wheels, and a person in it or upon it, nineteen miles in sixty minutes. The nineteen miles were covered in fifty-three minutes and twenty-seven seconds. Good going!

The old sporting pictures by Wootton, Barlow, Tillemans, Seymour, and many others, fetch to-day big figures, but it is not generally known that so far back as 1823, Ferneley was paid two thousand guineas for his big picture of 'The Quorn at Quenby'. Mr. Sparrow, in his admirable *British Sporting Artists*, tells us that Ben Marshall, when he left London for Newmarket, said: 'I have a good reason for going. I discover many a man who will pay me fifty guineas for painting his horse who thinks ten guineas too much for painting his wife.'

Newmarket is the home of the Jockey Club, founded in 1750. In those days the average height of a racehorse was not more than fourteen and a half hands. Flying Childers was exactly that height, but in a race timed by the Dukes of Devonshire and Rutland he ran four miles in six minutes and forty-eight seconds, carrying a weight of 9st. 2lb. Disputes still rage as to whether he or Eclipse was the better horse.

Newmarket remains the 'best' racing centre of the world. The broad High Street leading to the classic Heath is much as I remember it when a boy. The air on the Heath is also the 'best', except when the wind blows keen from the North Sea, which may happen even in May. Of its past and present glories the pilgrim must read elsewhere.

IV

Derby Day.

Epsom precedes Ascot. I am glad to think that Frith's 'Derby Day' has been placed in the National Gallery, a picture as instructive as the illustrations by 'Phiz' of Dickens's novels, pictorially convincing.

Happy (and comfortable) will be our pilgrim if he is a guest at a country house near the course. Failing such an invitation, he had better travel by train, unless the humours of an overcrowded road appeal to him. Last year some friends of mine never reached Epsom till the great race was over. They were held up, not by highwaymen, but by the congested traffic. Thousands, I imagine, go to the Derby who never set foot on any other racecourse and have no interest in racing. They wish to see a tremendous spectacle essentially English and democratic. It must be seen to be appreciated. I recall the year (1881) when Mr. Pierre Lorillard's horse, Iroquois, won the Derby, and thirty-three to one was laid against him less than a month before the event. In the same year, Foxhall, belonging to Mr. Keane, won the double event, the Cæsarewitch and the Cambridgeshire. After Iroquois's victory, it was said that no sober American could be found in London. One great lady remarked: 'I should hope not indeed'.

The bird's eye view from the Grand Stand, five minutes before the race, is panoramic, magnificent, and few behold it unmoved, if they realize its significance. Illustrious men have reckoned the blue riband of the Turf to be a distinction greater than the Garter. Winning the race was an excitement that accelerated the death of a friend of mine. Another old friend, riding his brother's horse, lost by a short head. His wife thought that her husband was first past the post—till the numbers went up. I asked her what she said. She replied laconically: 'Just "Damn!"' It will be agreed that she failed to do the subject justice.

There is always more 'thrill', if the victor is owned by a great personage. He leads in his horse, almost at the risk of his life. And he looks the happiest man on the course. A 'win' for His Majesty would warm all hearts. The psychology of this is significant to duke's son and cook's son, common to all classes, because it is a personal triumph. H.M. ceases to be the Monarch; he is transmuted into the Man. Good luck to him!

In the paddock our visitor can have his brains kicked out, if he scrapes too intimate acquaintance with the famous horses. What do they think about it? I asked Ormonde this question when I paid my respects to him in California. The veteran stood in a roomy loose box and surveyed me tranquilly, but his thoughts were seven thousand miles away. He carried himself superbly, as he made me understand after his own fashion that he, at any rate, had had his day—and his 'best' day was Derby Day.

There was a vendor of newspapers near Dublin, Stevens (I think) by name, who crossed and recrossed the Irish Channel each year, for fifty years, to see the Derby run; he died recently. This is no isolated instance. 'Old Kate' is still with us.

N.B.—It is lacerating to my feelings when Englishmen mispronounce 'Darby', and speak of it as it is spelt. I have noticed that some of our ancient towns, such as Cirencester (Sissiter) are being now pronounced as they are spelt by the Philistines. It is the duty of every Englishman to call places and persons by the names that time and custom have hallowed.

V

Royal Ascot.

Here England is at its best and in its best. The racing is of the best too, but the meeting is regarded as the supreme social function of the season, beginning with the royal procession up the course, a spectacle dear to loyal Britons, specially when the Queen is sitting beside the King. Our pilgrim will be fortunate if he secures the coveted ticket admitting him to the 'Inclosure'. Failing this privilege, he will be less conspicuously at his ease in the Grand Stand or the Paddock.

Everybody goes to Ascot. The youth and beauty of England are 'on show'. For many weeks famous *modistes* have worked overtime making the frocks which cost so much and are cunningly fashioned out of so little. The men are as smart as the women. The horses are the best 'groomed' of all.

I was in France when the Gold Cup was 'lifted' by an accomplished snapper-up of such trifles. How he did it is still a subject for speculation. The 'trophies' are guarded; they are surrounded by hundreds of persons curious to see them; and the 'getting away' with the loot was in itself no mean achievement. Colonel Blood attempted to steal the Crown of England. Evelyn marvels how he came to be pardoned, but the tale of triumphant audacity is told elsewhere. Charles II inquired how he dared such a deed. 'My father,' replied Blood, 'lost a good estate in fighting *for* the Crown, and I considered it no harm to recover it *by* the Crown.' Charles granted him a pardon. Would his successor have pardoned the light-fingered gentleman who stole His Majesty's

cup? Could the sovereign to-day exercise such a prerogative? Probably not.

When I was a cadet at Sandhurst, and the driver of a *tandem*, it was great fun to stand at the entrance to the 'Four-in-Hand' Enclosure and listen to the chaff of the crowd when some noble Jehu bungled the right-angled turn. The Duke of Beaufort of that day, known throughout England as the 'Duke of Sport', swung in at a trot amid deafening cheers—looking as cool as the proverbial cucumber. The three reigning 'Beauties' were Mrs. Langtry, Mrs. Cornwallis West, and Mrs. Wheeler. They were mobbed wherever they went.

Every crack regiment quartered in England has its luncheon tent at Ascot, where you may be sure the 'best' of food and drink is hospitably provided. Between one and two on each day our pilgrim will be 'assisting' at a Gargantuan picnic. Of course heavy rain is a national calamity, but even that fails to dampen the spirits of the multitude 'out' to have a good time, rain or shine. How many tons of salmon and lobsters are consumed? There is a Niagara of champagne.

'Butcher' Cumberland, the uncle of George III, inaugurated the first races at Ascot, partly because the royal Kennels were established there. Greville records that in 1833 William IV was 'bored to death' on the course, and that his horse broke down. Edward VII, as Prince of Wales, probably made Ascot what it is to-day; and he certainly never looked bored in public. Greville goes on to say that the sailor king was not well received, which may account for his sour looks. Horace Walpole never mentions Ascot, not fashionable in his day.

Mansions of gentility in or near Ascot are taken for the week, if available, at exorbitant prices, enough in many cases to pay the original annual rent. I came across an odd Stock Exchange tag: 'Buy before Epsom, sell before Ascot'. How this originated I have no idea. Possibly it refers to enormous racing losses only to be met by selling securities. Lord Hastings squandered an immense fortune on the Turf; so did hundreds of lesser known men, including 'Jubilee Juggins'. It would be interesting to know what the 'ring' collected when Tipperary Tim won the National practically unbacked, and when Felstead, starting at thirty-three to one, captured the blue riband at Epsom.

VI

As regatta and social function combined, Henley is regarded as the 'best' in the world. Dives hires a roomy house-boat and fills it with congenial guests. Men in less easy circumstances hire a punt and buy a hamper of good prog from some qualified caterer; most of us dash to Henley from London, and take what we can get with humble and grateful hearts. For my part 'rushing' to any form of pleasure is upsetting. On the other hand, if you make plans in advance, you feel that you *have* to go even if it rains; and a wet Henley is disconcerting. Nevertheless, a room, or rooms, can be taken at any good inn on or near the river, and then, if it rains, the pilgrim can find much to amuse and edify elsewhere.

At Henley you will see the River Girl in all her glory, a blooming Hebe, sun-tanned, vigorous, wielding her punt pole with incomparable grace and skill. I have never beheld her like anywhere except

on the Thames, and whether or not she hibernates is a problem for naturalists. In June she is in full flower, and as proud of her gaily decorated punt as Aurora was of her car. Henley is kaleidoscopic. Upon the house-boats hang baskets of flowers. Upon the roofs of some are *pergolas*. Nearly all the young men are in 'flannels', displaying the brilliant colours of the boat-clubs of which they are members. Here, in serried ranks, you will note every specimen of river-craft from the lordly motor-boat, a-shimmer with varnish and brass, to the tiny canoe. One can only speak of these, as one speaks of the horses at Epsom and Ascot, as 'perfectly groomed'.

I am not competent to write of the technical side of the racing. The Grand Challenge Cup is *the* event (eight oars) and the Diamond Sculls race ranks second. You may be sure that a full programme is provided; but nine out of ten persons present go to Henley, as they go to Ascot, to see and be seen, to eat, drink, and be merry. At night there are illuminations; and punts hung from stem to stern with Japanese lanterns glide up and down the river.

Emphatically Henley is not to be missed. It is a river carnival, a survival of pageants beloved by our kings. They understood the value of the riverside as a background, a 'setting' for leisurely and royal progresses. I should like to see His Majesty come up the course at Henley in some such barge as was used by Henry VIII, accompanied by the high officials of the river, notably his Swanherds, who, in August, take up the cygnets and mark them by cutting a small notch in the bill. The swan has been a 'bird royal' in England ever since the days when Cœur de Lion introduced it. Inside the Chesil Bank,

near Dorchester, is Lord Ilchester's Swannery, where in the nesting season a thousand couples of these great birds may be seen, thick as black-headed gulls at Bemersyde-on-Tweed. They are everywhere on the Thames. On the East Coast they used to be called Norfolk venison. A cygnet is excellent eating, but we find the swan 'on the index' in that curious eleventh chapter of Leviticus, classed as 'unclean' and therefore forbidden food. Swan-hopping is a vulgar corruption of swan-upping, signifying the official duty of taking up the swan and marking it. In old days any person razing or counterfeiting the king's mark was subject to a year's imprisonment.

At Henley still stands the famous old coaching inn, the Red Lion, where Shenstone, the poet, scratched upon a window with a diamond:

> 'Who'eer has travell'd life's dull round,
> Where'er his stages may have been,
> May sigh to think he still has found
> The warmest welcome at an inn.'

In the middle of the eighteenth century, Boniface owned his inn; sons and daughters dutifully served their father and his guests. To-day, a paid manager has usurped his place; and a 'welcome' depends upon the size and make of the car that disembarks travellers at his door. Mr. Harper is doubtful whether Shenstone's inscription was ever seen at Henley-on-Thames; he assigns it to Henley-in-Arden.

The magnificent bridge was built in 1789; and the masks on the keystone of the central arch were fashioned by Mrs. Damer, a cousin of Horace Walpole. Mr. Harper records that beneath an eagle

exquisitely carved Walpole wrote: '*Non Praxiteles sed Anna Damer me fecit*'.

There is a delightful backwater near Wargrave, now free to wandering punts after much litigation; but Wargrave has lost much of its charm, having been ruthlessly assailed by the jerry-builders. In the churchyard is the grave of Madame Tussaud.

VII

Polo.

I am proud of being able to style myself the Father of Polo west of the Rocky Mountains, and was captain of the first team of Englishmen who played against Californians in the presence of a large and enthusiastic crowd. Of all ball games, it is to me the most delightful and exciting. When I first played it in England, as a cadet at Sandhurst in 1881, ponies could be bought for fifty pounds. In California my brothers and I paid ten pounds apiece for any likely-looking animals, well-bitted and broken to cow-punching. We trained them, and sold them at a handsome profit. I bought one nearly clean-bred pony for fifty dollars which turned out a 'champion', and was sold subsequently in New York for £400, an astounding price in those days, and quite probably a record. Then polo was well within the reach of the moderately well-to-do; now it is a rich man's game, more expensive—if you play in first-class company—than fox-hunting.

A novice will do well to begin in the country, at Rugby or Cirencester, and qualify there for membership in some London team. After this experience, he could join the Rochampton Club, take lessons, listen to lectures on the game, and then betake him-

self to Richmond Park for a little quiet practice. The entrance fee at Rochampton is £10, and the subscription the same. Ranelagh and Hurlingham are more expensive; and at Rochampton the novice will find more low handicap players.

Roughly speaking, a man anxious to play regularly will require four ponies. Whilst he is playing, his four ponies will cost him for food, stabling, proper care, including farriery expenses, about £500, more or less. With economy they should cost less. For the non-playing months, each pony will average about £30 apiece; and so—all in—the year's polo, exclusive of buying the ponies, will cost at least £700. The novice would begin playing at Rugby about the middle of April and finish his season about the middle of September.

Before buying ponies, our visitor will not be wasting his petty cash if he joins the National Polo Society. The actual price to be paid for ponies depends upon where and with whom you play. I am credibly informed by a famous player of to-day that £2,000 has been paid for one pony. Roughly speaking again, the ordinary player, content to play with low-handicap men, may hope to get together four ponies for a sum of £600.

It is very important for a novice to join a team where there is at least one experienced and skilful player, who can, and will, raise the standard of the team.

In 1908 the 'off side' rule was abandoned, after a test match which took place in London. Up to that time, it was the duty of Number One to ride off the opposing Back. Seldom indeed, as I well remember, was he allowed to give attention to the ball. On the

occasion of this test match, Walter McCreery, who played Number One, hit the only four goals scored for his side! To-day, some experts are of the opinion that Number One, anxious to score, neglects his duty in the riding off of the Back.

Breeding polo ponies is becoming an exact science. That supreme authority, Captain E. D. Miller, in his *Modern Polo*, cites the experiments made by the late Lord Harrington. I have not the latest edition of Captain Miller's book (1925), but in it doubtless there is further information upon this fascinating theme, information which would be out of place here.

Polo, not of the highest class, is played out of London in many parts of the country, but a player inadequately mounted has little or no fun, and is a disability to his 'side'. The ponies exact greater care than hunters and are more likely to sustain injuries.

The actual training of the pony remains, I imagine, much as it was in my day. A promising pony can be ruined in a very short time. If he fears stick and ball, he is useless; if he is unmanagable, he is dangerous, and certain, sooner or later, to be ordered off the field. Patience and humanity will achieve miracles. You begin by walking the pony and knocking the ball about. Some ponies are amazingly quick to understand that they must follow the ball and help the rider to hit it accurately. Fancy shots, such as hitting the ball at right angles under the pony's nose, must never be practised at first, because the ball or stick may hit the pony's forelegs. If you begin by dribbling the ball, quite leisurely, any ordinary pony will take interest in the proceedings

after half a dozen lessons. The longer he is kept out of a game the better. Some ponies, like many men, are bad losers. We owned a clever performer, a little mare, but, when the wrong man was on her back or if in her considered opinion luck happened to be against her, she would gallop off the field and refuse to come back. Then, out of the corner of an aggrieved eye, she would sullenly watch the progress of the game. Kipling's famous story, *The Maltese Cat*, sets forth illuminatingly what a polo pony *thinks*.

It is an easy matter for any visitor to look on at our great matches whether at Hurlingham, Ranelagh, Roehampton or Rugby; and it is fairly easy too to acquire understanding and with it appreciation of the tactics of the game and certain difficult strokes. Polo is more spectacular than cricket, although, as a game, it is popular with the leisured few rather than with the many. To any horseman who loves horses and horsemanship, polo, as it is played by experts, is a liberal education. It must have been so considered by the ancient Persians.

A word may be added upon what is a sore subject to many Englishmen, but not to the present writer. Supreme skill at any game is within reach of any man with attributes for that game if he gives undivided energies and attention to it. There are few Englishmen who are willing or able to do this. When they do so, they become professionals and cease to be amateurs. We are approaching the day when this will be frankly admitted by the man in the street, who holds no brief for any particular field sport or game. Americans do not see eye to eye with us in this British ambition upon the part of our

'best' men to be lovers of many games and sports rather than specialists. Our best known polo players excel in other fields of endeavour; all honour to them for that. How can they compete on equal terms with specialists? To-day, the specialist achieves immense publicity and a measure of fame. But he ought to be considered a professional. He is so, because *his* game is *his* profession.

To those who consider that the loss of championships indicates national degeneracy, I offer this suggestion as spikenard wherewith to annoint lacerated sensibilities: if the nations of the whole world were invited to send one representative to London or New York to compete in a *pentathlon*, five events, say, lawn tennis, golf, racquets, polo, and riding across country, is it to be doubted that England would be the victor? I should like to lay heavy odds on my compatriot. I have chosen five events at random. But, in any *pentathlon* which included five sports or pastimes, it is certain that England could pick her representative out of hundreds of young men. In France, Italy, Germany, or the United States, it would be difficult to find *one* young man of all-round proficiency. Let us hug that conviction to ourselves when we hail, wholeheartedly, champions from elsewhere.

VIII

Concerning greyhound-racing, I must run mute, inasmuch as I know little and care less about this form of entertainment, which appeals tremendously to the betting public. If it was impossible to bet, the sport, if it can be termed a sport, would come to an inglorious end. Nevertheless candour compels

me to admit that the greyhounds chase the dummy hare with undiminished ardour. It has been suggested that a pack of foxhounds might pursue a dummy fox, but I hold a higher opinion of a foxhound's intelligence. Nobody can say yet whether or not greyhound-racing has 'come to stay'.

CHAPTER VIII

CRICKET AND FOOTBALL

I

WHO was the wag who said that England was separated from the rest of the world by an immense gulf called cricket? It's a true and witty saying. Very few foreigners understand or like our great national game, to which it might be retorted that very few of them understand or like us. In a sense cricket is—US. It stands for what we practise and preach—concerted action, team play, the discipline of the individual, the recognition of authority, and the subservience of all to a common end. . . .

Nevertheless, many Englishmen to-day are alive to the fact that cricket is not quite what it was. Famous exponents are at loggerheads concerning the whys and wherefores of a change which most of them deplore. There are too many drawn matches—the odds are now in favour of the batsman as against the bowler—'stone-walling' (playing for safety against time)—the rival attractions of tennis, golf and motoring—all these are as thorns in honest sides. Some giants of old contend that the remedies proposed are worse than the disease. The general public—a bad sign—remains apathetic. Village cricket, once played with enthusiasm upon all village greens, is moribund. As Vice-President of a local club I can testify to the difficulty of getting together

twenty-two young men upon a summer's afternoon. They say frankly that they have other fish to fry. As Vice-President of a village football club, I can also testify that there is no such difficulty in getting together boys and young men to play football, partly, we may suppose, because football is not played in the summer. Young men, when I was a young man, played cricket because there was nothing else to do; now they prefer tennis, golf, or racing along the roads on a motor-bicycle.

However, loyalty to the National Game is still strong; big matches still attract crowds; newspapers still devote more space to cricket than they do to anything else.

Will this continue? I don't know. Nobody knows. We believe what we want to believe. Speaking personally, I have no time to watch a game that lasts for three days, unless it happens to be a Test Match, or the annual contest at Lords between my old school and Eton; I dislike 'stone-walling'; I think that the perfection of our 'pitches' has taken from the game the rubs of the green and its perilous vicissitudes. But I speak as a looker-on; defective eyesight, which might have been remedied by the use of spectacles, prevented my playing in county cricket, although I loved village cricket—and do still. It is as a looker-on, keenly alive to the great traditions of the game, that I venture to embark upon the troubled waters of criticism, regretfully sensible that I may, unwittingly, give offence to some good men and true to whom cricket is a synonym for Imperialism.

I spent an afternoon looking on at a game between our county and the West Indians on a visit to us. It is true that it was a bowlers' wicket. Heavy rain on

the previous day had made the pitch difficult. No doubt the batsmen were justified in playing cannily, but to me the game was desperately dull. I marked a few dear old boys intent upon every ball, perfectly satisfied with the entertainment provided. I noticed that the younger men were bored—and no wonder! Young women were conspicuously absent.

Incidentally I had an enlightening word or two with an expert upon the vexed question of how to 'brighten' the game, not for him, but for *nous autres*. I perceived with amusement that any change would be anathema to him except *one*. He agreed (reluctantly) with me that a man who interposed a padded leg between a breaking ball and the wicket ought to be given 'out' by the umpire if in that gentleman's opinion the ball, even if it broke a yard, would have struck the stumps. He repudiated with scorn my suggestions that the bat should be narrowed, the wickets widened (that experiment is now being tried), and persistent 'stone-walling' penalised. A last suggestion that cricketers should play, if necessary, in the rain, as they used to do in village matches, provoked unparliamentary language. Had I no consideration for the pitch, the sacrosanct pitch, brought indeed to a pitch of perfection——? Well, I haven't. But I'm not a dyed-in-the-wool cricketer. I should like to see our crack batsmen scoring to win, not draw, the game with the odds against them. I should like to see the 'stone-waller' sent back to the pavilion amid derisive cheers, if he failed to score ten runs in twenty minutes. . . .

When I was a boy at Harrow cricket and Latin, the quick and the dead, marched hand in hand, quite regardless of the aptitudes of the individual. The

arguments that were used to bolster up what a few rebels regarded as an unjustifiable despotism are now wearing somewhat thin. The more enlightened of our dominies to-day plead eloquently for a greater recognition of the individual boy to whom both Latin and cricket may be not only abhorrent, but a sad waste of time if it is obvious that he will never attain any proficiency in either. Excess of loyalty to cricket has prevented many a boy from excelling at some other game for which he had real aptitudes. Devotion to cricket is not the least of the reasons which are put forward to explain our lack of champions at lawn tennis. The tennis champion of to-day must be caught young and trained from childhood. It is admitted that tennis as played at Wimbledon is a tremendous exhibition of skill and strength, exacting all the qualities of mind and body that go to the making of a first-class cricketer or football player. It is safe to predict that when tennis is taught and played in our preparatory and public schools, and possibly in our national schools, the championships will come back.

II

The visitor who wishes to see the 'best' cricket will 'assist' at a Test Match, or the match between Gentlemen and Players. He will be well served if he seeks as a companion some past master of the game, who will be happy to explain its tactics. Otherwise it will be leather and prunella to inexperience. It is likely that cricket, and cricket alone, may fail to attract the average American or Frenchman. In that case, such a contest as the match between Eton and Harrow may be commended.

This happens to be a great social function, unique in its way. The pilgrim is urged to go to Lord's to see the boys of two great public-schools, the girls who are their sisters, their other relations, and innumerable celebrities; he is invited to join in the general excitement and enthusiasm, and he should—if he has a cricketing friend—penetrate into the sanctuary of the Pavilion, a remarkable museum of everything and everybody connected with past and present cricketers.

On his joyous way to St. John's Wood from any hotel in Mayfair, he will pass over ground where once bubbled the brook from Tyburn. The gallows stood not far from the Marble Arch where Connaught Place now is. Here Lord Ferrers was hanged (with a silken rope) and innumerable others, including Jack Sheppard and Jonathan Wild. Lord Ferrers drove from the Tower in his own landau, dressed in his wedding suit, embroidered with silver. He petitioned the king to be executed on Tower Hill. inasmuch as 'he had the honour of quartering part of the same arms and of being allied to his Majesty'. His lordship murdered, in a fit of temper, his own steward, Mr. Johnson, and then coolly pleaded insanity. Jonathan Wild picked the pocket of a parson on his way to the gallows.

Speeding down Baker Street, one wonders why Sherlock Holmes selected such a drab and uninteresting thoroughfare for an abiding place. I have affection for it, because the Baker Street Bazaar and Madame Tussaud's Exhibition were here when I was a boy.

Skirting Regent's Park, we reach St. John's Wood, originally a dense thicket, now a crowded

suburb. Here lived the more prosperous Cyprians of Victorian days, of whom much could be written if this were a *chronique scandaleuse*. Crossing Marylebone one recalls the old saying: *The Marrowbone Stage:* to travel on one's own legs. Probably this tag came into common use when cits walked to the Mary-le-bone Gardens, where Handel's music was performed. These gardens were disused and built over at the end of the eighteenth century. Hone tells the story of an old parson who was asked by a person unknown to him what he thought of the music. 'It's very poor stuff,' he replied. 'You are right,' said the unknown. 'It is very poor stuff; I thought so myself when I had finished it.'

We reach the wall encircling the cricket ground, and immediately are importuned to buy light or dark blue *boutonnières*. 'Under which king, Bezonian, live or die?' As we pass through the gates, we may hear a roar from the huge crowd; somebody has been caught or bowled. . . .

When I was a boy at Harrow, a kind kinsman used to drive my brother and myself to Lord's on top of his four-in-hand, a memorable pilgrimage. We swept through the gates in fine style and took up a commanding position; but all that is of yesterday. There are many coaches and carriages to be seen to-day, but these vehicles—some of them only used for this occasion—are given their allotted place on the eve of the match. The crowd is too great to permit such traffics and excursions now.

But then—*Consule Planco*——!

'There we sat in the circle vast,
Hard by the tents, from noon,
And looked as the day went slowly past
And the runs came all too soon;

And never, I think, in the years gone by,
Since cricketer first went in,
Did the dying so refuse to die,
Or the winning so hardly win.'

These lines by Edward Bowen, a famous Harrow master, were written of a match when the issues were in doubt to the last minute. On such glorious occasions a thrill, so intense as to be almost unendurable, percolates through all tissues Etonian and Harrovian, and even outsiders, seeing the match for the first time, have confessed to me that they would not miss the experience for the world.

As soon as the rival teams leave the ground for luncheon, the spectators rush to the pitch. This is the moment when old friends, schoolfellows, meet perhaps after the lapse of many years—a great moment for each. They parted as equals; now one has far outstripped the other in the social scale. A curate in a 'topper' of pre-phylloxera vintage grasps the hand of the Prime Minister. In a jiffy they are boys again, chattering like boys, using the old familiar slang. The curate assuredly will be the bigger man of the two *if he has a kinsman playing*.

And so to luncheon.

And what a luncheon! What a rare 'tuck in'! 'Bubbly' in bucketfuls—cold salmon—quails in aspic —*foie-gras*—strawberries and cream galore—ices! All round the ground tables are set and corks are a-popping Here are the hospitable tents previously seen at Ascot; and in front of each you will behold a long *queue* of the smartest people in London waiting impatiently for admittance. . . .

The charm of it all is its intimacy. A stranger from Mars might exclaim: 'A family picnic'. And

the boys, Montagues and Capulets, have pride of place in a carnival of youth with age transmuted into youth. Old bucks of eighty, the last of the dandies, carry themselves with the air of boys on a holiday. Diminutive urchins talk with authority of heroes of the pitch, shrilly vocal if some minnow of a duke or ambassador dares to criticize the Tritons.

After luncheon, back in their seats, enthusiasts watch every ball as it leaves the bowler's hand ; but our pilgrim may prefer to wander round the outside of the stands or to sit, smoking a cigar, upon the lawns of the 'Nursery', where the 'practice nets' are set up. May he find some lovely lady, who knows her London, to keep him company. She will indicate the 'celebrities', particularly the men and women 'of the moment', who are sure to be 'on view'. A 'Matinée idol' will receive more homage from the 'flappers' than a reigning sovereign.

This would be the right time for an intelligent American to discuss with a bright lady journalist the effect of games upon the national character. The foreigner is, or used to be amazed at our absorption in games. What underlies the popularity of cricket—playing the game regardless of self—is easy to explain. More difficult to account for adequately is the 'looking on', the placid pleasure of the veteran in the activities of others. Certain games have become popular because age, counter-balanced by experience, is not a serious disability. I know youthful golfers who have passed the Psalmist's limit. Lord Balfour plays tennis. Still, it must be admitted that there is something rotten in any state, when a champion at cricket, golf, or tennis, provokes more interest and attention than men to whom the

destinies of empire are entrusted. Nearly all public-schoolboys reckon the Captain of the XI to be a greater personage than the Head Master. Piccadilly was blocked when Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks stayed at the Ritz Hotel. I don't grudge them their triumphs, but I felt ashamed when the Liverpudlians, including their Lord Mayor, welcomed a prospective cinema star, who had been a waitress in a tea-shop, more vociferously than they welcomed Field Marshal Lord Haig. She hadn't yet 'made good' and she didn't make good.

III

Football.

No stranger to our shores, be he highbrow, mezzo-brow, or lowbrow, should miss an International game of football. If football, whether Rugby or 'Soccer', fails to interest him, he can study human nature. He must be a dull dog if the uproarious excitement leaves him unmoved, if the caustic comments of the onlookers provoke no amusement. Any football 'fan' who is sitting beside him will enlighten his ignorance and enlarge his vocabulary. A 'fan' fans my latent sparks of enthusiasm into flame.

Football is more popular than cricket with the proletariat because they bet on the results and because a game lasts, with the intermission, less than two hours. Like polo, too, it is easier to understand than cricket. A ball has to be driven through two posts. Any child can grasp that as the essential objective. The finer tactics—the disposition of the men on the field, the passing of the ball, the feints, the interference, the objections of the referee—are as Greek to the uninitiated. Professional football of the

highest class is not played so honestly as cricket. But that again appeals to the rougher and tougher elements of the crowd. The 'fans' know the tricks of the 'pro' and have no sporting wish to see the better side win. Let their side—which they have backed—win *quocunque modo!* There is a lesser 'gate' for 'Rugger', because there is more betting over 'Soccer'.

The present popularity of football, the publicity achieved by famous players, has set our urchins a-practising. The village greens are never deserted in autumn, winter and spring. This is as it should be, a cause for rejoicing. Young men get fit, and keep themselves fit, to play football. In our congested industrial districts philanthropists are alive to the necessity of providing playing-fields for the millions 'at a loose end' on Saturday afternoons. Fresh air and exercise are the deadly enemies of gutter-bred Communists and fanatics. If Prohibitionists devoted energies and money to the providing of more playing fields, they would be fighting the demon, Drink, with greater success than they can claim at present. Men who wish to excel at games must be temperate.

There is, of course, an increasing tendency to look on at games rather than try to play them. The fact that our games are commercialised is obvious to any intelligent man who loves them and has their best interests at heart. The 'gate' has the first and last word. It is good business to lure a famous player away from his own town and county by paying him a bigger salary. Really he is bought and sold and *swapped*. We may find ourselves confronted with this Gilbertian situation: a match between two great towns in the north and south of England, advertised as such, in which the players

from the north all came originally from the south, and *vice-versa*.

What this spirit of commercialism portends, it is hard to say. The basic principle seems to be wrong, a mixing-up of conflicting interests, business and pleasure. For the moment they are masquerading as twins.

IV

If our visitor had to choose between the rival attractions of 'soccer' and 'rugger', I think he would get more fun out of the latter, particularly if he knew little of either game. To me 'rugger' gives a greater thrill, although I have played both with equal enthusiasm. My last game was in San Francisco in very mixed company; so much so that I was tackled by mistake by one of my own side, violently thrown, and had to be carried half-senseless off the field of battle. I recall that Walter Camp used to give lectures on the tactics of Rugby football, and much that he taught so efficiently has been adopted on this side of the Atlantic, slow as we are to learn from other nations, another reason for lost championships. We choose, rightly or wrongly, to regard games as games—and nothing else. England is the mother of games.

> To teach his grandson draughts his leisure he'd employ;
> Until at last the old man was beaten by the boy.

Constrained to be now more or less of a looker-on, I find myself wondering whether international contests, except from the box-office point of view, are desirable. They excite much ill-feeling on both sides—and misrepresentation—and slander. No mud shall be disturbed by me in citing notorious instances,

but the mud was there and it bespattered everybody.

V

As a nation we are indicted by intelligent foreigners for placing an undue 'value' on games. But any such discussion leads inevitably to a definition of 'values', a fascinating theme, perhaps the most fascinating in the world alike to doers and dreamers. What is 'worth while'; what isn't? Publicists attempt to deal faithfully with such vexed questions and fall helpless victims to the curse of generalization. Englishmen love their ruts. Many Americans love pie 'like mother used to make'. But when I lived in America I avoided all dishes labelled 'family style'. Returning to my own country I was disconcerted by much that bore the same label, 'family' pride, for example. I found myself confronted by platitudes 'same as father made' which moved me to sacrilegious laughter. Coming from a cow-country in California where the native sons obeyed the injunction: 'Root, hog, or die', it struck me forcibly, and for the first time, that games, especially at our public schools, were of too paramount importance. I think so still. And I think the same of our field sports if they rank first with any man or woman.

Looking back upon my own life and the lives of my friends, I have come to the conclusion that the success which may come to any intelligent man or woman who deliberately chooses to concentrate all energies upon attaining *one* objective is likely to degenerate into failure. Nothing fails so lamentably as success—as the world measures the word—if other great and joyous things are sacrificed to it. The accumulation of money, if it be an over-

mastering obsession, is a deadly menace to health and peace of mind. I have met many dull and dismal millionaires. The pursuit of fame in the same spirit seldom leads to happiness. It may lead to a splendid isolation from which most of us would shrink appalled. The happy men and women who have been fellow-travellers with me had many facets, each reflecting and transmitting light. The late Alfred Lyttelton was such a man. Had he given his undivided energies to lawn tennis, he would, I'm sure, have been a world's champion. He loved all games, truly catholic in his tastes. Magnificent cricketer as he was, he would have been bored to tears had he devoted his wonderful life to that game only. The same could be said about C. B. Fry.

I am no prophet, but I am beginning to think that so far as games are concerned, the commercialism that is undermining them, will have this good effect. The men and women, whatever their social status may be, who aspire to be 'stars', and as 'stars' marketable commodities, will be regarded as professionals. Those who have no such aspirations will remain amateurs; and there will be a gulf between the two. No stigma will attach itself to a lady of quality, if she becomes a professional tennis player, and, like the film star, she will draw whatever salary she can command. There will be no disconcerting and disappointing competition between those who in every sense of the word are professionals and those who regard games as pastimes. No amateur will be ashamed of becoming a professional. Automatically, he will pass from one class to the other, if—*if* he can bestride the gulf.

CHAPTER IX

TENNIS AND RACQUETS

I

I DID not see Lacoste defeat Tilden after one of the most thrilling encounters ever witnessed on the centre court; but I remember my excitement, when poor Anthony Wilding defeated McLaughlin just before the war on the same battlefield. It seemed incredible then (to me) that I could recall the long, waisted court, the uncovered ball, the high net, and the reluctance of gentlemen of the old school to take off their coats in the presence of ladies! Lawford and the Renshaws made the modern game what it is; and Lawford's honoured name is almost forgotten except by old-timers, like myself, who knew him. Whether or not the game can be made faster or more difficult than it is to-day is a matter of conjecture. Its popularity is steadily increasing. The children of cottagers are beginning to play it. In our larger towns, professionals are teaching stroke production. . .

Tennis-players are now divided into two classes: those, the elect, who play, or hope to play, at Wimbledon and in the other great tournaments, and the others, who are regarded by the elect as 'rabbits'. I think the rabbits have the most fun; and they don't acquire the 'tennis' face, the deep vertical line between the brows, the prognathous 'jaw', and the

pachydermatous skin which is so terrifying to the bunnies. Nor, as a rule, do they talk tennis 'shop', a patter now almost unintelligible to the mere amateur.

It is interesting to note the variety of 'shots' which an expert exponent has at his or her command. 'Rabbits' still exclaim 'Sorry', if they drop a ball (generally by accident) just over the net when their opponent is on the back line. Tilden makes no such fatuous apologies. I am glad to see the old-fashioned 'cut' and the 'back-spin' used at the right moment. I recall with amusement that certain hard hitters of a few years ago disdained such ca-canny strokes. To-day absolute mastery over the ball, only to be acquired by indefatigable practise, is essential to success. This is as it should be.

To me first-class tennis is a most fascinating game to watch. But the fact that such a high standard of play is now demanded by the general public who have to pay for their seats is a serious menace to the game, if it is to be regarded as a game. It is possible, and probable, that in the not remote future the best players will be highly paid professionals. I have touched upon this in a previous chapter, and have no further comment to make. Whatever happens the blooming amateur will go on blooming, but he will refuse to compete—and quite properly—against the professional. Any man or woman who accepts free board and lodging, and a cheque to cover expenses, is a 'pro'. The sooner that is made plain the better. Confirmed 'pot-hunters', especially those who sell their 'pots', are also professionals—and well they know it!

II

The visitor in quest of the 'best' tennis will go, of

course, to Wimbledon. Real tennis, as apart from lawn tennis, is for the few, and will never be popular because the scoring is so difficult. Lawn tennis tournaments take place throughout the summer. At nearly all of them 'stars' are advertized to appear. When severely handicapped, they don't twinkle quite so gloriously. A 'star' giving and owing thirty to a 'rabbit' is under a crushing disability, win or lose, and such games have little interest for the more intelligent onlooker. He likes to see Greek meet Greek. Some Greeks devote their lives to tennis; they make the circuit of the English tournaments; they cross the Atlantic; they spend their winters on the Riviera. I wonder if they get bored with this everlasting smiting of a ball, of this everlasting companionship with their fellow Greeks? There are notable exceptions, Norman Brooks is one, but for the most part these devotees worship at no other shrine. They are obsessed by tennis——! What a comical world it is! I have been told—the story is probably apocryphal—that Arnold Bennett asked: 'Who is Steve Donoghue?' Probably there are tennis players who have never heard of Arnold Bennett. A successful champion of the Ring proposed to retire with a fortune of £400,000. Shades of Tom Sayers and Jem Mace! Are these national heroes turning in their graves? We read also of some baby film-actor, hardly weaned, who is earning ten thousand a year; and the salary of our Prime Minister is just half of that——! Then one wonders what some future tennis champion will lay by, if he is reasonably thrifty. Shall we hazard a guess—a cool million? Who knows? England, if she becomes the playground of the world, will pay her players accord-

ing to the receipts at the 'gate'. What was the 'gate' at Wimbledon this year? What will it be ten years hence?

III

This armchair speculation ought to be interesting to non-playing parents confronted with the problem: *What shall we do with our sons and daughters?* If the hope of the family has aptitudes for golf or tennis, ought they to be nipped in the bud or diligently cherished and exploited? The world rewards handsomely its specialists. The tendency of the times is to pay (and overpay) any man, woman, or child, who can do one thing better than anybody else. This enlarges the field of human endeavour. It may break up our public-school system. It may divide this country into two camps, setting mind and muscle at civil war in a strenuous competition for the big cash prizes. I have a vision, a nightmare vision, of schools for potential golfers and tennis players, of schools for brain-workers only. At such academies all will be sacrificed to the Juggernaut of Publicity. And, in the end, muscle may triumph over mind. We are losing the sense of 'values'. A hard-working bishop declares that he can live and work on three hundred a year. We are not shocked. The gentleman best known in the 'film' world earns five hundred pounds a day.

Is the public indifferent to these startling differences in 'values'? Or do they ask wonderingly: 'What can we do about it?' The answer to such a question is that public opinion, and that alone, determines these values. Public opinion in Victorian days exalted, perhaps unduly, bishops, and held that

a proprietary interest in a public-house was the highest ambition to which a successful prizefighter might aspire. Able men belonging to ill-paid professions commanded a respect and esteem which is withheld from them to-day. Is there a spinster in the land who makes carpet slippers for curates?

IV

If a visitor comes to England to play tennis during our so-called summer, dare I offer any suggestions? Perhaps it is part of my agreeable duty to do so. I have played, humbly and in a subordinate capacity, with many famous exponents of the game; I have taken part in many tournaments. If I had to begin again, I should take lessons from some 'pro' who teaches stroke production; then I should practise assiduously against a wall till these strokes became automatic. I should hire a lively small boy to throw balls into the air from the other side of the net, and practise volleying with the same assiduity from the net, from the service line, and from a point half-way between the service line and the back line. I should swear a terrible swear to forswear ordinary games with 'rabbits'. It is impossible to learn modern tennis from the bunnies. I am assuming, of course, that the novice wishes ardently to excel at what is one of the most difficult and scientific games in the world.

The service.

It is admitted that a weak second service against good players means the loss of a point. Leaving out the champions—although they serve many faults—nearly all of our promising players defeat their ends by attempting too much, both pace and curve.

Placing a service judiciously is far more effective than either. Pace there must be within reasonable limits, curve there should be, if it can be given to the ball without too great an expenditure of effort; but direction is 'best'. Direction, first and last, wins games, other things being equal. An experienced player divines what his opponent is going to do before he does it. I cannot recall who was the first man to exploit the 'masked' shot. That, more than any other, has made modern tennis so interesting (and instructive) to watch. A player, making too sure that his forehand drive is about to be returned hard and fast to the right, governs himself accordingly, and is much disconcerted when the ball defeats him in the left of the court. His opponent has assumed an attitude that warrants the supposition that he *must* drive to the right; and he *is looking in that direction*. This is the essence of the masked shot.

Lobbing.

If I am looking on at a game, where there is little or nothing to choose between the players, I back the better lobber. A judicious lob falling near the back line is mighty hard to deal with. This stroke, so baffling and so telling, was first practised by women, shortly after the Renshaws sent a-running to the net every man who played hard tennis. The ladies lobbed in self-defence; they do still. No girl can hope to compete in tournaments till she has the lob at her command.

Foot-work.

Quite as important as in boxing or dancing. However, foot-work is part of stroke production and will be explained and taught by any competent 'pro'. The essential thing for the novice to remember is to

build up his play on a sure foundation. I was nearing middle age when I had to unlearn all that I had stupidly taught myself about tennis and golf.

Fancy shots.

These are now in every champion's armoury, defensive rather than offensive. How 'offensive' they were (and are) when practised at garden-party tennis: the 'chop', the 'drop', and the high lob with back-spin! As variants each is invaluable at a difficult moment, and as such give variety to a game that without them might degenerate into a slogging match. I fancy that the reintroduction of what was called *vieux jeu* by vigorous players may be credited to the ladies, who have in everything more *finesse* than the male.

Keep your eye on the ball!

Champions have told me that even they flout this—the injunction of greatest importance. To obey it, to keep on obeying it, exacts extraordinary powers of concentration. At racquets, even an ordinary player does, as a rule, keep his eye on the ball. Why? Because his opponent is more or less beside him and not in front of him. It is vital to look at your opponent first and at the ball last. Everybody knows that. How many do it?

It is certain that all over the world lawn tennis has 'come to stay'. Fifty years hence it may be *the* game of games. Will the rank and file play? Or will they prefer to look on? No girl, to-day, is invited to go to the piano after dinner unless she is an accomplished pianiste; nobody is asked to 'oblige' with a song, because the gramophone and 'wireless' brings the 'best' music to our houses. I heard a girl, who does play the piano very acceptably, say: 'I hate to make

a fool of myself.' I asked, for information only, as she was a friend of mine: 'For whom and to whom do you play?' She replied: 'Myself; I please myself; I don't expect to please anybody else.'

Expertise, in fine, has put to bed the ordinary amateur pianiste and vocalist. In country houses many of the guests refuse to play bridge, because, so they say, they don't play well enough. I sympathize with them. I object to the glare of a partner to whom all the conventions of the game are familiar. With difficulty I suppress the temptation to exclaim: 'You play better than I do because you play every day, but you ought to play ten times better than you do, inasmuch as you devote your life to the game.'

V

To-day, youth must be served; I recall vividly the old boys of my youth, the Olympians: the country squires, great gentlemen—the retired Generals—the Admirals, one cut above the Generals, conscious that they represented the Senior Service—the Indian Civil Servants, the most intelligent of the three—outstanding figures all of them. And they *believed* that they were superior to the retired physicians, bank-managers, and successful tradesmen, whom they kept at a disrespectful distance——! What the Squire of the parish said—*went*. But how far did it go? He saw little that was not beneath his honest nose. Honesty was his *cheval de bataille*. He remained honest in his conviction that, in the words of the catechism, all socially inferior to him should do their duty in that state of life to which it pleased God to call them. It never occurred to him that Omnipotence might summon the son of a farm

labourer to be a Member of Parliament, or that Omnipotence might ordain that his son should degenerate into a Remittance Man. I recall with shame my conviction that the world owed me something. Because my father and grandfather had been Masters of Hounds, I told myself that the horn of the hunter should be tooted by me. England, so merrie to me, was not merrie for the millions travelling and groaning under conditions which I held to be the state to which God had called them——!

Games are going to alter these conditions. Long ago I wrote a series of articles dealing with slum life. I happened to meet a lady of quality, who was interested in the factory girls of Whitechapel. I asked her how she went to work to uplift them. She told me that she began by teaching them how to take care of their rebellious locks, how to dress them prettily. They were eager to learn from a mistress who practised what she preached, who looked charming herself. I met her girls at a dance; all were strikingly better looking and better behaved than other factory girls who had not yet come beneath my friend's influence. This was an eye-opener. These girls danced beautifully with each other. I had seen waifs of the Mile End Road dancing upon street pavements; but I lacked the wit to realize then what dancing was about to achieve for the young women of England. Is there one young girl now of that class who doesn't dance?

VI

Hard-ball racquets is a game for the few; and only a few can witness a first-class match, because the galleries of our famous courts hold a limited

number of spectators. The stranger to our shores would not be wasting time or money if he witnessed one such match.

Squash-racquets is becoming increasingly popular. The heir to the throne plays it well. I forget what my own court cost, not having built it myself, but in pre-war days, when labour and material were cheaper, the bill—all in—must have been between six and eight hundred pounds. This is a lot of money, and makes a delightful game prohibitive to the less well-to-do. A rich lover of games with philanthropical instincts might do worse than build a few courts in our industrial towns. Squash-racquets can be played the year round, but it is at its best in late autumn and winter. Courts could be used also for Badminton, another good game increasing in popularity.

Any man (or woman) with aptitudes for tennis can learn to play squash-racquets, so called because a soft, squashy, indiarubber ball is substituted for the hard ball used in the senior game. To a strong, active man the pleasure in playing racquets, whether hard-ball or squash, is that he can hit as hard as he likes, the harder the better. There is a zest about banging the ball which appeals irresistibly to the player. But the veteran, not so nimble on his pins as the novice, varies his pace, relying more upon placing the ball. After fifty years of age, the game becomes too exhausting for all but the very few.

Any man who happens to possess an old barn, or any old building of the right size, can convert it into a squash racquet court by spending two or three hundred pounds. In it, during the winter, tennis shots can be practised. Still, it is certain that the game can never become universally popular, as

tennis and hockey are, because of the initial expense of building a court.

We played squash at Harrow when I was a boy; and it was then regarded as a valuable apprenticeship to hard-ball racquets. The School Racquet Player was a 'blood'. He could walk arm-in-arm with the Captain of the XI and the Captain of the Football. Oddly enough then—and I daresay now—the best gymnast in the school and the finest shot with a rifle were not reckoned to be 'bloods', unless they excelled in the playing fields. This must have been rather humiliating for them, but I mention the fact because it indicates the salient principle of the public-school system, which cherishes the conviction that team-play is the backbone of any game, which unquestionably it is. For a brief season, the Captain of the Shooting Eight stood in the limelight as one who might uphold the honour of Harrow at Wimbledon (to-day, Bisley) as the winner of the Ashburton Shield, but he and the champion gymnast were stigmatized as individualists and specialists. The champion swimmer ranked with them. It was thus in my time, and in my son's time; there may be revaluations now; I don't know. I am inclined to think that there has been a subtle change since the War. Of two famous 'old boys'—Stanley Baldwin and A. J. Webbe—who gets the loudest cheers on Speech Day?

CHAPTER X

GOLF, CROQUET AND BOWLS

I

WE may assume that our visitor wants to see the 'best' golf, and to play the Royal and Ancient game upon our finest links. I can imagine nothing more delightful than a leisurely golfing tour with a congenial companion during the merrie month of May, when the greens and fairways are in perfect condition. Four good men and true would make a delightful *partie carrée.* 'Singles' in the morning, 'foursomes' in the afternoon. Then, after tea, a prowl round one of our Cinque Ports. I have in mind three noble courses: Rye, of which I was a member for many years, Prince's, and St. Georges's, the two latter situate at and near Sandwich. There are others within easy distance, such as Deal and Littlestone, but the first three are in a class by themselves; and it would be almost impious to attempt to discriminate between them. All three test to the nth degree the skill of the expert. On the other hand, they have been designed so admirably that the low handicap player can enjoy himself, and do justice to his mediocre powers, as keenly as the 'plus four' performer. To the man, possibly, who is not in the first flight, but measurably near it, these championship courses are disconcerting, inasmuch as he, inevitably, will attempt shots which may be terribly

punished if they don't 'come off'. All my sympathy is with the gallant fellow who takes his brassie and tries to reach the green with his second, although the odds are against his doing so.

If I were making up such a party of four, I should urge upon the others to join me in a solemn pledge not to talk golf off the course. Some men play golf, talk golf, and dream golf. To these the game is an obsession. I shrink, too, from playing with a man who explains at great length why he 'foozles' his shots and misses short putts. Mr. Croome or Mr. Darwin tells a story of a golfer who took leave of a victorious opponent with the remark: 'I played badly, old chap, because I'm a bit off colour to-day.' Whereupon the other replied sympathetically: 'I quite understand; I have played golf for donkey's years, but never, *never* have I defeated a perfectly healthy golfer.' A certain discreet satisfaction when an opponent is in trouble is permissible. I was playing many years ago at Stoke Poges with Sir Johnstone Forbes-Robertson. On the seventeenth tee we were all square with one to go. Playing my approach to the last green, my ball struck the top of the bunker guarding the green and fell back into a dreadful place. As I gripped my niblick, I heard the wonderful diapason tones: 'There *are* moments when the misfortunes of our friends are not altogether displeasing to us.' However, we halved the match—and all was well.

As an *apéritif*, our visitor might be well advised to attend one of our great meetings, before he sallies forth to play the game himself. But this must be done with a measure of detachment and a just appreciation of one's own disabilities. The text-

books should be read in the same detached spirit, a warning not to be found in the prefaces. I feel reasonably assured of victory, when my opponent tells me hopefully that at long last he has just been enlightened by careful study of the latest treatise. Perhaps, to lure him on, I ask: 'What was wrong with you?' He replies modestly: 'Oh—everything: stance, grip, and swing'. Poor fellow——! He has played golf for twenty years; he has acquired laboriously a style of his own; and he believes that he can eradicate the bad habits of a lifetime in five minutes. A friend of mine, after a shocking round, said portentously: 'I shall never shatter my self-respect by striking at a golf ball again.' Oddly enough—for such resolutions (good or bad) are seldom kept—he did, there and then, abandon the game. *He knew too much about it.* He had bought and read the text-books. Now, at ease in his armchair, he talks happily of the great game that he might have played had he known less about it.

II

At a big meeting, you can see one match from start to finish, or half a dozen intermittently. To a novelist it is a great opportunity to study character and temperament. I have seen a giant's fingers tremble as he took his putter to hole out a fourteen-inch putt. Some are like graven images; others assume the pose of the *faux bonhomme*. With the one exception of croquet there is no game so trying to the temper as golf, because even champions miss the easiest shots, a nerve-shattering experience. The crowd loves a good loser. Potential champions have never achieved the highest honours, because they

are affected by the crowd. Whether or not in the future more drastic disciplinary measures will be imposed on some onlookers I don't know. Off the greens players are too often severely harassed. Now and again some great personage, not a distinguished golfer, has to open a new course by driving a ball fast and far (if he can) down the fairway. On one such occasion I saw the ball missed——! The personage had his eye on the crowd not on the ball.

Some of our veterans would play good golf if a battle were raging round them.

It would be impossible to give here a list of the innumerable meetings. The visitor can pick up any newspaper, and find out in five minutes where to go and what famous players to watch. No inland course is quite as good as the seaside links which I have mentioned. For a championship meeting, if you wish to be on the spot early and late, rooms must be taken long ahead. It is better, unless you know friends who are playing, to stop at any good hotel within twenty miles of the links, motoring to and from the course each day. There are excellent hotels at Folkestone, Dover, and Ramsgate, not likely to be overcrowded.

What is to be learned from looking on at golf? This is a hard question to answer, but it has been put to me many times. I shall offer a few hints to the novice later on. I doubt whether he, or she, can learn much from experts in actual play. Mark Twain observed that there were twenty-four things to remember when you took a club in hand, and that he, personally, could never remember more than twenty-three. He loved his joke did Mark, but understatement was not characteristic of his rich humour. The

qualities which win matches at all games are conspicuous on the links: pluck, endurance, fortitude and skill. We can take the skill for granted at a Championship Meeting. What amazes me is the fine recovery that succeeds a bad or misdirected shot, and the triumph over the rubs of the green. I have never met a golfer yet who said that there was no such thing as luck. I lost a Scratch Challenge Cup, which I had won the previous year, because my antagonist holed out from the rough *twice*. Anytning may happen utterly unforeseen. Once I saw James Braid drive a ball from the tee so superbly that to his surprise—and everybody else's—it travelled about one hundred yards farther than the ordinary distance and came to an inglorious finish in a bunker. Most men would have shewn some sign of annoyance. Imperturbably, Braid made an even more superb shot out of the bunker and on to the green. I am writing from memory, but I am almost certain that he took a wooden club to play out of that bunker and holed a long putt for a three! Two under Bogey. Again and again I have seen famous players drive into the rough and play calmly out of it with a wooden club, when I should have thanked my stars if I had got back into the fairway with a niblick. Such feats are not to be attempted by the amateur. And so I repeat that the ordinary man must look on at these astounding competitions with detachment, as if a mere mortal were watching gods at play. You are more likely to profit by the mistakes that these experts make. To do what they do when spurred to supreme endeavour is impossible. Not to do what such giants fail to do impresses itself on any plastic mind. There is another lesson to learn at these

meetings: the difficulties of the course. Certain holes are tricky. During a foursome between four professionals, I overheard one say to his partner: 'Put me into the bunker to the right of the green.' After he and his partner had won the match I asked him to explain this confounding injunction. The green in question was on a plateau; any ordinary approach would either be short or would overrun a fast and slippery green. The pro laid his ball dead out of the bunker. Next morning, I went out with him. He told me that he had made a certainty of this particular shot at this particular hole. He hit prodigiously hard at a spot in the sand about four inches behind the ball which rose gently, pitched on the green, and then trickled slowly towards the can. He did this about four times in succession and then invited me to try the same shot. To my surprise I did it. Then we both tried the ordinary running up approach from the fairway. Again and again the ball either stopped short or trickled over the green into the rough. The pro summed up: 'It's just a trick hole when the ground is hard'.

III

I have read—for my golfing sins—nearly every text-book on the Royal and Ancient Game. And, of late, I have contemplated writing one myself, which might be entitled 'A Short Cut to Scratch'. The camera, with a cinema attachment, has put permanently to bed all but the most up-to-date treatises. Seeing is believing. The slow motion photographs of a champion in action have opened our eyes to the fallacy of believing what you want to believe, merely because the golfer's creed was laboriously built up

on wrong premises.

But, even in the old text-books, one point of supreme importance was overlooked. It is possible that professionals refuse to call attention to an evil habit most difficult to eradicate, and one which brings much grist to their mill. Having suffered from this habit I now hold it in abhorrence; and I am certain that all first-class exponents of the game feel as I do, whether they say so or not. It is a habit acquired by the enthusiast early in his golfing career. Inasmuch as—nine times out of ten—he buys a set of clubs unsuited to his physical configuration, it follows, as a matter of course, that he goes on buying more clubs till in time he owns enough to stock a small shop. Again and again I have bought, at an exorbitant price, some club out of a pro's bag, merely because he played superbly with it. I have nothing to say against the price demanded, because the pro was tempted by me to part with an old and well-tried friend, knowing right well that he would have difficulty in replacing it. But he might have said: 'This club suits me; there is no good reason to suppose that it will suit you.' Again and again after a match on an unfamiliar course, when I have played badly, I have wandered into the pro's shop, beheld a tempting array of drivers and brassies, and have been beguiled into adding a couple to my remarkable collection.

Now I submit—not deferentially, because I am sure of my facts—that a novice should be measured for his clubs even as he is measured for a new suit of clothes. It is likely that before many years have passed there will be qualified Golf Doctors, trained to make such measurements. There is already a rule

of thumb advocating—other things being equal—shorter clubs for a tall, long-armed man, and longer clubs for the short-armed player. A good pro to-day will tell the beginner what club is likely to suit him, but his advice on the subject is not backed by scientific knowledge of his pupil's anatomy. He may insist, if he is naturally observant, that a man's clubs should be somewhat similar in 'lie' and balance, but in his own interests as a seller he can hardly be expected to lay down a law which conflicts with those interests. At one time, I was prepared to wager a small sum that I could guess at a man's handicap after careful examination of his clubs. This was fairly easy of accomplishment in the days of the gutty ball, when bad shots injured the wooden clubs. It is much more difficult now. But to-day—the bag of the ordinary golfer holds clubs which shout defiance at each other. How often an opponent has said to me: 'I'm playing well with my iron, but my mashie lets me down every time.' Examination of the two clubs accounts for this. A golf doctor would promptly remark: 'If you play well with one club, you can't possibly play well with the other, because both "lie" and balance are so different.' It is rare to find in the bag of a low-handicap man, three wooden clubs—the driver, brassie, and spoon—made by the same maker and made at the same time. Let the doubting Thomas test his own clubs—*blindfolded*. If he be handed any one of these three and if, when addressing an imaginary ball, he can say positively which club he has in his hands, why then he can be sure that his wooden clubs are not the same in balance. Very often the 'grips' are different. With my three clubs, made especially for me, by a

famous maker, I cannot detect when blindfolded any difference whatever. That is as it should be. My confidence in these clubs has been immensely fortified by my knowledge that they are a perfect set of triplets. With shame I must confess that I cherished for many years a driver, brassie and spoon not made by the same maker. Illumination came to me three years ago, when I had the good fortune to be playing against the steadiest player I have ever met. We played together for a week; and the accuracy of his wooden club play was a revelation. My spoon was my favourite club. In a desperate attempt to vie with my opponent's machine-like shots down the fairway, I abandoned both driver and brassie, sacrificing length to accuracy. My opponent had to admit that I was justified. Whereupon I gave all credit to my spoon, which he examined carefully, comparing it with the other clubs. Then he said: 'Your spoon is like my spoon. Will you play a round with my three wooden clubs? If you can play with my spoon, you will play equally well with my driver and brassie.' With his three wooden clubs I played an almost impeccable round. There and then I ordered three new wooden clubs exactly the same as his from his maker, who was kind enough to take great pains over the matter. I am entirely satisfied with them; I have never played since with the others.

This veteran, who was 'scratch' at Saint Andrew's, held even more strongly than I did the necessity of using clubs adapted to the player's physique. His physique happened to be much the same as mine. We had both of us begun golf in middle age; we used the three-quarter, not the full swing. Although we had never met before, we had come independently

to certain conclusions which, in the interests of the novice, may be briefly set down.

It is all important to know your limitations and to adapt your style of play to them. Try to acquire a style that suits you—and stick to it rigorously. Never play 'the sedulous ape' to men of a different build however brilliant they may be. Study diligently what is 'best' for you with the help, if you can get it, of an expert who knows what your game ought to be. Some pros try to impart their own style to all pupils. What a criminal waste of time and money!

I believe there is a short cut to 'scratch', if a novice, with any aptitudes for the game, has the pluck and perseverance to begin his apprenticeship by using his left hand only. The left hand, if left to itself, will do its duty; it is cruelly hampered by the right hand. When the left hand follows through automatically, and when—and not till then—the novice has learned to hit the ball straight in whatever direction he wishes, the right hand comes into play. All golfers know and dread the civil war that rages between the two hands; all golfers know that the left arm should 'go away' extended. As a rule the right hand forbids this, an accessory to the crime of 'pressing', of gripping the club too firmly, of not 'carrying through'. Abe Mitchell's book, with its slow motion illustrations, advocates the untrammelled, easy, swing—backward and forward—of the left hand. I have played with a man who had lost his right arm. He played admirably and with amazing accuracy with his left arm alone.

Would any novice obey this counsel of perfection? If he did, if—properly coached in regard to stance and grip—he gave undivided attention to his left

hand for six months, he would, so I believe, be taking a short cut to proficiency in a game which is disconcertingly difficult because the right hand and the left are continually at cross purposes.

Till you reach the green, the left hand should be the predominant partner, except for the niblick shot out of sand. Here again the novice might practise this shot with the right hand alone, gripping his niblick as if it were a cricket bat, or an axe, hitting hard, practising accuracy, intent only upon striking the sand at the right distance from the ball.

This dominance of the right hand at golf is a special curse to men who excel at other ball games. They start golf with a right hand trained to function independently. A famous cricketer of my acquaintance astounded everybody by his proficiency at all games—except golf. His good right hand was too much for him. It was a sore point with him that any game could defeat him; he couldn't account for it, as he told me himself; nor could I or anybody else. But he knows now the reason of what was then an inexplicable failure. Another famous cricketer happened to be also a fine golfer, but he told me that he could never play golf during the cricket season; and he never did. I have been asked to say something about putting. Long ago I became a 'two-bisquer' at croquet. My handicap at golf was then eighteen. I bought an aluminium croquet mallet putter and took to putting between my legs, much to the exasperation of my golfing friends, who had to admit that my putting (for so bad a player) was disconcertingly 'deadly' on a good green. When the croquet mallet putter was barred, a putter was made for me with the blade at right angles to the shaft. It is still per-

missible to putt between the legs. So long as this form of putting is allowed—and why shouldn't it be?—I find myself wondering why more players don't do it. You get the 'line' to the hole; and you get the two hands working together. I can remember when veterans refused to play between their legs with a croquet mallet; but the new stance was soon adopted because they discovered it to be effective. I think I am right in adding that the Committee at St. Andrews, although not forbidding this method of putting, have expressed a wish that it should be abandoned. But why? Reactionaries objected to the rubber-cored ball. Some resented the introduction of that comfortable garment, the woollen jumper; others have opposed conscientiously notable improvements in golf 'architecture'. But the world wags on.

Putting is a matter of nerves, as Vardon has testified. But it is also, like every other stroke in the game, a matter of keeping one's eye on the ball. The nearer the ball is to the hole, the greater the danger of taking the eye from the point of impact. In Medal play every ball must be holed out. How many twelve inch putts are missed? I submit that they are much less likely to be missed, if the player putts between his legs. He is standing directly over his ball; his club swings like a pendulum; he has to raise his head if he glances prematurely at the can. However—I am not sanguine that this method will be generally adopted, simply because the autherities are against it.

IV

I am glad of this opportunity of saying a good word for that too despised game—croquet. Admit-

tedly this is a game dull to watch, but so is billiards. I can recall the croquet of my childhood, when ladies in crinoline stood over the ball and were able to move it without detection; I recall, too, the renaissance of the game in the nineties, when it became once more fashionable, and incomparably more difficult. Then the more insistent claims of lawn tennis made themselves heard; and the young people commandeered the croquet grounds all over the country. Now, once more, it is creeping back into favour, because it can be played well and scientifically by the elderly of both sexes. The substitution of one stick for two, the alteration for the better of the rule dealing with 'wiring', the choice of which ball to play with, have been approved by all up-to-date players.

Nevertheless, as a game, it is not worth playing unless the lawn is level, absolutely true, and kept in perfect order, which means the expenditure of time and money. A first-class croquet ground costs to make nearly as much as a bowling green. Given the ground, given the right hoops, mallets and balls—all now standardized—given, most important of all, good players, croquet is a great game, nearly as difficult to master as golf or tennis, and challenging, as they do, the mind as much as the muscles.

To the busy man or woman croquet is unique because it can be played alone at any hour of a reasonably fine day. An enthusiast can stroll on to his lawn for half an hour and have a brief match with himself; he can practice difficult shots and take his time over the very complicated tactics of the modern game. Non-players have no notion of these tactics which include endless permutations. I don't think it would be possible for any unintelligent

person to excel at croquet. Other things being equal, the quick-witted player triumphs. The problems of the three and four ball break often permit of more than one solution. Indeed the difficulties of the game prevent many people from playing it. It is compared with billiards, but really it is more like chess.

Obviously not a game for young people.

I have said that it is a greater test of the temper than golf. One mistake, either in tactics or in running a hoop, may wreck an otherwise faultless game.

Why is it so dull to watch?

Because the onlookers, unless they are experts, cannot understand the objectives of the players. A long shot at a distant ball or the running of a difficult hoop may provoke mild applause from the gallery, but the 'thrill', if there is a thrill, begins and ends there. To the expert these incidental achievements are negligible. He is looking for the plan of campaign, the underlying policy of the player, which only he can appreciate or condemn. To me a championship match is exciting because each successive problem confronting the player is confronting me. Will my solution be the same as his? Probably not. But I am sensible, as he is, of the supreme difficulties with which he is attempting to cope, and if he triumphs I can share his triumph.

Croquet, it may be predicted, will come 'into its own' because it makes a subtle appeal to tired brain-workers, too old or too infirm to play more energetic games. Because age is now increasingly anxious to keep at bay the gentleman with the scythe, the claims of croquet will be recognized and acclaimed. Ardent youth disdains croquet, but it can be played

superbly by age. It is the game of games for any elderly person with a weak heart and a sound head.

V

Bowls, like croquet, is another game dull to watch unless you understand its difficulties. It has always been popular in Scotland, and it is becoming more and more popular in England. Some of the bowling-greens which used to be an adjunct to every ancient manor house are now being put into order. Beau Nash may have played bowls upon a green, now a terrace, in front of the house in which these lines are being written. My brother and I are contemplating making a new green; and, as an incentive, we have been presented with a beautiful set of bowls. Bowls is played with enthusiasm in Bath. But, as yet, of the finer points of the game I am lamentably ignorant, although I can exclaim 'Good wood' when I watch a ball that is not perfectly round taking the bias and curving into position close to the 'jack'. It is affirmed —but on no very good authority—that the game was played in the twelfth century——! In the sixteenth century bowling-alleys were spoken of as 'privy moths that eat up the credit of many idle citizens', as sinks of iniquity, because large sums of money were won and lost over the games. This accounts for the popularity of the game in those days. Charles the First was an enthusiastic 'bowler'. During the eighteenth century every country house of any pretension had its bowling-green. It is a leisurely pastime. I recall a print of two old dandies sipping their port under a tree and watching a game of bowls. They had a wager together, I'll be bound, over the result. And why not? I can find no record

of ladies playing the game, but it is a game at which they might excel, because it exacts delicacy of touch rather than strength.

It is almost certain that my brother and I shall make a bowling-green, no ha'penny matter, alas! And, if we prove to be 'rabbits', we may hearten ourselves up with a glass of port (not from the wood) to be sipped leisurely under a tree. It will be in order to serve the nectar out of an eighteenth-century decanter and to pour it into glasses of the same period. Two or three elderly gentlemen may be persuaded to join us. . . .

That delightful gossip, Hone, records the following: 'On the fourth of August, 1739, a farmer of Croydon undertook for a considerable wager to bowl a bowl from that town to London-bridge, about eleven miles, in 500 times, and performed it in 445.' This works out at forty-four yards a time, no mean achievement when we consider the condition of the roads in that day *and the inevitable bias of the ball.* But there was no congestion of traffic then.

VI

I am now at the end of my tether so far as field-sports and open-air games are concerned. I have tried to write of them without prejudice. Again and again I am asked which sport and which game is my 'favourite'. But I dislike any form of 'favouritism' (hideous word!). To exalt one game at the expense of another is so fatuous, so childish. Probably we all prefer the game at which we excel, but the attractions of other games are not diminished on that account. The man or woman with a catholic taste gets most out of life; and I bear in mind my accom-

plished friend who regretted towards the close of his life the 'things' that he might have done *and didn't*.

My old friend, Morley Roberts, in what I reckon to be his best book, *Flying Cloud*, an epic of the sea, writes:

'To attain knowledge, strength, wisdom, to know life and folly and disaster and triumph—these are the things, this is youth, this is the food for the heart, for the spirit. To attain these all sacrifice is good, is splendid; is not sacrifice at all, but a gift rather, a great gift. To do, to be, to grow, to put out roots into the world and suck nutriment from the living rock and living soil! There is naught else, children of the sea, of the Island, of the land encompassed by the Father of Waters!'

Brave and true words.

CHAPTER XI

SIGHT-SEEING

I

LET us attempt to consider London as the playground of the world. No city, not even New York, has changed more in the course of the last twenty years. The new landmarks are, in their way, as interesting and exciting as the old. Nash may be turning in his grave—I devoutly hope not—but to me Regent Street has changed for the better. That is a matter of opinion. The greatest change in London is in the Londoners, the foot-passengers whom you meet in the roaring thoroughfares. There has been a levelling-up and levelling-down. When I was a boy, Piccadilly, Bond Street and the Ladies Mile were the *parades* of well-dressed men and women; they are so still; but to-day you can see well-dressed women anywhere. All the little 'shoppies', who used to be compared so unfavourably with the 'midinettes' of Paris, are captivating in their well-cut skirts, their smart stockings and shoes, and their *cloche* hats. How the darlings do it the Lord (and possibly Mr. Selfridge) only knows——! The 'boys' whom you see with them after working hours are nearly as smart as the girls. London, although they work in it—and work hard—is their playground. Amusements twenty years ago were for the well-to-do; to-day there are amusements for all—the 'pictures', cheap excur-

sions, dances, free galleries, and the fun of the fair so different from the costly fun of Mayfair. London has become jolly, because jollity is within reach of the multitude.

I recall the days when democracy couldn't dance. At the village fairs, Phyllis encircled the neck of Corydon with two stout arms, and then the pair went round and round in solemn silence 'barging' into everybody. They wanted to dance, poor dears! but they didn't know 'how'. Little kitchen-maids now trip it as lightly and daintily as daughters of Duchesses. It is this change in the people that has so changed London. Long ago Englishmen went to Paris to be exhilarated. Again and again I have inhaled the air of the boulevards and felt that I was drinking champagne. I refuse to believe that there was any particular virtue in the air. The change from London was tonic, because the Parisians understood joy in life. But to-day I dare to assert that there is more honest fun to be found in London than in Paris, and there are more beauty spots. Several enlightened Frenchmen of my acquaintance have said so.

We owe an enormous debt to Whistler, the first to reveal the Thames to us. Is there any Frenchman or American left in the world who would contend that the Thames is less beautiful than the Seine? I have been up and down both rivers from Oxford to the Isle of Dogs, from Le Havre to the Côte d'Or. Let those who have done this decide which river is the more enchanting. Whistler revealed the beauty of the Thames in and about London. He taught us 'values'; he transmuted black and white into colour. How many visitors to London, intent on seeing the

best, embark on the Thames, anywhere between Hammersmith and Wapping Old Stairs, to look at London by day or night from the river itself, once the highway of our kings? Who makes a pilgrimage from the Gate of Katharine of Braganza, still to be seen, to the wonderful Pool of London? The right time would be on any still evening when mists have thrown their veil upon the waters, when you can glide down on the ebb tide, seeing every bend and reach of the river in silvery livery. A magical experience just before the lights on both banks begin to twinkle out. Mystery encompasses all things. Imagination has full play. There is an appeal to every sense. It is said that each city has its smell. But as we float into the East End, we catch whiffs of Singapore, of Calcutta, of Canton, and Honolulu. We could go ashore and find places which might transport us to these distant cities, where we can eat, if we like, food never to be found in London west of Temple Bar. Long ago I had to write about the congested districts in and about Whitechapel, an experience not to be missed, but there isn't one Englishman in ten thousand who loves to leave his ruts

The why and wherefore is baffling. There is so much to be seen, in so short a time—seventy years at most—and we see so little.

Tennyson once expressed a wish to visit the People's Palace, designed especially for the people in the East End of London. Henry Labouchere offered to drive him down, but the Poet Laureate exclaimed mournfully: 'No, no, I couldn't bear the publicity.' Whereupon Labby replied: 'Come along! I'll guarantee that if you stand on a table, and recite "Locksley Hall" there will be nobody in the Palace

who has ever heard of Locksley Hall—or of you.' Until quite lately my lord Tom Noddy lived and died in splendid isolation, and, copying his august example, lesser folks boasted that 'they kept themselves to themselves.' Sorry company, one may remark. The pendulum is swinging the other way; there is an increasing desire on the part of everybody to see more, to widen interests, to revalue valuations. That may be one of the happier results of the Great War, or possibly due to what is called the Americanization of England. An American demands the 'best', even if he is humorously aware that he can't pay for it and won't get it.

What to see, or what to tell others to see, is a difficult question to answer, like ordering dinner for half a dozen persons whom you have never met, or furnishing a house for a stranger. Sanguine youth is prepared to do both. One may offer a few hints. The proper use of the eyes is not taught in our schools; it is taught by the Dottoressa Montesorri, Dalcroze, and a few others. An intelligent stranger, visiting London for the first time, hardly knows what to 'see' first. Let him look at the forest before he scrutinizes the trees. Guide-books are little more than catalogues. They tell you what to see, but not *how* to see it.

I suggested the river as a sort of moving platform, *un parvis roulant*, from which one could look up at London; and I bespoke for my traveller a tip-tilted nose. The secret of sight-seeing is to look up. Mont Blanc is more impressive from Chamounix than it is from the summit. St. Paul's Cathedral and The Tower are monuments indeed when seen from the river. There is so little room in London to behold London. Seek the open spaces. We have nothing

quite so satisfying as the vista from the Place Vendôme, across the Pont Alexandre III, to the gilded dome of Les Invalides, or the other enchanting vista looking up the Champs Elysées to the Arc de Triomphe, but Paris has nothing quite comparable to the towers and pinnacles of Westminster as seen above the trees of St. James's Park, when you stand at the Buckingham Palace end and look across the water in an easterly and south-easterly direction. The foreground—lake, lawns and trees—is beautiful, but the background and mid-distance ravish the eye, particularly if visibility is not too good. We have specimens of domestic architecture to which distance—and distance alone—lends enchantment.

Beauty can be discovered in the Cromwell Road if it is seen in a fog (not too dense) when the lamps are lit. In January we have all kinds of weather. Many of our beauty spots demand sunshine. St. James's Palace, beneath the kiss of the orb of day, glows with delicate blushes. It is a dream by moonlight. But—to watch the mounting of the Guard on a raw damp morning is disappointing. Choose a fine day for that honoured ceremony. Still, it cannot be too strongly insisted that London must be seen in all weathers, as Whistler saw it. Piccadilly Circus, at night, is beautiful in driving rain, when the wet roadway and pavements flash back the scintillating colours from above. The rain softens what is garish and blatant. It has amused me to notice the effect of kaleidoscopic lights seen through rain upon the ordinary foot-passengers. Under cover of umbrellas they stand still and stare, spellbound. The flash-signs are familiar enough, too familiar, but they are seeing them under fresh conditions. . . .

The London parks—'the lungs of London', as Lord Chatham called them—are unique because they are *in* London. The pilgrim can step into them out of the traffic of the streets. After the Thames, I rank the Serpentine as a good place from which a stranger can get provocative peeps at mighty Babylon. In ancient days, when such garments were obligatory, I have taken off a frock coat and a tall hat, hired a skiff, and rowed myself about the Serpentine seeking for beauty spots. With a congenial companion, there is no pleasanter way of whiling away an afternoon than visiting the different parks (not all on the same day) and 'hunting' these 'spots'. A lover of Barrie will spend an hour at least in Kensington Gardens, in Peter Pan Land; and he will do well to pass a few minutes in the dogs' cemetery, where he will find some pathetic inscriptions on tiny tombs. . . .

The parks serve the purpose of foreground to lovely glimpses of London; they 'present' London to the stranger informally; they dispel first impressions gleaned from train windows as the stranger rolls through hideous suburbs. 'If this be Woking,' exclaimed Comyns Carr, the critic, 'let me dream again!' Hazlitt says somewhere: 'The faculties of the mind when not exerted, or when cramped by custom or authority, become listless, torpid, and unfit for the purposes of thought and action.' The faculties of observation are too listless in most of us, because we are cramped by the preconceived ideas which custom and authority impose upon us. That is why I am attempting to persuade the stranger to gaze at the forest before he examines the trees.

Sight-seeing is brain and back-racking.

II

There is nothing quite so tiring as a long morning or afternoon spent in a picture gallery. Any foolish pilgrim who tries to 'do' the National Gallery in three hours will be 'done in', and quite incapable of recognising beauty if he sees it. It is important therefore to avoid fatigue, best achieved by the exercise of commonsense. Plan the day's programme at your ease in an armchair with a good map in your hand and with the wise resolution to 'go slow', and to wander from your programme if fancy moves you to do so. Your own fancy is the best guide. But the point to remember is that for all sight-seeing there must be preparation, a soaping of the ways. Delightful books, not guide-books, are within reach of your hand. If you love pictures, read *A Wanderer in London*, by E. V. Lucas. Let him show you what he thinks best in our picture galleries. Whatever your hobby may be, whatever your *expertise* may be, you will find books on your special subject which will be invaluable. Many can be picked up, second-hand, at any book-shop in Charing Cross Road for a shilling or two.

The curious may wish to see the 'underside' of London. Private detectives make a living by showing to visitors thieves' kitchens and the like. The Chief Commissioner of Police confirmed my conviction that these dens of iniquity were 'run' on business lines at the expense of the credulous stranger. The same high authority told me that I should be reasonably safe by myself in the East End slums, unless my appearance provoked ribald chaff. I did adventure alone into unsavoury alleys and

houses and enjoyed the experience. London is the best policed city in Europe.

The East End should be seen at night, when the streets are swarming with Lascars, Chinks, Malays, Negroes, 'Turks, heretics, infidels, jumpers' (who is a jumper?) 'and Jews', especially Jews. You will begin to reckon how many Londons there are, each a cosmos in itself. Have a rollicking time at a Whitechapel music hall, and realise what intimacy can be established between performers and audience. Here, at any rate, is human nature at its best—and worst. Be prepared for chaff. Factory girls are adepts at duologue. I submit a specimen which I overheard on a bus steered through bewildering traffic by a Tony Weller of a pilot. A pert flapper giggled into a seat close to me.

FLAPPER (to Driver): I sy—fust time you ever drove a bus ain't it?

DRIVER (thickly): No. Fust time you ever rode on one, ain't it?

FLAPPER: Yus—as a rule I tykes my kerridge.

DRIVER: You means the ole pram.

FLAPPER (slightly nettled): I sy—don't try to be too funny, 'cos yer fyce ain't myde that wy.

DRIVER: My fyce ain't my fortin' anymore 'n yours is.

Here unfortunately, I had to leave the bus. There are no more horse buses, but the chaff goes on as of yore.

III

The pilgrim should visit happy Hampstead, Clapham, Highgate, Chelsea, Kew and Richmond. Hampton Court must be seen when the horse-chestnuts are lighting their lamps. The places mentioned are rich

in historical associations; there is hardly an ancient house now standing which has not sheltered some celebrity. A book has been written about the famous people who lived in Saint James's Square. If the past appeals, take into your confidence a good bookseller, who will make out a list of the books which will help you. The great houses in London are disappearing. Devonshire House has gone. Dorchester House is going. Stafford House, where the Dukes of Sutherland dispensed such princely hospitality, is now the London Museum. Montagu House, in Whitehall, once the most exclusive house in London, is a public building. . . .

Of the museums what can one say except this: you must seek in them, under the friendly guidance of the right books, what appeals to you, whether it be porcelain, pottery, furniture, plate, MSS., antique marbles, or prehistoric remains. Again, if you attempt to see too much you will see nothing. In the Gold Room at the British Museum, two objects alone are worth a visit—the Portland Vase, shattered by a vandal and miraculously put together, and the cup that belonged to Charles the Bold of Burgundy. Any expert would devote a week to the Salting Collection in South Kensington. Don't waste precious time staring at what fails to interest, but remember that lack of interest in anything that may be termed the best of its kind is a misfortune.

The innumerable treasures at Hertford House were collected by two men. In what spirit ought one to approach Manchester Square? Essentially the Gallic, because so much here is French. It would be impious to roll into these magnificent saloons after eating a beefsteak with fried onions and drinking a

tankard of ale, both God's good creatures. No; I prefer to look at French masterpieces after a French breakfast of coffee, crisp *croissants*, and Isigny butter. Then my soul has room to sing within me. When I paid my first visit to the Louvre as a boy I was wisely instructed: 'March straight to the Venus of Milo, pause at the end of the corridor, try to take it in, and if you can take it in, march out of the Louvre, sit down in the gardens, and let the beauty and glory of it soak to your inmost tissues.' I must confess that I did not obey this injunction. I lost a soul-satisfying first impression by staring stupidly at five hundred pictures. At Hertford House the pilgrim will do well to focus attention upon the pictures, or the Sévres porcelain, or the furniture, or the armour. I could spend two hours with the snuff-boxes. Two hours are the outside limit of keen observation. R.L.S. observed that five minutes sufficed to put into words all that could be said about a beautiful landscape; but he did not tell us how long to look at it. The first glance at a superb piece of porcelain is disappointing to me, because I fail to take it in. I have to examine slowly the paste, the glaze, the decoration, the modelling and the gilding, before I can appreciate it as an incomparable whole. That is why it is expedient to visit great shrines alone, unless you have a friend who loves what you love. Then companionship is at its 'best'.

I should like to say something about pictures, which so far as I know, has not been said yet. The ordinary amateur who knows nothing of the *technique* of painting must often wonder, as I have done, at the knowledge of the connoisseur, who can recognize a Reynolds or a Gainsborough at sight, and detect the

difference between an original and the finest copy. He has knowledge of pigments used by individual painters, of canvas, of brushwork, and of certain 'tricks' of craftsmanship too many to be set down. Cosway, for example, in the background of his miniatures used a delicate blue that is unmistakable. I once asked an expert upon blue-and-white Oriental porcelain to tell me how he had trained his eye. He took from his waistcoat pocket a small broken bit which he placed in my hand. 'That,' he said solemnly, 'is of the finest period; I have carried it in my pocket for twenty years. I look at it whenever I am in doubt.' Wise man! But it is less difficult than might be supposed to learn something of the *technique* of individual painters. A good memory is essential. An American is not afraid to use his tongue. The curators of our museums are at their 'best' when they are answering questions. One of these informed gentlemen was showing me the other day some Carolean plate. I thanked him for his courtesy; to my surprise he thanked me. 'It is so dull for me,' he said regretfully. 'Few out of thousands who come here take the trouble to ask questions which I am paid, not too handsomely, to answer. They moon in, they moon out; I wonder why they visit us at all.'

I recalled a line out of *Rejected Addresses:* 'All seen yet naught admired'.

Lovers of Dickens will visit Dickens Land in London (much of it swept away), ending up in Doughty Street, at the home of the Dickens Fellowship. There is no such sanctuary for the lovers of Thackeray.

The biggest shops are not the best shops, but as

emporia they should be visited in the right spirit. I can never resist poking my nose into these vast establishments when 'sales' are advertized. The 'bargain counters' allure me as a looker-on; and the eager pushing crowds of women, the sad resignation on the faces of the few men present, the 'patter' of the vendors, their patience and good temper are fish to my net. In many streets there are still to be found the open-air markets, where, not so long ago, authentic bargains could be picked up, notably in the Caledonian Market. When was the last wife sold in Smithfield? Was she a bargain? A 'Smithfield' bargain is still good English for the 'taking in' of a customer. Pause, gentle pilgrim, at any big bargain. Have the 'bit' vetted. Pierrepont Morgan, one of the greatest of collectors, rarely (if ever) trusted his own judgment, as Dr. George Williamson will tell you. It would be wise to consult *him*, if you were contemplating the purchase of valuable miniatures or plate. And he might, if you carried reassuring credentials on your face, show you the catalogue, printed on white vellum, of what Mr. Morgan bought, the 'best' in the world; there are only a few copies in existence.

IV

In February Parliament opens. Behold the King in his gilded coach drawn by eight cream-coloured horses controlled by postilions in gorgeous liveries; and the uproarious reception accorded to our sovereigns by loyal subjects ought to furnish a thrill and an assurance that the monarchy rests securely upon the affection and esteem of the millions.

It is a great spectacle, this glittering procession

from Buckingham Palace to Westminster, to any onlooker with a sense of historical perspective. I am told that the coach itself is a safe but not too comfortable conveyance, and that the occupants now and again are assailed by that indisposition too familiar to many who cross from Dover to Calais when the Channel is choppy—or worse. But I have also heard that this Cinderella's coach has been rehung since Victorian days, which may account for the gracious smiles of our beloved Queen as she swings leisurely through the serried ranks of policemen, soldiers, and cheering crowds.

The motor-car put to bed these pomps and vanities of yesterday. But, beholding the royal carriage, we can envisage the resplendent equipages which I can remember as a boy in which great lords and ladies went to Court. My mother told me that this was something of an ordeal not only to blushing maidens about to kiss the royal hand for the first time, but to portly dowagers not looking quite at their best beneath a mid-day sun! A London crowd, then as now, chaffed unmercifully high and mighty personages—wholesome discipline for them.

Having seen Parliament opened in rain or shine, our pilgrim will be seized probably with a desire to see the two Chambers (an easy matter), and later on, possibly, to obtain permission to sit in the Strangers' Gallery of the House of Commons, when some lively debate is anticipated. On such occasions there is a brisk demand for 'seats'. Our pilgrim, if he knows any member of either Chamber, can get without difficulty the necessary 'permit'. Failing this he can apply to his ambassador or to his Consulate.

V

Westminster has a charm peculiarly its own. A great public-school, the magnificent Abbey, Saint Margaret's Church, quaint streets, squares, and slums, lie within its precincts. Hardly a yard of ground but has historical interest. Coming from the general to the particular, from a bird's-eye view of London and Londoners *en gros*, each must decide for himself what details present claims upon attention. Take with you to Westminster Hall or Abbey a well-informed gossip, who loves every stick and stone. He alone can present the past in the guise of an appetising dish, easily assimilated and digested. You must furnish your own appetite for the fare provided. *Festina lente!*

Sir Christopher Wren.

Sir Christopher was the nephew of a bishop, Matthew Wren, and the son of a Dean of Windsor, sometime chaplain to Charles I. It is not surprising that he built fifty churches. He was also a mathematician, and an astronomer who built the Observatory at Greenwich. Assuredly a man of many parts. His favourite plan for the rebuilding of Saint Paul's was rejected. Pepys records that Sir Christopher invented a machine for drawing pictures (and so did Prince Rupert) of which the diarist gives no particulars. John Evelyn barely mentions the plan for the rebuilding of the City of London after the Great Fire, which, so it was currently believed at the time, was a punishment for gluttony. Having 'assisted' at several City dinners I am wondering when we may expect another Great Fire. . . .

Sir Christopher was rightly regarded as a prodigy,

even when he was a Gentleman Commoner at Oxford. It is worth remembering that he studied architecture in Paris, where architecture is more or less homogeneous. In London architecture is a welter of different styles. Nor is it easy to reconstruct the Paris of the seventeenth century. What Wren 'got' from Paris cannot be determined; what he evolved out of his own colossal brain is his monument. as he wished it to be.

Is it possible to teach the novice, interested in architecture, how to look at Saint Paul's Cathedral? The ordinary tourist gapes in sheer bewilderment at masses of stone which convey nothing to him. To our pilgrim, whom we may credit with more intelligence, I can confidently commend a remarkable book lately published, entitled *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, by Henry Adams. Of this the *Washington Star* observed: 'It is a rich and wonderful, and notable study—rich in theme, wonderful in insight, and notable in its method and effect.' It deals with Gothic architecture, but it teaches in no uncertain terms the art of observation. After reading it I was humiliatingly aware of years wasted in looking at the great fanes of France *in the wrong way*. What Henry Adams inculcates applies to the contemplation of all buildings. It is positively essential—he leaves no room for doubt on that point—to begin at the beginning and climb up through the centuries. He makes it plain to the meanest intelligence that an appreciation of the sixteenth-century *flèche* of Chartres Cathedral, that miracle in stone, will be hopelessly inadequate to any student of Gothic unless he has absorbed and understood the eleventh-century aims and objectives as exemplified in the foundations of

the Abbey Church at Mont-Saint Michel. You must travel on and upward from the Norman piers and round arches to the bewildering embellishments of the Later Gothic. What Adams says about exercising the powers of observation in the right way is nothing short of a revelation and a new gospel.

VI

If the Royal Standard is floating over Buckingham Palace, permission can be obtained to see the private apartments at Windsor Castle. Both Windsor and Eton College can be 'done' in one day, but why not take two?

As a boy at a preparatory school near Windsor, I used to attend afternoon Service on Sundays in Saint George's Chapel, sacrosanct to the Knights of the Garter. It was in this miniature cathedral that the late Henry Kemble listened with increasing exasperation to a dignitary of the Church (mis)-reading the Second Lesson. Suddenly, to the consternation of the vergers, Kemble's magnificent diapason tones were heard: 'Mumble-mumble—mumble the Word of God! Disgraceful!' A verger led Kemble from the Chapel. He was not aware that he had taken part in the Service.

The vergers in cathedrals still fill me with awe. What are they in private life? Inoffensive citizens, no doubt. Of old all vergers carried the *verge*, or rod, their staff of office. To-day, in some churches, there are women-vergers——! Quite recently, a party of Americans were being shown a church in Dorset by an old woman. One of them asked the ancient dame if she was the pew-opener. She replied

tragically: 'Ah-h-h—that's what I used to call meself, but this yere present encumbrance calls me a virgin, he do.'

Beneath the Chapel of Saint George of England lies Charles the Martyr. I have been told that when his remains were reverentially collected and laid to rest, the bones of one finger, unaccountably left out, were placed on the tomb. Probably the story is apocryphal. Our Senior Knight of the Garter was kind enough to show me a portion of the Garter riband, *pale* blue, which Charles took off immediately before his execution. It was handed to Bishop Juxon. A portion was torn off and came into the possession of the great gentleman who showed it to me. But, oddly enough, he was able to secure the rest of the riband, and the two pieces fitted. The colour of this most famous of all ribands has been continually changed: three times by Edward VII. It is worn, unlike other ribands, from left to right instead of from right to left. I was asked once if I noticed anything wrong about a famous portrait. I replied that the Garter riband was worn from right to left. It seems that originally the painter of the portrait had introduced the red riband of the Bath. Later on, when the gentleman became a Knight of the Garter he instructed some other painter to change the colour of the riband. All is Vanity, said the Preacher.

As a royal residence, Windsor is incomparably the 'best' in England, but it has its disabilities. The kitchens are far away from the dining-room. I think it was King Edward who ordered rails to be laid down and inaugurated a trolley service. In the dining-room is a dining-table of mahogany which can be enlarged *à discrétion*, but which still preserves

its perfect circle. In one of the windows used to stand a punch-bowl of solid silver, made to the order of George IV, large enough to be used as a bath. How many gallons of punch it held, I forgot to ask.

The private apartments I found disappointing—red, white, and green drawing-rooms, grandiose in character—Victorian in taste.

Nobody has explained to me why Cardinal Wolsey's once magnificent tomb was subjected to such ignominious treatment. His tomb-house has been reconstructed as a memorial chapel to the Prince Consort. Cromwell sold for some £600 the metal work designed by Benedetto. That is intelligible. What howls for explanation is that in 1805 the Cardinal's marble sarcophagus was removed to Saint Paul's Cathedral and used as a monument over Nelson's grave.

The Great Park at Windsor should be visited in June. Then you can fall asleep under some ancient oak and dream of Herne the Hunter.

The terrace, where George III and Queen Charlotte exchanged kindly greetings with their humbler neighbours in Windsor town, is as delightful as it was in Evelyn's day. 'The keepe, or mount,' he writes, 'hath, beside its incomparable prospect, a very profound well; and the terrace towards Eaton, with the park, meandring Thames, and sweete meadows, yield one of ye most delightful prospects.'

VII

Floreat Etona!

Eton College claims to be the best public-school in the world, a claim only disputed by ardent Harrovians and Wykehamists. Admittedly it has

nurtured more famous men than any other. We shall visit it because we happen to be at Windsor, but it is at its 'best' on the Fourth of June.

I hope that my pilgrim will see Eton with an Eton boy as cicerone. Then he may expect to be shewn nearly everything, including the 'block', where the birch rod still falls upon the bare flesh of potential prime-ministers. He should attend, if time permits, service in the noble chapel; he should poise himself upon a well-polished stool in the 'sock-shop' on Barnes's Bridge, and entertain his youthful host handsomely in return for his entertainment. Any talkative boy is a mine of information. Be present too when 'absence' is called in the School Yard; and then you will have an opportunity of taking stock of the 'swells', or 'bloods'. At the end of your visit a grant in aid should be forthcoming, a crisp note.

Dames presided over some of the 'houses' at Eton, but not necessarily of the feminine gender. 'Badger' Hale was a dame, when I was a boy, and Miss Evans, whose portrait by Sargent is a masterpiece. An Etonian must tell our pilgrim what the functions of a 'dame' were. I believe that Eton is the only public school that maintains a pack of beagles. They are gallant little hounds, with a most musical 'cry', and their temporary 'Master' serves a fine apprenticeship and is held in high honour.

Etonians, wherever you may find them, hang together and are a unit in upholding the traditions of their school. The Eton 'hall-mark' is as recognizable as the Oxford 'manner'. It is a joy to me to revisit Eton, particularly the playing fields. Sitting under the immemorial elms I saw Walter Forbes, then Captain of the Cricket XI, throw a cricket ball one

hundred and thirty-two yards—a record still. I saw my distant kinsmen, the Lytteltons, trailing clouds of glory behind them in those same Elysian Fields; and one of them, Edward, came back to his old school as Headmaster. Alfred has testified somewhere to his grief at leaving Eton, and his conviction at the time that he would never be such a tremendous 'swell' again. We minnows would ask the riddle: 'Why is the Eton XI like a shirt?' 'Because there are three Studds in it.'

The public-school system hardens hearts as well as muscles. My kind friend and publisher, the late Sir John Murray, proposing my health at a public dinner, observed that he had only one thing against me—I had not been educated at Eton. It has been said by an Etonian that any boy educated there is self-educated. I did not avail myself of this quip, but in self-defence I told a story about an Eton boy of my acquaintance. He was 'caddying' for his father at golf. That gentleman, a famous sprinter in his day, drove a terrific ball which struck a man who was driving a pony-cart. The victim fell out of the cart and lay senseless on the road. His executioner ran swiftly towards him followed by his son. He paused to recover breath, whereupon the Etonian asked his father if the man was dead. 'I hope not,' gasped the father, 'why do you ask such a horrible question?' The Etonian replied imperturbably: 'I only thought that if he was dead, I might take him home for my ferrets.' Commenting on this, I affirmed that no Harrovian would have said this; an Etonian present murmured: 'No—he wouldn't have had the gumption.'

Fortunately the victim suffered no serious injury,

and, after receiving a *solatium*, remarked that the gentleman could have another shot at him at the same price.

If possible, the pilgrim should obtain permission to see Holland House without and within. Greville has much to say about the celebrities who breakfasted and dined there. It is a country house in the heart of London. Before the War, the late Lord Ilchester pointed out to me pheasants wild in his garden and park. I never dared to ask what the rates and taxes were upon his princely domain. What are they now?

Holland House was built by Sir Walter Cope and much enlarged by the Earl of Holland, who married Cope's daughter and was beheaded in 1649. Addison died in Holland House, after marrying the widow of the Earl of Holland, but E. V. Lucas suggests in *London Revisited* that the great essayist enjoyed 'neither matrimony nor the splendour of the wife's palace, creeping away for simplicity and comfort to a neighbouring coffee house'. Later on the property was bought by Henry Fox, the first Baron Holland, the father of Charles James Fox.

For nearly three hundred years Holland House has stood out, almost supreme, as the home of wit and beauty, of fashion and fame, of a lavish and kindly hospitality to which even the pen of Macaulay could hardly do justice. The pilgrim, if he be permitted to walk through the rooms, can conjure up visions of Sydney Smith, Sheridan, Talleyrand, Tommy Moore, Rogers, Lord Melbourne, and hundreds of lesser lights. The carping Greville often dined with Lord Holland and found the talk 'pretty good'. He met Macaulay there for the first time

and took him to be 'a common-looking man in black'. He admits frankly that he set him down for a dull fellow *after* hearing him talk! He continues, 'Not a ray of intellect beams from his countenance, a lump of more ordinary clay never enclosed a powerful mind and lively imagination.' Greville has many unkind things to say about his hostess and her guests, but even he is constrained to admit that 'It is *the* house of all Europe.' They dined at five, an early hour, even in those days, but it was miladi's 'whim'. Lord Holland sat at the head of his table and ate nothing. Lord Holland, when unsupported by a single peer, stood up in the House of Lords and said: 'My Lords, I stand before you like our First Parents—alone, naked, but unashamed.'

Greville has been so much discussed recently that these lines (written in 1876 by the late Lord Winchilsea) may be quoted:

> Greville sets his joyless face
> Versus all the human race.

The charm of Chelsea still remains—and its gaiety. Of the famous people who lived there, from Sir Thomas More and Hans Holbein to George Eliot, space forbids a list; but Chelsea speaks eloquently of them all. The gloomy Smollett might have written gloomy novels had he lived anywhere else.

Visit Number 5 (now 24), Cheyne Row, where grumbled and wrote that dour Scot, Tammas Carlyle. Here the manuscript of the first volume of the *French Revolution*, accidentally burnt when in the custody of John Stuart Mill, was rewritten under intolerable difficulties. As a solatium Mill offered Carlyle a hundred pounds. I think Tammas refused

it.* Is *Sartor Resartus* read by the rising generation? I don't think so. Does anybody read Herbert Spencer? He was taken to Cheyne Row to see Carlyle. After the meeting the synthetic philosopher had nothing pleasant to say about the historian. Tammas, at the same moment, was muttering: 'Herbert Spencer—an immeasurable ass!'

Charles Kingsley lived at Saint Luke's Rectory, when he was a boy at King's College, but his novels were written at Eversley.

The Tate Gallery is in Chelsea. Here you will find a fine picture by Fred Walker, the original of Little Billee in Trilby. Here, too, hang the masterpieces of Watts, who married Ellen Terry when she was a young girl. During a recent flood, Father Thames, full of strong waters, invaded the basement of the gallery and wantonly assailed many drawings in water-colour by Turner. . . .

To lovers of Chelsea porcelain, a few words can be said about the first factory. It stood at the junction of Lawrence Street and Cheyne Walk. Mr. Solon records that a partial work of excavation on this spot brought to light the remains of a kiln and a few fragments of china. . . . The same high authority states that there existed a close relationship between the Chelsea and Bow factories and a striking similarity of 'paste'. In 1745 the potters had achieved consummate skill, as the famous 'goat and bee' jug bears witness. In 1749 the Duke of Cumberland and Nicholas Sprimont went into what must have been a curious partnership. During Sprimont's management, in the course of one decade, enormous quantities of the finest porcelain were sold at public auction. 'Butcher' Cumberland, with an eye skinned

for the 'main chance', probably stimulated the demand whilst Sprimont attended to the supply. What the aristocracy of the day thought about a royal duke bemeaning himself by going into trade, they may have kept to themselves. Doubtless H.R.H. posed as the patron of a new industry, but he saw to it that he had his share of the profits. That gay gossip, Horace Walpole, makes innumerable references to Nolkejumskio (the cant name for the victor of Fontenoy), but is courtier enough never to allude to him as Sprimont's partner.

The Royal Hospital at Chelsea was built by Sir Christopher Wren. Here Wellington lay in state, before the great warrior was laid to rest in Saint Paul's Cathedral. The pilgrim should visit the Pensioners, and have a talk with one of them. There used to be a *nostrum*, supposed to be a cure for gouty affections, sold under the caption 'Chelsea Pensioner'. Whether or not experiments were made on the veterans, or whether one of them furnished the original recipe, I can't find out.

Sir Hans Sloane removed to his house in Chelsea his museum, which he bequeathed to the nation on certain conditions. He died at the ripe age of ninety-two, full of years and honours, one of the most distinguished men of his time. The Duke of Montague's mansion in Bloomsbury was bought to house his books and collections; and thus the British Museum came first into being.

CHAPTER XII

FOOD AND WINE

I

ENGLISHMEN—I have said—get the food they deserve. It is shockingly bad in most of the inns and hotels out of the big cities; and is it pathos or bathos to record that for the most part tourists believe it to be good? When I wrote on this subject some years ago a gentleman from the Antipodes took exception to what I said. He replied that he had travelled from John o'Groats to Land's End, staying in many hotels, and that he had found the food provided *better* than what he had at home. Truth informed this statement, but I reflected that if he had spent his life in France instead of Back of Beyond, his opinion upon matters gastronomical would have been more worthy of consideration.

A demand for better cooked food would create the supply. Many Englishmen pride themselves upon eating, with a humble and grateful heart, whatever is set before them. These worthy people confound the epicure with the glutton. An epicure demands quality, whereas the glutton wallows in quantity. A *gourmand* is not a *gourmet*. The late Captain Newnham Davis—better known as the Dwarf of Blood—wrote much (and admirably) about food, but he was singularly abstemious. He wanted a little of the 'best'. He got it.

The best food is not easily procurable anywhere. I have dined vilely in a fashionable restaurant in Paris, but at another's expense. The dinner was improperly ordered, ill served, and the food chosen vitiated the palate for the fine wine. The *maître d'hôtel*, reading my thoughts, glanced at me and shrugged his shoulders. Had he been consulted, the result would have been different. His customer—as I was well aware—had taken me to the restaurant at the last moment, selected a few dishes from the *carte du jour* and two noble wines, and had then outraged the sensibilities of an artist by insisting that we were in a desperate hurry inasmuch as we were going on to the play.

That is *not* the way to do it, either in Paris or London!

I learned the right method from a French friend, a painter, with whom I was staying in Paris long ago. He was not in too easy circumstances. After the simple French breakfast, we adventured to a small hotel, now pulled down, not far from the Avenue de l'Opéra. The *patron* was my host's friend. We sat down in a quaint little courtyard and smoked a cigarette. Without any awkwardness my friend mentioned the sum he was prepared to pay for my entertainment. *What could the patron do for us?* Two wines were selected, a white and red burgundy: one a delicate Meursault with the captivating label *Goutte d'Or* (from the *Côte d'Or*), and the other a Romanée Conti of age and distinction. I am reasonably certain that the price paid by my friend for these wines was not the price as marked on the Wine List. To choose the right ambrosia for our nectar was a labour of love and experience. The two

artists, after much colloguing, pinned their joyous expectations to a *Sole Dieppoise* and a *gigot de six heures.* I gathered that a tiny leg of well-hung mutton would be treated tenderly for six hours and basted with claret, as it sat enthroned upon a bed of fragrant herbs. An atom of garlic, like the onion in Sydney Smith's salad, was 'unsuspected to animate the whole'. A *soufflé au Parmésan* crowned the feast. Very simple, you will say. But, had you listened to these two men as I did, you would have come to the conclusion that it was not so simple as it seemed. We descended to the cellar. The white wine was left in its bin till the last moment, the Romanée was carried to the patron's office and placed, end up, upon the window sill where a late September sun could be trusted to warm adequately the bottled sunshine within. At nine that evening I could exclaim with Sydney Smith: 'Fate cannot harm me, I have dined to-day'.

Naturally I thanked my friend for the pains which he had taken on my behalf, but he replied candidly: 'I always do this: it takes time, but one is repaid, *hein?*'

I wish to stress the point that one *is* repaid most handsomely. What took place in that tranquil courtyard was an object lesson for life. Even in country inns, or in unpretentious London restaurants, it *pays* to have a word or two in advance with the proprietor. I have known some famous restaurateurs. They are not, as a rule, long-lived, if their profession (or art) as caterers to an ignorant public is dear to them. I imagine that they die of vexation of spirit, of disappointment. They have seen customers gobbling anchovies just before sipping a first-growth claret—!

How could they survive such a lamentable spectacle? The great Joseph left the service of a multi-millionaire, gave up the salary of a cabinet minister (he was indeed a cabinet minister), and assigned as his only reason that he was losing his art. Doubtless he was. Vatel, the chef of the Prince de Condé, committed suicide because the fish did not arrive in time for dinner! All joking apart the culinary art *is* an art, although only the few in this country acclaim it as such.

I cannot give names, except collectively. There are hotels and restaurants—Claridge's, the Ritz, the Berkeley, the Savoy, the Maison Basque, the Carlton—and how many more—which appeal to the rich, but even in these an intelligent interest in food and wine secures more attention and better service. I repeat the injunction of a gourmet of my acquaintance: '*Always order dinner before luncheon.*' I would add: 'Do so leisurely.' The nobler wines cannot be treated cavalierly, nor can the humbler vegetables. The cooking of cabbage, cauliflower, and potatoes throughout the kingdom is lamentably bad.

It is certain that no dinner, however carefully ordered, can be first rate if there are too many dishes. Half way through a city banquet the palate is cloyed and refuses to function properly. To those unhappy persons who have no sense of taste or smell, this is a matter of no importance, but why, it may be asked, do they squander money upon what they are unable to appreciate. I can admire the man who is content with a raw onion and a crust of bread, or a baked bullock's heart. But the profiteer who gets all four feet into the trough and gobbles indiscriminately dishes that might tempt Lucullus arouses in me homicidal feelings.

In the smaller restaurants, the proprietor will be flattered if you ask him to mention the *spécialités de la maison*. There is always some dainty dish which challenges particular attention; there is always some wine which the proprietor cherishes for an appreciative customer. He wants, unless he is a fool, to please you; and, if he does please you, he is sure to hang about waiting for a pleasant word of thanks, too often withheld.

Other things being equal, so far as the minor restaurants are concerned, it is worth while taking pains to find out the names of the newer establishments, more or less on trial. At these a more sustained effort is made to satisfy and increase the *clientèle*. I recall with regret many restaurants which made an excellent start, established themselves in popular favour, and then fell short of their own standards. Largely again the fault of an indiscriminating public, although the greed of the proprietor may so easily defeat his ends. Very rarely is the dinner at a fixed price worth eating. Too often it is cooked for clients who dine early. Two dishes fresh from the fire are more appetizing and wholesome than a dozen which are kept lukewarm. All character goes out of them; the subtile ethers from fragrant herbs have departed.

It is cheering to record my conviction that food in London is being better cooked, although the 'roast', once the pride of English cooks, is not so good as it used to be, partly because the actual meat, beef, and mutton, has been kept in cold storage. Grouse out of season lose their distinctive flavour.

As a general rule, order food that is in season; it is better and cheaper. Inexpensive fish, such as halibut,

John Dory, and the humble skate are delicious if rightly cooked. A vegetable course is to be commended. One rich dish is enough. Two provoke dyspepsia, the root of all evil. I interested myself in watching some trippers this summer. Their one consuming idea was to eat as much as possible. Father, mother and children gorged themselves. At about five in the afternoon they were fed to the teeth with every kind of food procurable. The Olympians were suffering from acute indigestion; the children were fretful and tired out. Falling into talk with them I learned that they had risen at five in some distant city and expected to be home at midnight. What a holiday! Some of the children were spanked into sullen silence, but a tiny girl who confided to me that she was suffering 'not 'arf' from nausea, declared valiantly: 'But we've had a lovely time, Mister.' Truly, as the French say of us: we take our pleasures sadly.

As a nation we not only eat badly cooked food, but much too much of it. A London alderman once remarked that he felt that he had dined when that portion of his person which was the first to enter a room, carefully placed nine inches from the table, touched——! Probably he was a self-made man, and his fellow-countrymen, also self-manufactured, seem to think that you can't have too much of a good thing, or of a bad thing if you reckon it to be good.

Women are not much interested in food, which is a pity, because they have more delicate palates than men. Young women jump up from a perfect little dinner at a restaurant, like the Savoy, to dance——! I do not blame them, far from it, for preferring dancing to eating, but why mix up the two? A

young man doesn't stop in the middle of a round of golf to play tennis.

Our cookery books—with one or two notable exceptions—are not very inspiring. If we could find an author who would deal with vegetables as Charles Lamb dealt with roast pork——! Lady Jekyll, in her admirable *Kitchen Essays*, has something Elian about her remarks on food. The good Mrs. Beeton, whom I regard as a sort of syndicate of plain and uninteresting cooking, is an apostle of mediocrity. Brillat Savarin, Francatelli and Soyer (who begins a recipe for one sauce with 'Take two hams') are too extravagant and grandiose. Walker's *Original* may be heartily commended, and a little book on dinners written by the late Sir Henry Thompson. Generally speaking, cooking, if it is to be regarded as a fine art, is treated without enthusiasm in the text-books, exactly as it is treated in everyday life. Excellent housewives have complained to me that 'ordering' dinner is a perfunctory job; it shouldn't be to an intelligent woman. I feel certain that Lady Jekyll, for instance, enjoyed a talk with her cook, even as the average woman enjoys a talk with her dressmaker. I heard it said of a village damsel that 'she pined her belly for pride of back'. Humorously true of tens of thousands of girls in the humbler walks of life.

My fancy lingers upon a text-book on cooking, with some such caption as *The Romance of the Kitchen Range*, which would set forth anecdotally, with more than a dash of literary ability, the gospel of good food intelligently treated. Such a volume, which could be issued in fairly cheap form, would take an honoured place beside similar volumes which deal with the delights of the garden. The golden link between

kitchen garden and kitchen would be salient. So would the links between altar (the stove), river, moor, and salty meadow. I have faith that such a book will be written by a judicious taster of food, not a glutton. Mrs. Earle, I may be reminded, in her *Potpourri in a Surrey Garden*, introduced some excellent recipes. She showed the way.

Some of our doctors, but not in the genial spirit of Sir Henry Thompson, are treating food seriously, too seriously for the man in the street; but they, if they could do it, might achieve a revolution in our national cookery. It is not to be done in a didactic spirit, scientifically considering food values, telling us to weigh carbons, proteids, and what not. What should we think of a guest who brought to the dinner table a pair of scales? He, as guest, would be weighed instantly by us—and found wanting. Still, the doctors are to be thanked for advocating the importance of food, indeed its super-importance. They have made it plain that dyspepsia has wrecked happiness more than drunkenness.

I hold no brief for expensive cookery. I plead the cause of the many not the few. Is it possible to begin with the many? Or, must enlightenment come from the few? Why can the Irish cook potatoes, when the English fail so conspicuously in our treatment of our commonest vegetable? Why is hotel toast uneatable? I plead also for a greater catholicity of taste. London is Cosmopolis. The best food of all the nations is procurable in London, if the visitor knows where to go. The Italian and French quarters transport the traveller to Italy and France, but, alas! too often he carries with him his own taste for his own food. He disdains dietic experiments; he eyes

distrustfully all dishes unfamiliar to him. His fixed standard of comparison may be a well-grilled chop and a whisky-and-soda; he is adventurous everywhere except at the table.

Conceivably, the cooking of food may—if the domestic problem grows more acute—be undertaken by a benevolent government. We shall, perhaps, have a Cabinet Minister ministering to the tastes of the million. The experiment has been tried, with signal failure, by our service flats. But, talking with the directing manager of one of them, he told me with disarming candour that it was his business to satisfy his clients, not to educate them. With a twinkle in a business-loving eye he admitted that tragedy underlay the fact that they were satisfied with what he provided.

So I repeat—we get the food we deserve.

II

During many years, I have been a modest collector of wines. A friend of mine, living in a small flat, astounded me by affirming that he had the finest cellar in London. But it transpired that he was alluding to the cellars, just across the way, of a vast emporium. At the last moment, he bought what he wanted. In his case he took precautions. An aged port was decanted before it crossed the street; the nobler red wines of France were not hustled and bustled.

The bibliography of wines is surprisingly large. A friend in the trade told me that he had in his own library some two thousand books and pamphlets which proclaimed the gospel of the grape. So far as I know nearly all these books have been written by

experts for experts; they are too technical for the ordinary reader. But a small text-book of 'Wine—how to buy, serve, store and drink it'—by my friend, Mr. W. J. Todd (Jonathan Cape) may be heartily commended to the amateur. Mr. Todd tells him what he wants to know, and what few indeed do know.

I am often asked to name my favourite wine—a silly question! Each wine has its own season. Burgundy, *par excellence*, is the right nectar for chill October; the finer clarets should be sipped delicately in summer. In the spring my fancy turns to the white wines, delicious too in hot weather, because they can be served at a lower temperature than the red wines. During the winter, the vintage ports, the Rheingau hocks, madeira and sherry challenge our attention.

I would say a good word for the 'little' wines of France, Germany and Italy, but, alas! seldom do they suffer transportation; nor are they long-lived. They should be drunk on the spot together with the right food, and the 'patron' of any inn in Touraine, for example, will take pleasure in setting before an appreciative guest a wine whose name is hardly known twenty miles away.

To get the 'best' in England is no easy matter. And that is why I stress the importance of 'collecting' wine, if you possess a good cellar and some knowledge of the care which good wine exacts.

Our pilgrim, of course, must buy his wine where he finds it. He may find good wine in unexpected places. All the famous restaurants are justly proud of their cellars, but even rich men, unless they be connoisseurs, order champagne in preference to the

nobler red wines, some of which are more expensive. With champagne any food can be eaten, which makes the task of ordering a little dinner comparatively simple. Then again, as a rule, the ladies like best a sparkling wine, preceded by some palate-vitiating cocktail. Admittedly, after a strenuous day, champagne has tonic properties of high value; hence its popularity. The *propriétaires* of famous vineyards in the Médoc or the Côte d'Or would think a man mad if he ranked champagne above the Lafite or Clos Vougeot of a recognized vintage year. But he would be the first to admit that a humbler wine of a good year is incomparably superior to a great wine of a bad year. A man who buys wine by label only will be sadly disappointed.

A palate for fine wine can be acquired by any person with acute sense of taste and smell provided a good memory goes with these. Wine-tasters have astounding memories; they never forget what pleases them; they can differentiate between, let us say, twenty clarets of the same year, recognizing the home of each; they know what young wine ought to be and what old wine should be. If you ask them how they do it, they reply: 'Memory'. The great wines possess distinguishing ethers which develop with age in bottle; these ethers are so subtile and delicate that they lose their virtue if the wine is rudely handled or improperly decanted. I like to decant an aged and noble wine myself; I like to take it tenderly from its bin, place it on end for a few hours in a comfortably warm room, and draw the cork shortly before the bottled sunshine is drunk. This procedure does not apply to certain old vintage ports, which acquire sometimes a disagreeable odour,

immediately noticeable when the cork is withdrawn. Such wine must be decanted several hours before it is served, and, if the stopper is left out of the decanter, the slightly offensive smell will pass away.

III

Any visitor to London who is anxious to drink the 'best', is advised to take the wine-waiter into his confidence. The actual wine-list will teach him little save the price of the wines. Of two clarets or burgundies, listed for commercial reasons at the same price, one may be much better than the other. The wine-waiter knows which is the better. And he knows also what food should be eaten with the wine, unless he happens to be a rank imposter. Certain rare wines may not be listed at all; they are reserved for the few, the very few who can appreciate them. If the visitor be a novice, but keen to learn, he might begin with the less costly wines—given always that they are of a good year—and work his way up from mediocrity to perfection, an agreeable vagabondage!

Thanks to my kind friend, Monsieur André Simon, it has been my good fortune to be a guest at some of the 'Educational' luncheons and dinners given by the Wine and Spirit Trade. My first invitation held out this lure: 'Would you care to come and taste some of the rarest vintages left in the world?' Naturally I accepted with alacrity. The object of these *symposia* is to educate not the few guests who may be honoured with an invitation 'to assist', but the actual members of the Wine Trade. All the great firms are represented. Upon one occasion, we had an 'Imperial' of Château Latour, 1878. I knew 'Magnums', 'Jeroboams', and even 'Reho-

boams', but I had never even seen an 'Imperial', which holds about eight quarts. An aged wine had preserved its great and distinguishing qualities in this huge bottle; and we were invited to compare the claret with a burgundy, a Chambertin, of the same year. Such wine, I need hardly add, is not procurable. A few bottles may still be found, cherished and preserved for a great occasion. The port that followed was of the '47 vintage, and in perfect condition, although these wines were sipped by me less than three years ago——!

Our pilgrim must fain be content with what is procurable. Unless it be specially commended, the very old wine listed in great restaurants is better left undisturbed. The odds are that it has 'gone off'. I should think twice before ordering a burgundy that was older than 1899. 1900, 1904, 1906, 1908, and 1911 were good years for both claret and burgundy. As a general rule, the host sets before his guests wines of different vintages, ending with the oldest and best, but this is a severe test of the palate, if several wines are served. I have tried serving throughout dinner wines of the same vintage. It is enlightening to compare the four great clarets of, say 1911,—Haut Brion, Lafite, Latour, and Margaux; or the burgundies of the same year: Clos Vougeot, Chambertin, and Romanée Conti. With such wines the food should be of the simplest. At a burgundy dinner, the other day, our wise host provided clear soup, no fish at all, a perfect saddle of mutton, and a dish of cheese. Personally, I demand nothing more. As an *apéritif* we had one small glass of very dry sherry. During this dinner, I feel sure that my host would have had a fit, if any thoughtless guest had

lighted a cigarette. With the coffee and old brandy we were offered superb cigars.

Fish, particularly if it is served with a rich sauce, vitiates the palate for the nobler red wines. I cannot recall the name of any glutton who was a connoisseur of wine; and there are many gluttons. Nor can I recall one drunkard who could be described as a *gourmet*. Good wine is wasted upon habitual drinkers of whisky-and-soda. Indeed, excess, in whatever form you find it, defeats its own ends, unless those ends are satiety. The pleasures of the table are best appreciated by those who practise self-denial.

If any reader of these lines wishes to realize, perhaps for the first time, how easily the palate is vitiated, let him pour out two glasses of good claret from the same bottle. Let him drink the first with the adjuncts of an olive and a crisp dry biscuit. Then eat an anchovy or an orange and drink the second glass. It will be difficult to believe that it is the same wine.

In England, never in France, the red wines are too often served at too high a temperature. It was said of one well-known entertainer that his champagne was always too cold and his claret too warm. Ice bad champagne, and your guests will not know whether it is good or bad till the next morning. The late Lord Beaconsfield liked his champagne 'with the chill off'. With red wines it suffices to take them from the cellar and to leave them for a few hours in a room neither hot nor cold, a room where a thermometer would register sixty degrees Fahrenheit. On the other hand, a delicate claret taken hastily from a cold cellar and drunk at once is disappointing. To plunge such a bottle into hot water or put it

close to a roaring fire is to invite disaster. When I have been driven by necessity to warm artificially a claret fresh from the cellar, I leave the bottle for ten minutes in very luke-warm water. That is infinitely better than leaving it in hot water for one minute. But any rapid change of temperature is prejudicial to fine wine.

In England, for some reason unknown to me, the finer hocks and moselles are neglected. It is true that the best are very expensive; and it may be true that a taste for them must be cultivated. Cheap hock is not worth drinking. The finest is difficult to buy even in Germany. When it became known that 1921 was a wonderful year for hock and moselle, a great quantity of inferior wine, purporting to be of that vintage, was put on the English market. Beware of it! I can cite an amusing experience. I asked a guest what he would like to drink, and he replied: 'Liebfraumilch, 1921.' I ordered a bottle. My friend mournfully shook his head when he tasted it. Without a word, the wine-waiter whisked it away, and returned with another bottle. My friend shook his head again. A third bottle was brought which was pronounced to be the genuine article. And yet, on the wine list of this particular restaurant, only one Liebfraumilch, of 1921, was listed, although the three bottles submitted to us bore three different labels. My friend's comment was: 'You *can* get it, if you know it when you *do* get it.'

The white wines of France are increasing in popularity with the ladies. The best, like the famous Château Yquem, must not be regarded as beverages. One of our leading novelists was guilty of the crime (to me) of serving Château Yquem throughout a

long meal——! In France one glass is drunk during the sweet course.

The greater white burgundies such as Montrachet and Chablis are hard to come by. I think I am right in saying that the Montrachet vineyard covers barely seven acres. How could there be much of that on the market? With oysters and fish these white burgundies precede gracefully their red kinsmen.

Our pilgrim must beware of 'fortified' or 'loaded' burgundies. They can be detected at once by a heavy after taste from which a pure wine is free. Burgundy, of course, contains more alcohol than claret. A crude, fiery burgundy cannot be drunk with impunity.

IV

I hope to write one day a book dealing with the romance of wine. Already I have collected much material, picked up here and there, rarely if ever found in the text-books. It will be a labour of love to write such a book. Wine has played a great part in the history of nations. The Grand Monarque, who made Volnay popular, drank it on the advice of the physician, who claimed that it added many years to the long life of his royal patient. Napoleon carried Chambertin with him on his campaigns, but if he liked a well-matured wine one wonders how it withstood the jolting over rough roads? He liked to eat with it *Poulet à la Marengo*, and he could hardly have found anything better to bring out the flavour of what Professor Saintsbury calls the King of Wines. The vineyard of Haut Brion, the only vineyard outside the sacred Médoc region, which produces a first-growth wine, is said to have taken its name

from an Irishman, O'Brien, but this story, I fear, is apocryphal. Oddly enough, authentic anecdotes which might serve to illustrate the romance of the grape are as rare as the rare wines themselves. In a long series of volumes entitled *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de France*, wine is mentioned again and again, but only incidentally. Our diarists, agreeable gossips, have more to say about food. Probably then as now both food and wine were regarded as hardly worthy of more than passing notice. Evelyn, Pepys, and Greville have little to say about pictures, porcelain, or furniture. In Dumas' novels wine is consumed in vast quantities, but we are told little about its quality.

CHAPTER XIII

SOCIETY

I

HIGH Society, in the days of the Great White Queen, was a close corporation, rigidly inclusive and exclusive. You belonged to it by right of birth, or you didn't. There are still a few houses which preserve inviolate the old restrictions and traditions, but the doors of these—big double doors—open wide to welcome distinguished foreigners and fellow-countrymen who present indisputable claims to admittance. That genial monarch, Edward VII, set a wise example by admitting to his presence (and friendship) men and women who had not the '*entrée*' by right of birth. Others, but not all, did as he did.

In Victorian days, at the famous houses, most of the guests were directly or indirectly of kin to each other. Their names were to be found in the Englishman's Bible, the Peerage. These names constituted in themselves a passport. Profuse hospitality was shewn to cadets of noble families, not in a position to return it. These Beefeaters saw to it that the sacrosanct precincts were not invaded by outsiders. At my school, Harrow, the word 'outsider' labelled sons of men who had made fortunes in trade. There was no essential snobbishness in this at that time. It was merely part of a tradition imposed upon plastic youth

and accepted blindly. Now I can blush with shame at my jejune attitude, and thank an inscrutable Providence that such nonsense has gone by the board, never to return. It is humiliating to reflect that the son of a tenth transmitter of a foolish face ranked higher than the son of some prince of industry and achievement; but so it was.

In London society, to-day, there must be at least a thousand sets, all overlapping. The so-called 'smart' set is not the 'best'. Captious critics affirm that it is the worst, because the guinea stamp is the hall mark. The smart clothes—and what goes with them—can be bought with cash. Because the very smart people have to be amused—amusement being their main objective—they admit to temporary fellowship anybody who is 'entertaining'. A 'nobody' pays for his entertainment by being entertaining. Nothing more is demanded from him or her.

Probably, the 'highbrows' have self-constituted themselves as the 'best' set in London, a claim disputed by lowbrows and mezzo-brows. In a sense these superior persons have taken the place of the great lords and ladies. They *are* exclusive. Our pilgrim will not see much of them, unless he is approved as worthy of recognition. Apart from such supermen and superwomen, a visitor who carries ordinary credentials on his face or in his pocket can go more or less where he pleases, reasonably sure of a welcome if he has *one* friend to vouch for him. It cannot be too strongly insisted that the friend at court is necessary. And this is the place, also, to insert a warning word, especially to Americans visiting England for the first time, concerning social engagements. My American friends, whom I love

to entertain, have complained to me that English hospitality is restricted. It is amazing to me, knowing both countries well, that a difference in etiquette is not as salient to them (being very acute observers) as it is to us. We are slaves to petty social engagements; Americans, with rare exceptions, are not. Many seem to assume that because they have time to burn, we have the same, other things, of course, being equal. An American, of the get-there-quick temperament, 'wires' to an English friend—to whom in his own country he has shewn generous hospitality—that he has arrived in London and secured 'reservations' at some hotel. The Englishman wishes to entertain him; he glances at his engagement book in dismay to find that every available hour is booked up for a fortnight; and his American friend is leaving London for Paris within a week——! Again and again, I have cancelled engagements (gladly enough) to make time to pay attention to old friends, and then, in the most charming way, they have asked if it wouldn't be quite as convenient if they changed the date of their visit in accordance with some change in their own plans. It doesn't occur to them that such a change at the last moment is often quite impossible. I have begged my transpontine friends to give me notice of their advent. This—so they point out—cannot be done, because their trips abroad are seldom planned long ahead. They dash over—when they can! It is likely that ordinary engagements in America are not regarded as fixed feasts. The late Lord Rothschild invited a South African millionaire to dine with him, but the guest was missing at the banquet. Next day, Lord Rothschild meeting the gentleman in the city remarked: 'We

expected you to dinner last night.' The guest replied: 'I know, but I warn't 'ungry.'

II

Our pilgrim, if he be a man of many facets, may wish to see something of London Society, a wish easily gratified because, as has been said, all sets overlap. When I was last in New York, I was an honorary member of at least half a dozen clubs. Nobody could have appreciated this privilege more than I did. But, unhappily, I cannot confer a similar privilege upon my visitors. My clubs in London do not admit strangers as honorary members, unless they happen to be men of international reputation. Even then, bothering formalities have to be observed.

A dinner given by any of the great city companies is a gorgeous function not to be missed. At the Mansion House, on such occasions, the magnificent gold plate is exhibited, and the servants are in royal livery. To get an invitation to one of these banquets is comparatively easy, to eat and drink half that is set before you exacts patience and a superb digestion. These civic entertainments last for hours. Both before and afterwards the stranger will meet men of distinction to whose speeches he listens probably with acute disappointment. As after-dinner orators we do not excel, but—partly perhaps because of the Americanization of England—we are not so dull and prosaic as we used to be. I was present at the Mansion House when the Milton Tercentenary Dinner was given. It was said afterwards that one guest asked for an explanation of the word 'tercentenary'. When he grasped the fact that it meant a three hundredth anniversary, he ex-

claimed: 'Why the man is still alive; I've met him.' The Lord Mayor's guest believed that the banquet was in honour not of John Milton but of Thomas Lipton.

Probably the story is apocryphal.

Literary dinners are of frequent occurrence, where lions and lionesses coo softly as sucking doves. Invitations are not hard to come by. Occasionally, amusing debates succeed these symposia. The Authors' Club, the Pen-and-Ink Club, and the Whitefriars (a club of journalists) hold regular sessions, and chaff is more appreciated than the solid wheat of serious discussion.

Of learned societies I can write little from personal experience. I imagine that the talk is nearly as heavy as the food, because our pundits, unlike the Americans, are not good 'mixers'. To me a political dinner is anathema. 'Shop' is jabbered from the soup to the savoury. At one of these dinners, whilst the port was circulating, two Cabinet Ministers discoursed interminably upon Land Tenure in Scotland. A young Guardsman got up from his chair and joined me. 'Have you,' he asked, 'any Scots' blood in your veins?' I replied that I had. He riposted loudly, too loudly: 'I haven't a damned drop, thank God!' That was one little ray of sunshine enlightening a dreary evening.

Americans take little or no interest in our politics, but they like to meet our politicians. I doubt whether they glean much from them. No less a personage than a sometime American ambassador, a man of wide attainments, said to me: 'I don't understand So-and-So', naming an Olympian. I attempted to explain that the gentleman in question had never

understood himself, which raised a quiet smile. This talk took place before the war, when Protection or Free Trade was a burning political issue. To-day no political issue can be described as burning. In the House of Commons a dyed-in-the-wool Last-Ditcher scarifies some extremist of the Labour Party, and is seen afterwards dining with him, apparently upon the friendliest terms! This puzzles Americans, as well it may. Heat, however, was engendered over the proposed alterations in the Book of Common Prayer, provoking from a friend of mine the protest: 'My God! they'll be tampering with Bradshaw next.' But the rank and file remained cool and indifferent. It may surprise Americans to learn that our nation, as a whole, bestows well-deserved confidence upon our permanent officials, who soar high above Party. These quiet, highly trained Sentries of the State remain at their posts. They do the work and let others do the talking. They *know* what can be done and what cannot be done—and the Man in the Street has never even heard their names. Labourite, Liberal, and Conservative are 'up against' them.

III

Bohemians, as readers of *Trilby* and Henri Murger understand the word, have ceased to be. They vanished with the dandies. Chelsea might deny this, but so it is. The Bohemians were dying fast and hard when I was a cadet at Sandhurst with leanings towards the brush rather than the sword. Even then, the Bohemians whom I did meet were journalists, actors, and musicians, rather than painters. The lively gentlemen who wrote for *The Pink 'Un*,

when that encarmined weekly was read furtively by curates, were essentially in and of Bohemia. I do not know where to look for their like to-day. Is there one left who would reel into a taxi, as poor Phil May did into a 'growler', stammering out: 'C-c-cabby—d-drive me to Land's End?'

There is, of course, a pseudo Bohemia which guileless visitors accept as the genuine article, a pseudo Bohemian set who play at being Bohemians. But they have no sense of vagabondage. They drink hard; some of them take drugs, and nearly all cut their hair and wear socks that match their ties. Society accepts them as decadents. Let it be recorded in their favour that most of them are clean in body if not in mind. It is reasonably safe and sound to disagree with every word they say.

In the theatrical set there is less overlapping than elsewhere. The theatre is a world of its own, a microcosm. Having known personally nearly every actor and actress of note of my generation, having worked hard with them at innumerable rehearsals, knowing them out of the theatre and in it, I can say, still wonderingly, that they carry the theatre with them wherever they go and seldom do they stray far from it. My dear old friend, Cyril Maude, is a notable exception. In his good company I feel that I might be talking to a country squire The late Charles Wyndham and Charles Hawtrey never talked to me of the theatre when they were out of it. Harry Irving, who played in so many of my plays, was at his best when he forgot the theatre, but nearly all the others, men and women (especially women), are obsessed by their profession. In their defence, and in defence of an attitude towards life which

seems to leave out the side of life that is not backcloth and wings, I must confess that in the theatre the same obsession takes a strangle hold of me. The mimic presentment of life suffices. I cannot explain why this should be so except on the hypothesis that both playwright and actors are engrossed with the task of presenting life (as it appears to them) as faithfully as possible. Apart from the actual lines, and their method of delivery, what is called 'business' becomes of paramount importance. Outside the theatre, nobody has any idea of the strain imposed upon body and mind; nothing else seems to matter much; to get the stuff 'across' is everything. Actors and actresses of the first rank are charming companions, shrewd observers of real life, because such observation is part of their technique. But always they envisage life from the point of view of the looker-on. All is fish to their net; all is turned by them into terms of the theatre. The greater the artist, the greater is his bondage (or allegiance) to his art. Inasmuch as the art of the theatre reflects life in all its aspects, any actor who has played many parts is sympathetic to and knowledgable about life; his tentacles seize life, but life doesn't seem to seize him; he absorbs tragedy and comedy, assimilating both; he doesn't disagree with either and consequently they do not disagree with him. The same obsession is noticeable, but not nearly to the same extent, in painters, musicians and novelists, but they remain more or less themselves, and speaking as a novelist, the obsession which attacks me as a playwright is negligible when I'm at work on a novel. Other men who have written plays and novels have said the same to me. I don't think that this absorp-

tion in the work of the moment is due to love of it. I have an enduring love for my work as a novelist. No; it is the actual task, whether you love it or not, that imposes iron fetters upon the mind. A novelist can wander where he pleases on the sole condition that he takes his reader with him; a playwright must tell his story in three or four chapters, tell it with ever-increasing tension and continuity. Not one irrelevant line is permissible. He is piecing together a mosaic, he is working out a problem which exacts undivided attention. The actor interpreting an author must give the same attention and energy to his part, and the mental strain is terrific till he has mastered it.

I have written more than I intended, beguiled by a theme deeply interesting to me, but I have so written to support the suggestion that the visitor who wishes to enjoy theatrical society will talk, if he is wise, about the theatre, and he will be well entertained if he does.

IV

Some five and twenty years ago, an American friend who had lunched with me, and was in London for the first time, asked me to show him the residential quarter. I knew what he meant; he wanted to see the houses wherein the rich and well-to-do lived. We chartered a hansom and sped joyously to many 'quarters', beginning with Mayfair. My companion stared at great houses and small. From Mayfair we adventured to Belgravia and thence to Kensington. I think we ended in Portland Place. During this long pilgrimage I had to answer many questions concerning rents, rates and taxes, the cost of running

large and small establishments—and so forth. Finally, my friend said sorrowfully: 'I can't take it in—there's so much of it that I'm dazed.' Tickled by this admission, I handed him a *Court Guide*. He turned over a few pages and laughed. 'I came here to see the big sights,' he murmured, 'and residential London is the biggest sight because most of it is out of sight.'

Being a man of facts and figures he attempted to set down on paper, very roughly, what residential London 'meant' in dollars, and what the combined incomes of the residents *might be*, and, lastly, we made a wild guess at what was spent in entertaining. Our figures wouldn't be worth recording, even if I could recall them. It is certain, however, that more was spent upon entertaining then than now: great establishments were on a sumptuous scale, and the Upper Middle Class, apart from the nobility and landed gentry, prided themselves upon their dinners, as Galsworthy testifies in *The Man of Property*. What impressed us was not so much the palaces—Devonshire House, Stafford House, and Montague House—but the myriad streets and squares which held unknown persons whose incomes lie between two and five thousand pounds a year, all of them entertainers. And these innumerable persons were part of London Society, cogs upon a colossal Joy Wheel which whirled unceasingly.

V

If our pilgrim be a young lady with ample means but no English friends, she can 'pay' for an introduction to Society. The procedure is as follows. She seeks and finds a chaperon. To answer fortuitously

the advertizement of some 'Lady of Title', unprepared to give or take references, would be imprudent. There are many ladies of established position who can play admirably the part of fairy godmother to girls who wish to join in the fun of Mayfair. A handsome fee is paid, plus a weekly or monthly payment which includes everything except outside entertainments. Miss X will buy her own frocks and frills, but Lady Z, with immense experience in such matters, will see to it that her charge goes to the right places and is not robbed. At Lady Z's house, Miss X meets many agreeable persons and receives many invitations. It is 'up' to her to 'collect' more invitations, which she does if she can. If Miss X is able to afford 'outside' entertaining—little luncheons and dinners at smart restaurants—her success is assured. Much fun has been poked at the parties to these arrangements, much malicious nonsense has been talked about them, but—if entered into with good faith on both sides—the ends justify the means; value is given and received. A girl thus launched in Society will be asked to many country houses after the season is over. She will have made her own friends and be well able to look after herself. I should not hesitate to entrust my daughter to the right Lady Z; and I consider the bargain on both sides to be perfectly fair and, nine times out of ten, satisfactory.

VI

The overlapping of sets in London Society is an asset to any visitor, because—if he is invited to one '*omnium gatherum*'—he is certain to make congenial acquaintances likely to ripen into friends.

Thirty years ago, if you dined with an industrial magnate you met men of his kidney, if you dined with a many-acred squire, you met squires and their dames. Such dinner parties were dull to any outsider. Sheep were careful to exclude goats. If a lion strayed into the fold, he roared and they bleated. To-day, at any big party, a stranger will be sure to meet representatives of every profession and calling. Like drifts to like, contacts are established swiftly and unceremoniously. It is significant, too, that youth has come into its own, perhaps too uproariously. I recall many a host and hostess, brilliant entertainers of the middle-aged and elderly, but at their hospitable boards youth sat submissively silent, hardly able to speak if spoken to, because youth had no practice in small talk. The scrapping of class distinctions has made entertaining both easier and more agreeable; but another factor in the sum of social happiness obtrudes itself—the scrapping of age distinctions, the most notable sign of the times. Because youth now meets age on equal terms, there has been a levelling up and down of mountains and molehills, mountains of pomposity, molehills of bashfulness. All that is to the good. It is to the good, too, that subjects never mentioned in polite Victorian society are now freely discussed. It was deemed ill-bred to speak of religion, politics, or any human infirmities at a Victorian dinner table. Paterfamilias scowled, Materfamilias looked down her nose, if the talk strayed from the old-established ruts. What an Atlantic tosses between then and now!

VII

I suggested in a previous chapter the establish-

ment of a bureau of enlightened guides, who would make sight-seeing less perfunctory and more alluring. I suggest the establishment of a similar bureau, which might further the entertaining of visitors. In Bath, when Beau Nash was Master of Ceremonies at the Pump Room and elsewhere, presentable strangers were presented to Bathonian Society by him. Mr. Pickwick and his friends were welcomed by Angelo Cyrus Bantam, Esquire. There ought to be something approximating to this in London, where informality rather than formality could place the intelligent visitor in touch with those whom he wished to meet. He might wish to meet people who had no wish to meet him, but difficulties confront all enterprises. Whether or not such a Social Mart can be established, I have great faith in the old-fashioned letters of introduction, credentials still honoured at sight.

Space forbids any detailed account of the different sets. It is enough to say that any visitor of intelligence will find without much trouble the set that appeals to him. A golden key opens the doors of the Smart Set. The other sets, taken as you find them, demand a cutlet for a cutlet, not necessarily a lamb cutlet.

CHAPTER XIV

RURAL ENGLAND AND COUNTRY-HOUSE LIFE

I

It is now possible to see rural England under the happiest and most comfortable conditions. You hire or buy a caravan, attach it to a moderately powered car, and go where fancy beckons in a spirit of joyous independence. You camp where you please; you take your own time over your pilgrimage; and—a lure to the less well-to-do—the expenses for a party of three or four are less than what would be expended upon ordinary railway fares and hotel accommodation. These caravans, lightly constructed and easily towed, are miracles of cunning craftsmanship. I inspected one the other day, which cost £300. It belongs to a neighbour of mine; and I understood from him that a similar conveyance could be hired for several weeks at a modest rate per week. Many years ago two friends of mine spent their honeymoon in a caravan which, compared to this latest model, was a mere shed on wheels. The up-to-date van is provided with electric light, central heating, and all the conveniences of a miniature palace. You sleep in a comfortable bed; you cook your meals upon a perfect little stove; and in a jiffy, kitchen or bedroom can be transmuted into a delightful sitting-room. My

neighbour took his caravan this summer from Bath to the north of Scotland. *Nothing went wrong*——! It sounds too good to be true, but it is true.

Rural England, of course, can be seen from the char-à-bancs and bus, but these vehicles travel along the main roads, shunning (as they must) the narrow lanes and smaller roads. Like trains they run on time. Some beauty spot may be their objective, but the passenger cannot seek beauty on his own initiative.

What I wrote in the chapter on sight-seeing applies here. Rural England appeals to more than the eye. You will find in it what you take to it, and the important thing to take is local information—not supplied by the ordinary guide-book. I have been collecting information about folk-lore and ancient country customs. Till I set myself to this delightful labour—for labour it is—I had no idea of the difficulties confronting me, of the unsifted, uncollated masses of material. The County histories—vast tomes—hold much but they lack the charm of smaller books dealing with particular districts. A traveller interested in the smaller bridges which span every stream in the kingdom will wonder who built them. Let him try to find out—if he can!

The travelled roads, the main arteries of traffic, are bordered by disappointments, jerry-built houses and cottages, pimples upon the face of the landscape. Small wonder that the pilgrim in search of beauty exceeds the speed limit when he races over them. As I write these lines a national movement, if you can call it that, with the object of restraining the activities of the beauty-destroyers, is afoot. Will it move? Can it move? Good taste and common decency have never been the attributes of the million.

It is a now a legal offence to scatter paper in the New Forest, but how is the law to be enforced? The trippers laugh at the notices and maliciously—so I believe—defile the sylvan solitudes. If they are caught, a negligible fine is imposed. Six weeks' imprisonment might have a chastening influence upon these savages.

II

The hills of England are a wonder-land. I name those well-known to me—the Chilterns—the Mendips—the Cotswolds. Hidden among them are lovely villages still undefiled by the jerry-builder. Every county, even Middlesex, has these sanctuaries, and, oddly enough, the nearer they are to the roaring thoroughfares, the more difficult are they to find.

The Chilterns lie within easy reach of London. They begin in Buckinghamshire and extend to Oxford, impinging also into Bedfordshire, chalk hills, for the most part, once covered with beech trees. A pilgrimage from London to Oxford, through the Thames Valley, would give the pilgrim endless opportunities to see the less frequented parts of the Chilterns. I am loth to commend to other persons, places, pictures or books. The guide books do this perfunctorily; and the contrariety of human nature is such that too often the expectation aroused is left unsatisfied. The intelligent traveller yearns to discover fresh beauties for himself. He knows that they are his for the seeking. The charm of rural England is racy of the soil, of what grows on it and lies under it. Where there is clay and corn-land cottages and houses are built of brick and roofed with thatch. In woodland districts timber plays a decorative part.

Where there is stone, the old builders worked in stone. Every ancient building is a chapter in domestic architecture, telling its own story of art and craftsmanship. Old panelling dates itself. Flints, thrown up by the plough, are used decoratively in walls of stone and brick. The genius of the Elizabethan builders found expression in a capacity for using any material that lay ready to their hands. The names of the architects, if there were architects, are forgotten. Some, possibly, playing with mud as children, used plaster and timber when work succeeded play. Who was the first to discover vitrified bricks? Who was the first to lay bricks in geometrical patterns? Two villages lie within a mile of each other, each was built at much the same time; but in one there is a general uniformity of design and construction, in the other no two cottages are alike and all have decorative value. Some humble craftsman must have imposed his good taste upon a tiny community. It is difficult to believe that the hard-drinking, hard-riding squire of the eighteenth century did more than pay the bill. What astonishes me is the sense of porportion, so lacking in the house-builder of to-day. Architects acquire this sense after a long apprenticeship, but the villages of England were not built by architects. The instinct for right construction, common to birds, must have informed men who loved their work.

The Mendips—dear to Thomas Hardy—are close to Bath, the Queen City of Somerset. Considered pastorally, I hold Somerset to be the most beautiful county in England. It is rich in ancient stone houses, in secluded hamlets, in a glorious champaign, and it is still, throughout the length and breadth of it, rural

England. The lake district has, of course, scenery; Devon has Dartmoor and its gorgeous coast; Hampshire has the New Forest. But Somerset and Dorset are pastoral. Even within two miles of that ugly town, Bristol, the pilgrim will find himself in enchanting country. If he demands grandeur, there is the Cheddar Gorge; if wild open spaces beguile him, there is Exmoor. Devon has Clovelly, but Clovelly is unique. I dare to affirm that there are more beautiful villages in Somerset and Dorset than in Devon, Hampshire, Sussex, Kent, and Surrey all lumped together. These counties are well known to me; each has something not to be found in the others, and comparisons are odious and odorous. Nevertheless, the charm of Somerset and Dorset lies in the fact that you can travel for miles and see nothing that offends the eye. Hardy's country is much as Hardy found it seventy years ago. Perhaps it appealed to him, because he began life as an architect; he was a lover of stone. Stone quarries abound in Dorset and Somerset. Some of the houses are dreams in stone. It is difficult to believe that they were fashioned by human hands. They were built to endure—and they have. On the dullest, bleakest day the sunshine of countless summers radiates out of Ham stone, gold that no alchemy of time can transmute into lead. Bath stone has a soft silvery-golden sheen that suggests Sardian electrum, that long forgotten alloy of pale gold and silver. It is almost as malleable as clay when taken fresh from the quarry; it hardens with time and exposure; it mellows and ripens.

From the Mendips one passes easily to the Cotswolds, the pride and glory of Gloucestershire. In this range of hills are hidden villages as yet untouched

by the vandal. The tripper passes them by. The pilgrim, making the pleasant town of Cheltenham his headquarters, might spend a happy month exploring the Cotswolds. If he climbs to the top of Cleeve Hill, he will thank me for introducing him to one of the most panoramic views in England.

I have mentioned these three famous ranges of hills well aware that there are others not so familiar to me. The point for the visitor to remember is that villages of the plains are losing, or have lost, their distinctive beauty, whereas the villages nestling in the hills are still what they were. The once picturesque hamlets near to the towns have become surburban in character. Tram-lines run through them; 'stores' have taken the place of the village shop; smug chapels seem to stare defiantly at the old church; crude advertizements, yellow petrol pumps, and kindred atrocities, proclaim the triumph of the many over the few, the victory of ignorance. The writing, in indelible ink, is Ichabod.

III

It would be impossible to enumerate the beauty spots of England, and fatuous to set down what I reckon to be 'best'. Our rivers are as beguiling as our hills, and river inns are fairly good. Industrial centres, hideous though they are, appeal to any visitor interested in industry. I have never missed an opportunity of visiting a great factory; and the conflicting claims of Capital and Labour will be adjusted on a satisfactory basis when the Man in the Street makes himself familiar with both at first hand. A lover of porcelain should visit Worcester and Coalport; any man concerned with shipping should

inspect our great docks. The ordinary visitor tries to see what he is told he ought to see. The 'oughts' of life are indeed its 'crosses'. Purpose should inform our pilgrimages. A pilgrim to Lourdes seeks some special grace. It is a benediction to get what we want, but we must know what we want. To join a personally-conducted tour, to be bustled here and there, to listen to the patter of a parrot of a guide, is to become a cog on a machine, to cease to be an individual.

IV

The country houses of England.

Wherever you wander, north, south, east, or west, you will find some 'show' place—one of our stately homes. The pilgrim can begin with Windsor Castle, the stateliest of all; he can end at Alnwick or Raby. Apart from architectural and historical interest these show places are treasure houses, and as such too well-known—and too often described—to call for comment here. They are not to be passed by, but the traveller who wishes to see them should find out in advance when they are open to the public. To the few, lucky enough to be invited to stay in these palaces, I offer felicitations. They will enjoy a wonderful experience. Our great establishments are in every sense of the word 'established'. There is an enormous staff of highly trained, highly paid servants, a hierarchy among themselves. On one vast estate in the Dukeries the labour bill comes to one thousand pounds a week! Small wonder that the wheels of life seem to be well-oiled, revolving smoothly and silently by night and day. The pomps have passed away, but the gracious hospitality, if less

splendid and grandiose, remains in spite of a diminished rent-roll.

Of the lesser country houses, the ancient manors of England, I can write with more intimate knowledge and with greater love. There is an endless succession of these, hidden away for the most part, standing in lovely gardens, now lovelier than ever since the introduction of herbaceous borders and a more general knowledge of the art of gardening. The gardens of the great houses are too spectacularly splendid. There is no intimate charm about them. The ornaments—the vases—the statuary, the magnificent stone benches—are too ornamental. A king and his courtiers might feel at home in such surroundings, but the ordinary man in a tweed suit is overwhelmed by a sense of gorgeous isolation. I was visiting a magnificent place a few weeks ago, designed and built for a prince of the blood. It was offered by a grateful nation to the Iron Duke. He declined to live in it. It was too big for him. To-day, the gardens show signs of neglect and impoverishment. Nobody can predict what the future of these huge houses will be. Many of the elder sons of present owners will not be able to keep them up. Stowe has been turned into a public school.

The manor houses and their gardens are autobiographical. In many you will find stained glass escutcheons impaling the arms of the ladies who have lived and loved in the panelled parlours. Their dowries helped to keep the old place in the possession of one family for hundreds of years. These manors belonged to squires who rarely wandered far from their birthplace, men with a tenacious sense of 'property'. All valued highly—perhaps too highly—

their possessions. It was a sacred duty to these gentlemen to keep estates intact, and to hand them on to their successors. If the squires of England are doomed to pass away, much will go with them that can never be replaced. Between them and their tenantry was a sturdy affection and respect never accorded to the rich carpet-bagger. The squire knew intimately his own 'people'. He was an autocrat, it is true, but his autocracy was as a rule benevolent; he worked with and for his beneficiaries; he was approachable; he had great knowledge of his land and of local conditions. His influence, as a potent force for good in his community, waned with the coming of the railroads. When the lord of the manor began to leave his manor, his manor left him. His tenure of his estate depended upon his living on it.

As a boy I knew many such squires. What Washington Irving portrayed so charmingly in *Bracebridge Hall* is a true picture of the best country house life long years after he was dead. We may revive some of the old quaint customs, an attempt is being made to do so, but can we revive the simple spirit that animated them?

Country house life of to-day is entirely different. The week-end party has tolled the knell of the old leisurely hospitality; and the smile with which the modern hostess speeds the departure of a guest is more honest often than the smile which welcomes him on arrival. She is tired out by multifarious activities. Let us try to indicate what they are. Invitations are issued for a week-end visit with a 'shoot' on Saturday. Madame, probably, motors from London on Friday morning. She has no secre-

tary, so she has to attend to certain matters herself. The servants have preceded her. She will be busy inspecting the guest rooms and seeing that fresh flowers, writing materials, and the right books are in their place. She makes arrangements that her guests shall be met, if they come by train. She has to consider what servants they will bring with them. My lady's maid and my lord's man must have comfortable quarters. She attends, too, to the decoration of the dinner table, and hopes that the fish will arrive in time. Between tea and dinner the house-party assembles. Some may wish to play bridge. Cocktails and cigarettes are consumed immediately before dinner, and cigarettes may be smoked during dinner, unless the host happens to be a lover of vintage port. After dinner more bridge for the middle-aged and elderly, and a 'gamble' for the young people. The men refuse to sit up late, so everybody goes to bed reasonably early. On the Saturday, the men shoot, and the ladies appear at luncheon in sporting kits. Home to tea and bridge. After dinner, a 'rag' may follow a dance; and a few young people drop in to make things cheery. On Sunday golf is the main objective, and Madame is rather pleased if some of her guests betake themselves in their own cars to distant courses and are absent from luncheon. Non-golfers go for a brisk walk. If the host is a hunting man, the inevitable visit to the stables follows luncheon. Madame's guests expect to be 'done well'. Luncheons and teas are square meals; dinner is a banquet. After dinner more dancing; but no ragging on the Day of Rest. And so to bed. Next morning the guests whirl themselves off as soon as possible after breakfast. In the afternoon Madame

returns to London, wishing, perhaps, that she had never left it. It must be admitted that all this is fatiguing for Madame, and in her less robust moments she may wonder what Grandmamma would have thought of such jaunts and jollities. Grandmamma's house-parties lasted for a fortnight and would be voted to-day very dull affairs, but her guests were friends of long standing, not mere acquaintances. They came and went leisurely; they expected little in the way of entertainment and were not disappointed.

The 'smart' week-end party, as I have tried to describe it, has set a fashion which only the few can emulate. The many who used to entertain modestly and well live quietly in their ancient houses and practise the arts of economy. Incidentally they cultivate their gardens.

V

These gardens are the 'best' in the world. Nobody disputes that. They are the long results of time and patience and love—a wonderful trinity. There are yews in England mentioned in Doomsday Book, there are pleached alleys and bowling greens which are much as they were in the reign of the Virgin Queen. To these pleasances have been added the herbaceous border, the rock-garden, and the water garden. I am sorry for the man or woman who has no love for a garden, whether large or small. A great joy, an abiding satisfaction, is missed. Mother earth is so grateful, so beneficent to her lovers. If they caress her, she responds so generously and ardently, but she disdains a Laodicean. She is wholly feminine in her exactions; she resents neglect. Some stupidly

imagine her to be a fair-weather friend, but in drab and drear November she demands even more attention than in May.

Unfortunately, it is not easy to see the gardens of England apart from those belonging to the show places. They are shut in by high walls and hedges, regarded by their owners as sanctuaries. To show a lovely garden to an unappreciative visitor is a penance.

It may be suggested that the impoverishment of our squirarchy after the war, and the impoverishment generally of the upper middle class has given an amazing stimulus to gardening. I have noticed that men who can no longer afford to hunt or shoot turn, almost automatically, into amateur gardeners. There are hundreds of such men in and about Bath whose energies are devoted to half an acre of ground. Many who had to 'put down' an under-gardener, found themselves taking his place. One said to me: 'I can't buy hunters, but, thank God, I can buy bulbs.'

The love lavished on gardens during the past decade must bear rare and refreshing fruit. The modern text-books dwell at length upon the care to be exercised in the selection of flowers and plants that will present a colour scheme delightful to the eye. Miss Jekyll warns her readers against certain garish combinations dear to Victorians. She—and many others—submit 'plots' and 'plans'. Rich people bespeak the services of a garden designer. The horticulturists plant out small exhibition gardens. The public taste in these nice matters has improved tremendously. It follows that any man capable of conceiving a pleasing colour scheme for

his herbaceous border can apply similar aptitudes to the decoration of his house; a woman will apply them to her dress. Manufacturers of exquisite dress fabrics will seek inspiration from their gardens. Probably they have done so already.

CHAPTER XV

COLLECTING

I

I HAVE always been a collector, beginning, as a boy, with postage stamps, butterflies, and birds' eggs. When I returned to England in the late nineties I bought my first good 'bit' of old furniture, and frequented curiosity shops. There were wonderful opportunities then, but even then (as now) the man in the street would say: 'Bargains are not to be picked up; twenty years ago was the time.' He was wrong. Bargains may be found anywhere and everywhere, but, as a rule, only by the specialist who knows more than the average dealer. Dealers find bargains, but they rely upon their general knowledge. The big men in the trade buy from dealers who have faith in small profits and quick returns. Many a local man has said to me: 'This may interest you. I bought it at such and such a sale; I paid so much for it; you can have it for a ten per cent advance. It's good, but I don't know how good it is.' How could he know? The 'bit' in question might be a piece of porcelain, unmarked, but obviously of good paste, finely decorated, richly gilded. The expert, and he alone, would recognize it as the work of a famous modeller, and knows what some rich collector would be likely to pay for it.

No expert is likely to read this chapter; it is written for the ordinary traveller who is in a modest way a collector. I can say to him what was said long ago to me: 'You must pay for knowledge.' Find out what you can from the text-books and the National Collections, and then, cautiously, buy what appeals to you as fairly good and reasonable in price. You will profit by your own mistakes. There is no short cut to 'expertize'.

Perhaps the men who have made the biggest bargains within the past two decades are rich men who have employed experts to buy for them in the world's market, but is there much fun about that? And it takes immense capital. We can leave such men out of court.

Again and again, ever since I wrote *Quinneys*, I have been asked by would-be collectors what to do and how to do it. My correspondents give me credit for a knowledge which I don't, alas, possess. I am not an expert. I find it easier to tell them what not to do. As in horse-dealing, never pit your ignorance against the experience of the professional dealer. Most of them have a code to which I subscribe. They buy cheap and sell dear—if they can, but, like all traders, they deem it a stupid policy to alienate customers. They will answer certain questions honestly enough if the questions are put to them civilly and sincerely. They hope that you will come again, and that you will send your friends to them. In no other fashion can a prosperous business be built up.

There are two distinct classes of collectors—and what a difference between them! You must make up your mind to which you wish to belong. The real

enthusiast, the lover of art for art's sake, buys what he can afford in the hope that later on he may replace it with something better. Such a man, if he exercises ordinary judgment, will acquire in time a collection worth looking at, and, incidentally, a collection that has enhanced greatly in value. He disdains 'cripples'; he has no sentimental attachment to his possessions, unless he can affirm proudly that they are indisputably the 'best'. Of course, he holds in abhorrence all 'fakes' and reproductions, however good. I do not indict such a collector as being at heart concerned with the cash value of his *objets d'art*. It is rather an obsession with him to get rid of any possession—however dear it may be to him—when he finds something better to take its place. He is for ever on the look out for the better; when he finds it, he is miserable till he acquires it. That is the inborn, unquenchable spirit of the true collector. I have preached his doctrine, but I can't bring myself to practise it. I belong to the second class. I find something that pleases me; I buy it; and when it becomes mine I set perhaps an inordinate value on it. This attachment is sentimental. When I glance at it, I recall the circumstances under which I bought it, the pleasant companion who was with me, the haggling, the triumphant acquisition, the happy moments passed in finding the right place for it. . . . The object, intrinsically of little value in itself, has trebled itself in value to me, because I am the slave of my imagination. If a cripple, I look at it as a mother looks at a crippled child. It ceases to be a 'stick' or a 'stone'; it has become part of myself, part of my past. I lack the heart to throw it into the street. With inherited possessions this sentimental

attachment waxes stronger. Could I scrap ruthlessly a silver tea-caddy of a bad period when it is impossible to see it without seeing my mother's slender fingers hovering about it? And so, I repeat, I am not a true collector. I belong to the immense majority who buy what pleases them in the hope that it will go on pleasing them to the end.

II

However, so far as the actual buying is concerned, it makes little difference to which class of collectors you may belong. The important thing is to buy what appeals to you. For the 'big' things, 'bits' often described as 'museum pieces', there is no place like London. The 'best' drifts automatically to London. More, in London, if a purchaser has any doubt about the authenticity of a 'bit', he can have it 'vetted' at small cost to himself by an expert. In a country town this may be impossible.

How is a novice to detect a fake or a reproduction? With reputable dealers, a guarantee may be demanded. Some fakes might deceive even the elect, but no dealer deliberately runs the risk of giving a guarantee which may damn him as either ignorant or unscrupulous. In small matters the novice must exercise discretion. It doesn't pay to fake objects of little value, but there are exceptions. Americans are buying silhouettes of Georgian and Early Victorian worthies. The demand has provoked an immense supply of fakes. Examine the paper, the frame, and the gilding (if there be gilding). Buy a fake and submit it to a magnifying glass; compare it with a genuine article. Ten minutes careful inspection will teach you the difference between them. Americans,

too, are buying samplers. The fakes are easily detected. As I write these lines I have beside me a sampler worked by one Sarah Knight, in 1786. It is in its original oval frame. Part of the Eighth Psalm has been encircled with a wreath of embroidered rosebuds. An intelligent child would know that this sampler couldn't be a fake. The silk in the embroidery is worn and faded. The black thread used for the lettering of the psalm has slightly stained the canvas (once white now discoloured by age), because the sampler must have hung in a damp room. Parts of the canvas are frayed; there are worn holes in the frame. Nobody would attempt to fake all these little indications of age. The fake would cost more than the original.

Unhappily, eighteenth-century wine glasses are more easily faked than silhouettes and samplers. When I began to collect old glass, the reproductions were crude and unconvincing. To-day, they are miracles of cunning craftsmanship. Buying such glasses, I judged their authenticity by the linked sweetness, long drawn out, of their 'ring', by the weight of the glass, by the flaws in the metal, and so forth. I have been shown lately reproductions, made on the continent, which have all these characteristics. A friend of mine, an expert, said: 'I dare not trust my judgment any longer.' The result has been to depreciate the value of the Simon Pure stuff. Wise collectors are now afraid of eighteenth-century glass. A great pity, because one can sip romance from these beautifully fashioned, perfectly proportioned wine vessels. How many belles were toasted out of them by the beaux of the period? What fine wine they have held!

Glass cut by hand or by machinery can be detected on sight. What is cut by machinery is mathematically even. I have never seen an old piece cut by hand of which this could be said—the angles, the curves, the facets are never quite the same. Nevertheless, for all I know to the contrary, there may be craftsmen to-day who are patiently reproducing these inaccuracies, even as the flaws in the metal are reproduced. The tricks of any trade are Legion.

III

Old needlework and prints, whether in colour or not, are much sought, and not so easily found. Any reputable dealer in colour prints will point out the differences between a genuine article and a reproduction. With the aid of a moderately powered lens these differences leap to the eye. Old Mr. Vaughan, a famous collector at Brighton, gave me my first lesson, and I have never forgotten it. He knew what pigments were used and how they were applied. He took one of the genuine 'London Cries' and a faked copy. I could see little difference between them at first. In less than ten minutes, it seemed incredible that any reasonably intelligent person could mistake one for the other. But that was nearly forty years ago. If I were going to buy prints to-day, I should entreat another expert to give me another lesson. I distrust profoundly my judgment about all prints, especially mezzotints, the most beautiful and the most valuable.

Models of old ships, notably Spanish galleons, are rare and valuable. The shops are now selling reproductions. Not one out of a hundred is genuine. These 'nefs', in silver, are extremely decorative on a

mahogany dining-table. The late Duke of Edinburgh had a remarkable collection of them. Prints of Nelson's line of battleships are increasing in value. Plates and dishes of pottery with these same ships, in blue and white, are worth collecting and have historical interest. Being a true lover of porcelain, I cannot commend pottery with whole-souled enthusiasm. They ought never to be placed together in the same cabinet, or even room. I feel certain that if I collected pottery, I should buy modern pieces by Bernard Moore, and others, rather than Old Staffordshire. Beware of that, my gentle pilgrim, when you find it in wayside cottages. Such mines are 'salted'.

I mentioned earlier in this book the smaller *articles de vertu*, such as seals, snuff-boxes, pouncet boxes, and the trays full of odds and ends of old-fashioned trinkets. Many a bargain may be found in these trays. Now and again I have come across a trifle of exquisite workmanship, fashioned in Paris or London, which has escaped the notice of the dealer. He has bought it, probably, at a sale, for a few shillings. In it goes to a tray with the others.

Good work in wax is worth buying at a moderate price. Profiles of celebrities in wax or ivory or bone, in their original frames, have (for me) great charm. The little frames, even a hundred years ago, must have cost money. I am looking at one now and comparing it with a reproduction. The acorn, nearly always found below the ring, is exquisitely modelled; even the ring, ordinarily plain, is a triumph of art and craft. Such a frame couldn't be reproduced to sell; it is in itself a guarantee that the wax profile inside it is of the period; the glass, slightly convex, is also old.

These smaller objects take up little room in a suit-case or trunk; and I imagine they are duty free. I commend them to all travellers.

Miniatures, however attractive they may appear to the untrained eye, should be passed by. As a rule dealers in country towns know nothing of miniatures. The best are very valuable; and the best are cunningly copied. A dealer may be speaking the truth when he shows you a miniature which he believes to be, let us say, a Cosway. Perhaps you point out to him that Cosway died in 1921, and that the gentleman in the tiny picture is wearing a coat fashionable in the thirties. He admits candidly enough his ignorance.

They are now reproducing those enchanting little boxes out of which a jewelled bird springs and warbles. These boxes were bought a hundred years ago by Russian Grand Dukes and oriental potentates. They were costly toys then. The reproductions are costly to-day, and very inferior in craftsmanship.

The same can be said of snuff-boxes. I am told that snuff-taking may become fashionable again. It is certain that large quantities of snuff are consumed in Great Britain, but not by our dandies. A collection of snuff-boxes is always interesting, but I find myself wondering how many were used, or given away, by the First Gentleman of Europe? No collecting is complete without one or two of his, and his favourite 'mixture' is still sold at a shop in the Haymarket in surprisingly large quantities——!

IV

Furniture.

Period furniture beguiles most of us; and I find it

in queer places. It is distinctly out of place in modern rooms, where it 'barks' at everything else. It is difficult for an Englishman to understand why so much of it is crossing the Atlantic. I have seen in California a Chippendale cabinet cheek by jowl with Post-Impressionist pictures! At a recent sale I saw an American buying a huge dining-room table made in the reign of William IV. Into what sort of a dining-room was this table about to adventure? And would it fall to pieces if the unfermented juice of the grape were served upon it? Anyway it fetched an enormous price, nearly £200. There is now hope for our Early Victorian mahogany, vilely designed but stoutly fashioned. It was made to endure—and it has.

I am constant in my affection for the work of Hepplewhite, Sheraton, Chippendale, and Adam, but the possession of furniture made by these supreme artists imposes great and reverential responsibilities. Frequently, such furniture was designed for certain houses and rooms. Pictures by Reynolds and Gainsborough should hang upon the walls. Books in mellowed calf bindings should gleam softly in the background. Garish wallpapers, gay carpets and curtains, a profusion of flowers, are impossible, or at least ludicrous adjuncts. If I were an American, I should be terrified of buying one fine 'bit' of Chippendale. Unless I happened to be a millionaire, I should know that I was asking for serious trouble. If I could appreciate fittingly my purchase, I should want to enshrine it fittingly—and to compute there and then the cost of doing so. Dealers tell me, with a slightly malicious chuckle, that they sell such pieces to customers who admit that they can afford one specimen 'bit' and no more. What effect that one bit

will have on their Lares and Penates, they do not take into consideration. I submit mournfully that it will wreck their home.

I turn from mahogany to oak.

Old oak, with an authentic pedigree, is quite as exacting as old mahogany. It is at its best in an ancient Tudor manor house; it is at its worst in a modern bungalow. Nearly all of it exposed for sale is faked. The genuine pieces are immensely valuable. I saw a refectory table the other day for which £800 were offered and refused. What happens at the New York Custom House, when old oak is pronounced by experts to be new? What wailing and gnashing of teeth must ensue! Therefore to my pilgrim I would say: 'Leave old oak in old England.'

Nevertheless, it would be great fun for a traveller, if he had the time and money, to collect enough old oak panelling and furniture to furnish completely one little parlour. Many Englishmen of my acquaintance have done this successfully. It would take a lifetime to furnish a house. It is now possible to treat old oak that has been consistently maltreated with horrible stains and varnishes. Black oak, so called, is funereal. Remove the black stains and you find beneath the dirt of centuries the silvery splendour of the monarch of trees. He gleams out at you in the friendliest and most grateful fashion, as if to say: 'I am young and handsome again. Don't you like me? Don't you feel that you can live with me?' Oak thus rejuvenated will adapt itself to the present year of grace; it bestows a benediction upon it; but it is at heart still old oak, eyeing askance other woods, however beautiful they may be.

All that I have said about furniture applies, for the

most part, to the larger pieces. One, only one, very small 'bit' can be secured by the traveller with impunity. It will serve as a peg upon which to hang conversation; it will not obtrude itself if placed in a corner. But it ought to have all the corner to itself.

V

Old silver.

It is a curious fact that in England, the finest old silver is never exhibited except in the dining-room or on the tea-table. Lavender-scented spinsters point proudly to their china teacups, but they say nothing about their teapots. I know of one great house where the silver plate is shewn to visitors, but it is kept in a strong room, brilliantly illuminated. Some of it is designedly ornamental, never intended for work-a-day uses, worthy to be placed in a museum, but I am sure that the owner of it would refuse to place it in a cabinet in his drawing-room. Why?

Perhaps old silver, unquestionably genuine, is the safest investment for any collector. No great silversmith in this country would dare to impose upon a customer a spurious bit. The penalty for doing so, if the fraud were discovered, would be too great. Any collector seeking fine specimens will attend, of course, the great auctions, but he will do well to employ a dealer to bid for him. Small 'bits' may be picked up reasonably cheap in a country town. It is dangerous to buy foreign silver in England. Intimate knowledge of our different hall-marks can be acquired quickly and easily. There is enormous difference in value between early and later Georgian silver; and it is most important when buying chased or *repoussé* silver of, say, George II (with its authentic mark) to

make sure that the chasing and *répoussé* work have not been superimposed at a later date. A Queen Anne tankard, belonging to a member of my family, was so maltreated, and lost at least 75 per cent. of its value. Coffee-pots and teapots were subject to this mutilation by a generation who were unable to appreciate a beautiful object when they saw it. So, once more, beware——!

What I have said about old furniture applies also to old silver. It puts to the blush new silver. All table silver should be of approximately the same period. Age gives to silver a mellow appearance that is unmistakable. Again, there must be no mixing up of styles in either ancient or modern silver. Select the style of craftsmanship which pleases you, and stick to it like a limpet. A Victorian urn overshadowing a Queen Anne teapot on breakfast or tea-table loses what virtue it may possess. Plain silver—which I admire more than any other—never 'goes' with the decorative articles, and, if you place silver-gilt pieces beside it, the latter look garish. There is an enormous quantity of late Georgian silver in this country which can be bought cheap, because it is atrociously florid, made at a time when the taste of our great families was at its lowest ebb. Modern silver is infinitely preferable, or good reproductions of pieces made prior to 1780. What is new may be superlatively good; what is old may be superlatively bad. I saw some four dozen silver plates, very meretricious and pretentious in design, in a Bond Street jeweller's shop window. I asked him if he was optimist enought to hope to sell them, and he replied: 'Oh, yes; they'll go to America.' That was more than a year ago. Passing down Bond Street, the other day,

I saw the same plates. They hadn't gone to America yet. My brother inherited a silver dessert service, complete, of appalling design. Eventually he had to sell it at the current price of the metal. It had cost about £500 originally, and was sold for less than £100.

VI

Porcelain.

There is a charm and fascination about old china impossible to put into words. As a young man I viewed it with indifference if not disdain. I couldn't understand what I held to be a 'craze'. Well, a craze it is, and always will be, to the uninitiated. I am no longer of their number; and yet I have strayed but a short distance upon a road that has no ending; I have not adventured to far Cathay, or even to Dresden and Paris. My pilgrimages have been to Bow, Chelsea, Worcester, and Derby. Oriental porcelain is in a class by itself. Intimate knowledge of it is as difficult to acquire as a knowledge of the Chinese language. Long ago, a friend of mine, who is one of the greatest living authorities on Ming and Kang-He, confounded me with a remark worth recording here. I had asked him if he was often consulted by collectors. He replied in the affirmative, adding: 'I like it.' Then, after a pause, he observed: 'But I hate giving an opinion.' Naturally I exclaimed: 'Why?' He shrugged his shoulders. 'You see I feel that I don't yet know enough.' If he didn't know, who did?

The intermittent study of our English soft paste has been enough for me, but I admit that the 'bargains' to be picked up by the connoisseur are

not English porcelain. Dealers know too much about that, if it is first rate. On the other hand, English porcelain is to be found in every town in England and in most of our country houses; so there are many opportunities of acquiring knowledge.

I began with an Old Worcester butter dish, of the Dr. Wall period, scale pattern, decorated with flowers in panels, exquisitely gilded. I may say that I bought it under compulsion, and it cost ten pounds, a sound investment. 'That,' said the vendor, 'will teach you what to look for in Old Worcester.' It did. I have just got up from my chair to look at it now. It holds its own in a cabinet (not too full) of English porcelain.

I am told by dealers that Americans buy Oriental china. If they can afford to buy the best, they are justified, but too often the man of moderate means buys rubbish. I have a loathing for rubbish. Americans buy Sèvres and Dresden, and at their proper peril. Inferior Sèvres and Dresden are not worth buying. The 'best' of these famous wares is almost prohibitive in price; you find the 'dud' stuff everywhere.

I gave my attention to English soft paste, because it is comparatively easy to know it when you see it. The novice must begin by finding out the difference between hard and soft pastes. He can buy a lens and a sharp file for a few shillings. Equipped with these he can take the field after one lesson from an expert. Never again will he confuse the two pastes. To discriminate between unmarked pieces of Bow, Chelsea, and Worcester is not so easy, more particularly when the specimen presented for sale is not of the finest quality. Buying my first piece of indisputable

quality, gloating, as I did, over it, I understood what quality is in porcelain. 'If you are interested in china,' said a collector to me, 'look at the best first—and at nothing else.' Sage counsel!

To our pilgrim, I commend a quest after Crown Derby bisque figures of the late eighteenth century. They were delightfully modelled by Spengler, Farnsworth, Hill, Coffee, and others, but they vary in quality. Sooner or later these lovely little groups will command high prices. That is nothing to me, because only abject poverty would induce me to part with my modest collection. Originally they were sold in sets, such as The Four Seasons. To buy one of a set, and then to search diligently for the others, is an exciting chase. Also it justifies entrance into any shop, where porcelain is sold, with the 'open sesame': 'Have you any Derby bisque?' I hold no brief for Derby bisque, but—other things being equal—it has not yet had the consideration it merits. It can be bought at a reasonable price. Lack of space forbids my writing more upon this engaging theme.

VII

Gems.

Uncut stones of the lesser gems repay collecting. Apart from their beauty, romance lies in them. Some are credited with special virtues; some, like the opal, are supposed to be unlucky. In India necklaces are put together including all the lucky stones, but these are rarely seen in England. Opals have a curious fascination for me, partly perhaps because I was born in October. For many centuries it was regarded as a lucky stone. How and when ill-luck linked itself up with it I have tried—and failed—to find out. It is

unlucky inasmuch as it may fly to pieces at any moment. It dies because it is alive, a-sparkle with vitality. In the days of the Borgias it was believed that it grew dull and opaque when placed near poison——! There is not a scintilla of truth in this legend. But it is true that opals lose and regain their fire in an inexplicable fashion. Pearls, it is well known, ought to be worn. Contact with a warm skin seems to increase their lustre.

A collection of the less valuable gems is well within reach of a purse not too lavishly furnished. Such a collection teaches both geography and geology. It might lead to a study of all crystalline forms under a moderately-powered microscope.

I have touched lightly upon what I have collected myself. Mention must be made of old brass. Nearly all of it is faked, but these fakes are sold cheaply and are very decorative—particularly the tall twisted candlesticks, the toasting forks, and the warming-pans. There is a remarkable collection of these latter at Concarneau in Brittany, including specimens used by the queens of France and other great ladies, nearly every one embellished by a coat of arms. They are historical monuments! Old brass plates and dishes are valuable; the fakes are worthless. Now and again I have come across smaller candlesticks of the eighteenth century at a moderate price; they are worth buying; and the old is easily distinguishable from the new, as any honest dealer, if you ask him, will demonstrate.

Of pewter I know nothing. That, too, may be worthless or very good.

Rare books, scarce first editions, and the like, have never been fish to my net. After talking with that

famous bibliophile, Dr. Rosenbach, I was seized with a poignant regret that earlier in my life I had not given attention to this exciting quest; now it is too late. Book-collecting exacts unflagging energies and enormous experience, not to mention a handsome bank account. The prices paid lately are simply staggering, but they do not stagger Dr. Rosenbach.

To sum up, time and money spent in judicious collecting is well spent. It is, perhaps, the easiest way of acquiring knowledge which provokes an unslakable thirst for more knowledge. I can't recall one collector who could be termed a dull dog when he was talking freely of his adventures and misadventures in search of the rare and beautiful. To such a man beauty is indeed a 'joy for ever'.

CHAPTER XVI

HAIL AND FAREWELL

I

How desire outstrips performance! I wished to say so much that has been left unsaid. Not a word as yet about Music and so little about Pictures. We are accused, very unjustly, of being an unmusical nation, and it is true enough that the upper classes, the leisurely well-to-do, are not enthusiasts. But are they, taken by and large, enthusiastic about anything? Or is it a pose to suppress enthusiasm? It used to be when I was a young man. It is now a pose to affect an exuberant cheeriness of manner and deportment, but it is impossible to exclaim 'cheerio' after listening to the Lener Quartette; and so instead the fashionable folk murmur: 'They are rea-a-l-ly ra-a-ather priceless.' Sir Thomas Beecham resents this. So many Englishmen are afraid of enjoying the passing moment: afraid to live, afraid to die. But the fact remains that music—good, bad, and indifferent—appeals enormously to the multitude. The sale of gramophone records bears witness to that, and the enormous attendance at our musical festivals. If England were not music-loving, men like Pachmann, Mark Hambourg, Mischa Elman, and Kubelik would keep out of it. All the famous *virtuosi* come to London. Grand Opera may be under a cloud because salaries, rentals, and costs of

production are so enormous. But even to-day a famous singer will fill the Albert Hall to capacity; and every cottager who owns a 'wireless' listens in to the innumerable concerts. My humbler neighbours tell me that they are tired of 'jazz'; they are familiar with the names of the great composers; they are discriminating between good and bad. Ultimately the good must triumph. At any rate the music-loving pilgrim can find the 'best' in England if he takes the trouble to read the morning newspaper. I urge him not to miss the services in Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's, and the Chapel Royal. We have choirs as good as any in the world.

Picture-seeing is, as a rule, aimless. It would cease to be so if the visitor confined his attention to one master at a time. I recall a visit to the National Gallery, when a Van Eyck was temporarily on exhibition. My companion on that occasion happened to be a mine of information concerning the Van Eyck brothers, their use of certain pigments, and their influence upon modern painting. I listened spell-bound. Then we looked at our own Van Eyck and compared the two pictures exhaustively. We looked at no others. It was also my happy fortune, on another visit, to have with me as guide a French painter who had made a special study of Velasquez. He, being a professional, was even more enlightening. And he, too, refused to look at other pictures. This is the right spirit. A vivid impression of a masterpiece should not be blurred; if you see everything, you see nothing. A Japanese connoisseur of porcelain, with a cellar full of treasures, takes out one precious object and looks at it for a week; then he replaces it with another. I know of a hall in a beau-

tiful house which was designed especially to present to fullest advantage a magnificent Kang-He vase of surpassing loveliness. Umbrellas and hats never profane this sanctuary. It was intended to be a shrine; and a shrine it is.

Our National Portrait Gallery appeals to a different spirit. Many visit it, quite properly, as they go to Madame Tussaud's, to scrape intimate acquaintance with the Immortals. But here again intelligence should be exercised—and discrimination. If a man happens to be reading Pepys, Evelyn, or de Grammont, he must be strangely unintelligent, if he experiences no wish to see the Hampton Court Beauties. Unless he does read these gentlemen, a visit to the Hampton Court galleries will be perfunctory. Before entering our National Portrait Gallery, it would be wise to select some particular period of English history and to look at the counterfeit presentments of the man who made that history. A soldier, who knows his Napier, would seek out portraits of Sir John Moore, Wellington, and other men who controlled or inspired their activities. This method lends a fresh zest to picture-seeing, but how many do it?

What is called the different schools of painting should excite curiosity. The Dutch School is unmistakable. Each school invites criticism and comparison with other schools. Certain painters, like Turner and Morland, owed little or nothing to their predecessors. Turner expressed a wish that his work should be compared with that of Claude Lorraine. Did he realise, apart from his pride in his own powers, that comparison begets a better understanding of what we look at?

I have never been to a picture gallery with a dealer; I have never attempted to set a price on pictures. Dealers claim to make values. To-day they are booming Zoffany. This commercial side of art is intensely irritating to a lover of art, and a visit to our National Collections is free from such acerbities. *The pictures are not for sale.*

11

An American friend who was staying with my brother and myself amused us by declaring his intention of writing a book to be entitled 'Debunking Europe'. Listening to his comments upon the 'sights', of the continent, I hope that the book will be published. He admitted that he had 'done' Europe; and Europe had 'done' him. He said that he was in need of a rest-cure. He intimated that, so far as he was concerned, I could *have* Europe if I wanted it. . .

All that he had seen was a vibrant blur; he was 'mixed up'. He had visited, for the first time, four countries——! He could remember how many miles he had travelled in his highly-powered car—and little else. He had tried to compute *in miles* the length of the haloes upon the heads of saints and madonnas: 'Thousands of them!' he exclaimed. He was scandalized because an indiscreet person had told him that the models of the great Italian painters were nearer and dearer to them than they should be. It was 'bunk' to portray these ladies as 'holy', sheer impudence to encircle such naughty heads with a halo. . . .

What interested us was the conjecture: 'Do Americans feel as this man does? Is he a *vox populi?*'

English tourists display the same eagerness to see everything. It may be a characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race. In the instance just cited the ladies of the party had enjoyed themselves, because they took to Europe knowledge of Europe. Our friend, highly-powered as his own car, with an intimate knowledge of his own country, a successful man of business, a good citizen, made no secret of his disabilities as a sight-seer; he was humorously conscious of them. He quoted Mark Twain: 'An innocent abroad'. And he contended that such innocents should not be enticed to visit places where their innocence was humiliatingly exposed and self-imposed.

He had done what he had no aptitude for doing.

It is tragedy to reflect that millions go through life like tourists in a foreign country who cannot even talk the language of that country. It is the underlying purpose of this book to indicate to any visitor to our shores not what there is to be seen and enjoyed, but how to see and enjoy it intelligently. I was invited to answer an article with the aggressive caption *Hunting to Kill*. My caption was *Hunting to Live*. I attempted to point out that hunting was an epitome of life, with much the same triumphs and disasters which challenge the qualities that make life worth living. Killing is the least part of true sportsmanship. The fellowship of the hunting-field is the main cause of its popularity. Hunting differentiates life from the stagnation of mere existence. It stands for recreation and rejuvenation.

What I have written is, of course, personal—my own experiences. It may be suggested that I have scattered my energies. Now and again I meet some old schoolfellow who has achieved success by un-

swerving devotion to one end. As an object lesson he imposes the question: 'Has he sacrificed too much to gain his end?' Nobody can answer that but the man himself. It would bore me to tears to hunt six days a week, or to fire off thirty thousand cartridges in the course of one shooting season; but, *mirabile dictu*, the men who thus override their hobbies are not, apparently, bored. Above them hangs the sword of having to give up the one thing that has engrossed all their capacities for enjoyment. Men have said to me: 'I should kill myself if I couldn't hunt.' They don't when the time comes, but they look and feel unemployed.

III

I have written nothing about yachting. One week aboard a luxurious, ocean-going vessel was more than enough for me. We ate, we drank, we attempted to make merry, but it was up-hill work. Of yacht-racing I know nothing. The men who sail their own yachts get, so they tell me, barrels of fun out of it. Probably a big yacht is the most expensive luxury in the world.

I am wondering whether it would be possible to employ Puppy Show methods of criticism—the award of marks—to life. The New Year would be a good time for revaluations. We need a touchstone to stabilize old and new values. How many marks ought we to award to our work whatever it may be? How many to our sports and games? As I grow older, I attempt to compute what my contempories have got out of their lives, or what they appear to have got. This may be an amusing and instructive exercise, but it doesn't carry one very far, because

we know so little about others. And we know too often little about ourselves, stagnating, as so many of us do, in a small circle of interests and activities that grows smaller each day unless we make a vigorous effort to get out of it.

I have said something about politicians, but nothing about politics. The 'best' politics in this country are not party politics. Most of us are sick to death of party squabbles and acerbities. We would fain take a more panoramic view of national affairs; but how is that to be done? The common denominator of all parties should be an interest in the nation as a corporate entity. Politics ought to be the most fascinating study, dull and dismal only to the dull and dismal. It seems incredible to-day that when I was a boy it was considered 'bad form' to talk politics at a dinner table, or in any mixed company. We were terrified of treading on each other's corns, and our politics, such as they were, can be properly described as corns, hard growths that obstructed any freedom of movement and actually made movement painful. The right politics, rigorously exclusive of party interests, ought to be taught in the National Schools and preached from every pulpit in the land, broadcast in every home. In this respect the ancient Greeks and Romans were far more enlightened than we are. To be a citizen of Rome or Athens was the highest civic privilege. Well—*au revoir*. This world is not Utopia but Upsidonia. The small strawberries are now, seemingly, on top of the pottle, advertizing quantity as against quality. Quality is in eclipse. How long will it remain so?

We have given the vote to young women; what use will they make of it? I recall an old gammer in

the New Forest, who, when she was asked by the parson to send her grandson to a Confirmation Class, replied promptly: 'Tom 'll go, an' gladly too. Fur why? He's allers ready for a lark.' Will some of the younger women regard 'voting' as a lark? Let us hope not. Let us hope, too, that the majority will make a sustained effort to grapple with the issues at stake, and read both sides of a vexed question. Many have scant time to read. Many will echo the opinions of others; few will realize their new and far-reaching powers. The more enlightened may refuse to vote because they will shrink from their responsibilities, aware of their own mental limitations. To these I would suggest that it is their duty to vote according to the lights vouchsafed them. Back of every vote recorded should be a guiding principle, the still small voice of conscience. The safe-guarding of our industries may be a problem too difficult for sweet-and-twenty to solve, but the safeguarding of the home, and all that the home stands for, is personal and intimate to every woman.

IV

The word 'best' has been too often used in these pages. We choose our friends, but love imposes itself, and we accept more or less the dictum that love is the greatest thing in the world. Love is 'best'; and it imposes itself. We choose everything else according to our tastes and fancies. That is why it is super-important to choose wisely. The most extraordinary thing about us is our resiliency and undulancy, as Montaigne made plain long ago. We should be happier if we realised this. Montaigne is read because he was a man of many facets. Each

facet was turned by him to the light; he reflected light and transmitted it. I should have enjoyed cracking a bottle with him; and he would have discoursed, I feel sure, most delightfully concerning the subtile ethers of the grape. We don't talk enough about simple pleasures. We are, indeed, in serious danger of losing the amiable art of small-talk. In some houses the tyranny of Bridge is intolerable. I am wandering from my superlative, which, I repeat, imposed itself on me. I was invited to deal with it as best I could, and my 'best' may appear 'worst' to a captious critic. Only yesterday I read with amusement some lines written by a prospective Labour candidate: 'No one can see so clearly as a woman the absurdity of fox-hunting, war, and drink, yet some women are our blood-thirstiest hunters, our most thorough-going jingoes and—well—perhaps as bad as men in their actual and theoretical attitude towards alcohol.' This gentleman, no doubt, would take exception to the title of this book, but it has not been written for him, or for any other kill-joy. I am not, happily, concerned with his views, but it might have occurred to him that if women ride to hounds, support the necessity of an army to protect incidentally themselves, and drink wine, that he won't persuade these persons to mend their ways by stigmatizing their activities as 'absurd'. But Conservative, Liberal, and Labourite habitually use the wrong words, as habitually as each in his degree promises on the platform more than he can perform. Calling a Prime Minister a liar does not, necessarily, make him one.

Whatever may happen, I am optimistic about the future of England, because I believe in the common-

sense of my fellow travellers, a belief based on experience. Pessimists are, nine times out of ten, self-centred. They anticipate trouble which may affect themselves. A man I know predicted war with America. Why? He could give no adequate reason, but he happens to own property in the United States which, in the event of such an unlikely catastrophe, might be confiscated——! That discoloured his judgment and drove sleep from his pillow. All my more reactionary friends suffer from this same insidious disease. They remain sane and calm when discussing eventualities which would not affect their pocket. But the average Englishman indicates most clearly his possession of commonsense when he regards himself as one of a team, when he is permeated with the principle—first brought to his notice in the cricket field—that team-work surpasses individual effort. The man who is familiar with our field sports and games must know more about his fellow-countrymen than, say, the mere bookworm, or the man engrossed in business. He talks with Everyman; and Everyman talks with him.

The French used to make comic play with our word 'shocking'. They contented that we, as a nation, were too easily shocked. Is anybody 'shocked' to-day at anything? I regard this sturdy refusal to be shocked as a healthy symptom in the body politic. Possibly the war self-shocked us out of being shocked by others. Self-shock, as a theme for novelist and dramatist, is to be commended. Sudden impoverishment self-shocked our gallant squirarchy. Conscription self-shocked Tom, Dick, and Harry. V.A.D. work must have self-shocked some of our young ladies delicately nurtured, brought up with all

blinds down between themselves and what was held by their mammas to be offensive in life. Does anybody now wish that it had been otherwise? It is indisputable that the war broke down the barrier between the classes, but it has not bridged the immeasurable space between ignorance and intelligence. The great menace to our prosperity and welfare as a nation is the possible, but only temporary, triumph of ignorance over intelligence. The many may, for a brief season, dominate the few, as they did in the Terror, but even then out of the many will arise the few who in their turn will terrorise the many. That is the lesson of Lenin and Trotsky.

V

I was asked to write this book as a *vade mecum* for visitors to England. Annually, they are increasing in numbers. Many of them 'come to stay'. In such seaports as Cardiff we are actually confronted with the problem of dealing fairly with negroes and those of negroid blood, the same problem which has been such a *Wonderful Puzzle Fifteen* to Uncle Sam.

Our visitors affect us and are affected by us, consciously or subconsciously. For instance, whether we like it or not, we are becoming Americanized. We are adopting their 'slanguage', their conduct of hotels, their get-there-quick business methods. We understand them better than we did; we may hope, perhaps, that they have a nicer understanding of us. Anyway, this ever-increasing intercourse ought to be an asset to both nations. When I lived in California, kind and hospitable as the Californians were to me and mine, I could not blind myself to the hardly veiled hostility to 'Britishers' in the lump. Our

more impassioned advocates of 'hands across the sea' have never seemed to realize that America is American and not English. Out of the millions in the United States there may be ten per cent. who might be described as Anglophile, many of them with English blood in their veins. The others, who represent every race under the sun, are Anglophobe. American writers of distinction, like Owen Wister, have given adequate reasons for the distrust both inherited and acquired which somehow we have inspired in the hearts and heads of the vast majority of Americans. It is almost hopeless to attempt to make this plain to the distinguished Englishmen who have passed through America, but who have never lived in it. They meet the Anglophiles who wish to meet them. The others stand aside, silent but aggressive. On our ranch, we had a superb flagstaff, the highest in California. We never dared to fly the Union Jack. Cowboys would have riddled it with bullets. We flew, instead, Old Glory. A straw this, but it serves to indicate an animosity which had nothing whatever to do with us as individuals. One American lady, shortly before the war, writing for a paper with an immense circulation, declared that when sailing past Dover from Hamburg to New York she retired to her cabin, to avoid seeing the white cliffs of *perfide Albion*——! I cite this instance without any rancour. She was giving her little twist to the lion's tail.

Every American who comes to England should be welcomed as a bird of passage who may carry back to his own country a twig of olive. Most of them do so. It has always annoyed me that certain Englishmen, who travel far and wide, keep out of America.

Why? Nobody has answered the question to my satisfaction, but I believe that we can learn more from Americans than they can learn from us.

VI

It is easier to exclaim 'Hail' to the future than to bid farewell to the past. I have bade farewell to many of the sports and games briefly described in these pages. But I feel that what I have gained on the swings, I have not lost on the roundabouts, because there is really so little difference between the swings and roundabouts of life. An ardent fox-hunter might, so I suggest, be equally happy chasing butterflies if impoverishment constrained him to do so. The pleasures of a philosophical old age are dear to old age, although incomprehensible to youth.

I wish that I could revisit America. Perhaps I shall before the curtain rings down. I should like to make acquaintance with the wonderful Mid-West of which I know nothing. I should avoid the old trails familiar to me. The younger generation of Americans, whom I have met in England, have aroused curiosities. After meeting Sinclair Lewis, I was filled with a desire to spend a week in Zenith. I should like to spend a month in the new Los Angeles, which I remember as a half Spanish town. America seems to have set the pace to civilization. America has 'speeded up' her citizens. Perhaps Uncle Sam's greatest and 'best' achievement is his solution of the problem of adjusting high wages and a better scale of living with increased output and less unemployment. I should like to read a book, somewhat similar to this, dealing with what is 'best' in

America from the point of view of a man who has no prejudices, no axe to grind, but a whole-souled wish to set forth what seems 'best' to him.

Hoping to read such a book, I lay down my pen.

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