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THE COMPLETE SPORTSMAN

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

LORD BELLINGER
THE BOLSTER BOOK
THE PERFECT GENTLEMAN

* * *

RUTHLESS RHYMES FOR HEARTLESS
HOMES
BALLADS OF THE BOER WAR
MISREPRESENTATIVE MEN
FISCAL BALLADS
VERSE AND WORSE
MISREPRESENTATIVE WOMEN
FAMILIAR FACES
DEPARTMENTAL DITTIES
CANNED CLASSICS
THE MOTLEY MUSE

* * *

A GROUP OF SCOTTISH WOMEN
THE MOTHER OF PARLIAMENTS
SPLENDID FAILURES

THE COMPLETE SPORTSMAN

(COMPILED FROM THE OCCASIONAL PAPERS
OF REGINALD DRAKE BIFFIN)

BY

HARRY GRAHAM

AUTHOR OF "THE PERFECT GENTLEMAN," "THE BOLSTER BOOK," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY LEWIS BAUMER

LONDON
EDWARD ARNOLD

1914

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PREFACE

To the vast majority of my fellow countrymen—indeed, I think I may safely say of the Anglo-Saxon race—the name of Reginald Drake Biffin is no doubt by this time a familiar household word. To preface a volume of his writings with anything resembling a formal introduction may therefore be regarded not only as a work of supererogation but also as a piece of unpardonable editorial impertinence. It is, however, always possible (though admittedly unlikely) that there still exist in certain obscure out-of-the-way country districts one or two benighted beings who are unacquainted with the literary masterpieces of this remarkable man. To these, if such there be, it may perhaps be advisable to address a word or two of explanation and apology.

Some little time ago, when my dear friend Reginald Drake Biffin left this country somewhat suddenly at the urgent instigation of his family, and started out to carve a career for himself upon a kangaroo farm on the distant

Murrumbidgee River, he generously entrusted to my care a mass of valuable literary material upon which he had long been at work, with instructions to make such use of it as I deemed proper in the public interest. It has thus been my privilege to be the means of publishing, during the last five or six years, under the titles of *The Bolster Book* and *The Perfect Gentleman*, two volumes containing selections from the writings of my absent friend which have served to establish his claim to rank among the dozen foremost essayists of the twentieth century. To-day, therefore, when in response to popular clamour I am once more venturing to publish a volume compiled from the same source, I feel confident that the public will not withhold that support and encouragement which it so freely lavished upon former works from Biffin's immortal pen.

Sport is a subject upon which much has already been written, and still more yet remains to be written; but it is not personal affection for or admiration of my poor friend that prompts me to assert that of all the many writers upon this perennially interesting topic none is more competent than he to instruct the public mind and guide popular taste. On all matters connected with sport Biffin proved himself over and over again to be an authority whose opinions were

unquestioned, whose experience was unrivalled; and it is no exaggeration to say that he himself could not be described more truthfully than in the three words that I have chosen to adorn the cover of this work.

I am bound to admit that to the minds of casuists and hypercritics "The Complete Sportsman" may appear to be an intentionally misleading title for a volume in which certain popular sports are not touched upon at all. It is indeed true that the reader may search in vain throughout this work for any mention of polo, of deep-sea shrimping, or of billiards. But, after all, life is short; it is as well to leave something to the imagination of the reader, and if a popular demand should arise for further enlightenment upon these omitted subjects it will always be possible (and perhaps profitable) to supplement the present volume with another of a similar nature dealing with any sports that do not happen to be treated in these pages.

It may be considered that some explanation is due from the editor to the reader in order to account for the presence of the final portion of this book, which might well have been labelled "Appendix," but which I have chosen to insert under the more ingenuous heading of "Padding." To try and explain this would take too long; it will be sufficient to say that this particular

section of the work is included for a variety of excellent reasons connected with the price of the book, the number of pages required in order to satisfy a rapacious public, and other purely technical matters which are only of importance to publishers and booksellers, and would not interest the general reader.

I must take this opportunity of thanking my old friend Professor (late Mr.) Sandeman Bloggs, M.V.O., for assistance in revising the proofs. Mr. Lewis Baumer desires me to state that he declines to be held in any way responsible for the picture on p. 85, illustrating an elephant-trap. This particular drawing is the work of that rising young artist Miss Norah Biffin, who achieved notoriety some years ago as the illustrator of an unpleasant book entitled *Lord Bellinger*, now mercifully out of print. It shows, if I may say so, unmistakable signs of the influence of Mr. Tonks, Mr. John, Mr. George Morrow, and Mr. Sickert, in whose ateliers Miss Biffin has so patiently studied art during the last fourteen years.

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MAJOR SPORTS

I.
SHOOTING

1.

I COME of an essentially sporting stock. A remote ancestor of mine named Beowulf de Byffyne (closely related to Reginald Cœur de

Bœuf, and grandson of Herebald the Drake) was the founder of an early British Syndicate, the members of which combined to rent a snipe-

marsh in Wessex in good King Alfred's time. Here, if we are to believe an ancient document still carefully preserved in the family archives, my forebear "dydde oftetymes slay ye nyne snyppe in ye syngle noone, wyth ye bolte and crossebowe."

On my mother's side, too, I am distantly related to the famous William Tell, and at the maternal knee I was taught my letters from a rhymed analogical alphabet which opened with the suggestive line: "A was an Archer who shot at a Frog," the music of which haunts me still. My uncle, Sir Noel Biffin, under whose kindly guardianship my early life was spent, could justly boast that he was within six inches of being the best game-shot in Rutlandshire, and there was scarcely a pheasant in the Midland Counties that had not at one time or another escaped by but a hair's breadth from his ubiquitous gun.

2.

Biffin Grange, Sir Noel's famous country-seat, decorated throughout with trophies of the chase, was long one of the most popular show-places of England, and tourists would come from all over the world to inspect the marvellous collection of stuffed pike with which the front hall had been superbly furnished. I well remember

my nurse telling me in awestruck tones that she had once seen the late Mr. Ruskin gaze with a peculiar fascinated look, in which surprise and admiration appeared to be struggling for supremacy, at the frieze of tarpon's scales which adorned my uncle's dining-room. Quite five minutes elapsed, so my nurse assured me, before the great man passed his hand rapidly across his eyes and turned with a long-drawn sigh to the cases of embalmed penguins that were ranged along the walls of the principal passages. It was even rumoured, with what foundation of truth I am unable to state, that the King of the Belgians had offered an enormous sum for the huge skeleton of an anthropoid ape which was the chief feature of my dear aunt's boudoir, but which, out of respect for her memory, Uncle Noel resolutely declined to part with.

The happiest days of my youth were passed at the Grange. In the congenial society of my uncle, and amid such surroundings as I have endeavoured to describe, it was not surprising that I should have become imbued at an early age with that sporting instinct which has been a dominant characteristic of the Biffin family for many generations, and is by no means the least valuable heritage of our Anglo-Saxon race. As a careless schoolboy I would spend many hours in the gun-room listening to the head game-

keeper's views upon the prolificacy of rabbits, or wandering round the billiard-room admiring those masterpieces "after Sir Edwin Landseer" with which its walls were lavishly besprinkled.

There was one picture in particular which always riveted my attention, and thus unconsciously sowed the seeds of that love of shooting which bourgeoned into maturity as soon as I reached an age at which I could safely be entrusted with a fowling-piece. In this remarkable engraving the artist had succeeded in depicting a scene from the everyday life of our beloved Royal Family, at once dignified but homely, human and yet in a way sublime, which was calculated to appeal especially to the taste of a loyal youth like myself, whose passion for all forms of sport was latent if as yet undeveloped.

In the foreground of the picture stood Queen Victoria, dressed in the ample evening gown fashionable half a century ago, while on a sofa at her side Prince Albert gracefully reclined, pointing, with not unpardonable pride, to a brace of grouse, three moor-hens, a wild duck and a couple of teal which he had just laid at the feet of his royal consort. From the vantage point of an adjacent footstool a small King Charles's spaniel was engaged in regarding the proceeds of the day's sport with an air of detached interest from which suspicion was not

altogether absent, while through a window at the back could be seen a distant view of the river Dee, on whose peaceful bosom a swan was standing on its head with a persistence worthy of a better cause. The face of the Queen was illumined by an encouraging but rather forced smile, in which astonishment at the size and variety of her husband's bag seemed to be battling with the natural annoyance occasioned by the spectacle of her best carpet covered with blood and feathers. (Indeed, if one may say so with all due respect, His Royal Highness's incurable habit of bringing grouse into the drawing-room, as shown in so many contemporary prints, though it has escaped the notice of most biographers, would appear to have been the only weak spot in an otherwise perfect character.)

I must confess that it was this engraving as much as anything else that filled my youthful soul with the ambition to excel as a game-shot. In my childish dreams I would often picture myself emulating the achievements of royal personages, and strewing the nursery floor with the sanguinary corpses of defunct *fauna* that had fallen a prey to my prowess. My delight can therefore readily be imagined when, one memorable Christmas morning, my Uncle Noel presented me with an old-fashioned pair of hammer-guns for which he had no further use.

He had shot with these weapons himself for over forty years, and had only finally decided to discard them because the barrels had become so worn that he was afraid they might at any moment burst in his hands and injure him fatally.

To say that I was enchanted would be but a poor way of expressing the extent of pleasure that I derived from my new possession. In the excitement of the moment, and heedless of possible consequences, I rushed out, gun

in hand, to the home farm, in search of some suitable target. And before my natural prudence had warned me of the doubtful wisdom of such conduct, I had discharged both barrels in the direction of a large Jersey cow named "Maud,"* which was at that moment being milked by one of the farm-hands.

Neither of my shots took effect, I am glad to

* Owing to her incurable habit of coming into the garden.

say, and the next thing I recollect is being impelled by some subconscious force to run eight times round the cowshed at breakneck speed. The milkman would also appear to have been smitten with a similar desire for exercise, and

ran round the shed immediately in my rear, with a pitchfork in his hand, expressing the while a passionate longing to effect that meeting from which I seemed to feel a growing and perhaps not unreasonable aversion.

Just as I was circling the track for the ninth time

a friendly pig came to my rescue, and thrust itself between the legs of my pursuer. The latter fell heavily to the ground, leaving me to finish the course alone, and in another minute I had gained the shelter of the house, and was hiding my gun in the library behind an edition of Shakespeare's works where I knew that I could count upon its remaining undisturbed.

3.

It is not my purpose to weary the reader with a detailed account of my gradual education as a game-shot, nor would I be so impertinent as to assume that he does not already possess something more than a rudimentary knowledge of the art of shooting. But there are one or two points in connection with this particular branch of sport which even the most experienced sportsmen are apt to overlook, which I need not therefore apologize for mentioning as briefly as possible, at the grave risk of appearing to be desirous of combining instruction with entertainment.

Students of Charles Dickens will doubtless recollect that it was at the wise instigation of Mr. Pickwick that his friends Winkle and Tupman acquired the habit of carrying their guns "reversed" (as soldiers call it), thereby ensuring the safety of their companions-in-arms and considerably enhancing the pleasure of the day's sport. The "nice conduct of a loaded gun" should indeed form an essential feature of every sportsman's education. And any man who handles his weapon in such a manner as to imbue his fellows with not unnatural fear should be compelled to wear a piece of red silk round his left arm, so that his society may be avoided

as carefully as is that of a kicking horse in the hunting-field.

The only really safe way of carrying a gun is over the shoulder, with the triggers pointing to the sky. Nevertheless, one may often meet with men who are so careless of human life that they treat their guns as though they were guitars or infants-in-arms, or even as walking-sticks. It is not, however, necessary to warn the true sportsman against such malpractices, the disadvantages of which are too obvious to require mention.

The most careful man I ever knew was a sinister-looking individual whom I once encountered in a dark corner of one of the thickest of my uncle's coverts. When I came suddenly upon him he was busily engaged in taking his gun to pieces, storing the barrels down the leg of his trousers, while he tucked the stock away in a voluminous pocket at the back of his coat. I thought at the time that he was erring on the side of excessive caution, but I was wrong. Had this man, in fact, continued to exercise sufficient prudence, he would not at this moment be undergoing six months' imprisonment for poaching.

It is, of course, essential that a gun should always be unloaded before its owner attempts to climb a stile or negotiate a stiff fence; indeed, there is only one thing more annoying than to shoot a fellow-creature owing to a neglect of this

simple precaution, and that is to shoot oneself. I need not dwell upon the palpable idiocy of persons who, inspired by natural mental hebetude or a warped sense of fun, point a fully-charged weapon at one another's stomachs, and then try to explain to the coroner that they "didn't know it was loaded." The humour that attaches to a simulated attempt at homicide is, at the best of times, of the most tenuous and meagre quality, and when such jests lead to a sudden decrease in the population they are very seldom calculated to raise a hearty laugh.

I remember how, during one of the annual pheasant shoots at Biffin Grange, the presence of a certain Colonel Vipont at the covert-side would spread a kind of panic among the beaters, and fill the most daring of his fellow-sportsmen with an ill-controlled desire to return home by the shortest and swiftest route. Colonel Vipont's main object in life appeared to be to fire off as many cartridges as possible, and he evidently laboured under the impression that the more shot there was in the air at any particular time, the greater would be the chance that some animal might accidentally walk or fly into it.

It was from a sense of gratitude that Sir Noel invited this man year after year to form one of the party at the Grange, where the pleasure of his society was but little appreciated. He and my uncle had been shooting together once in

the Norfolk marshes, when the latter happened to be badly stung by a wounded snipe. His companion rushed to his rescue, beat off the infuriated animal, and sucked the wound for several hours, thereby in all probability saving Sir Noel's life. As the sportsmen were some six or seven miles from home when the accident occurred, as also the wound was unfortunately situated in my uncle's chin, and the gallant Colonel insisted upon applying continual suction to the poisoned puncture until medical aid could be summoned, the return journey was fraught with difficulties which may easily be imagined.

In his youth Colonel Vipont had been a crack military shot, and he was never able to grasp the fact that methods which had once proved successful on the rifle-range were utterly unsuited to the covert-side. Being short-sighted, he relied solely upon his sense of hearing for notice of the approach of game, and if he thought he heard the sound of a rabbit rustling in the undergrowth he would at once "prepare to receive cavalry." Lying flat upon his chest, he would raise his gun to his cheek, close the left eye, and deliberately rake the surrounding countryside with volley after volley, evincing a total disregard for the safety of his neighbours, and displaying a childlike belief in the old adage which declares that "every bullet has its billet." The rabbit usually escaped scot-free, but scarcely

a day passed without some innocent human being in the vicinity being liberally peppered with shot.

At last, however, when in the course of a single afternoon the Colonel had poured both barrels into the legs of our local vicar, whose tuneful methods of clearing his throat had caused him to be mistaken for a covey of partridges, he was adjudged to have overstepped the limit of legitimate carelessness, and was sternly warned off the field. His unpopularity in the county had by this time reached such a pitch that, in deference to the earnest solicitations of his friends, he reluctantly consented to give up shooting and occupied himself for the remainder of his life with the less perilous form of sport known as "philately."

The day on which Colonel Vipont reached this momentous decision was long kept as a public holiday in the district in which he resided, where, owing to the prevalence of crippled rustics whom he had at one time or another added to his bag, every village bore a striking resemblance to the town of Lourdes. The news of his retirement (prematurely published by a post-mistress who read it on the back of a picture postcard which the Colonel had despatched to a friend in London) was received with universal expressions of delight. Athanksgiving service was held by the vicar in the parish church; a rabbit was roasted whole on the village green;

several pheasants were burnt in effigy on a bonfire lighted for the purpose; and a great cry of relief rose to heaven from the local Cottage Hospital, which had long been filled to overflowing with the victims of Colonel Vipont's misguided zeal.

4.

One of the commonest sources of danger out shooting is the popular delusion that a hearty luncheon, in which alcohol plays no insignificant part, exercises a beneficial and steadying effect upon a man's aim. A Virginian friend of mine told me that he had entirely renounced the use of spirits while coon-hunting, as he found that they caused him to become torpid and somnolent, and greatly increased his natural inclination (as he picturesquely put it) to "hug a fence."

Lord Burlingham, on the other hand, used frequently to assure me that he attributed his remarkable proficiency with the fowling-piece entirely to the fact that his loader was always provided with a flask of rare old brandy, with which he liberally dosed his noble master whenever the latter's energies showed signs of flagging. The result of this was that towards the end of a day's sport his lordship had usually reached that happy condition of mind in which a man sees everything trebled; each pheasant that rocketed over his head seemed to him to be

accompanied by a pair of twins, and by the same subtle imaginative process he was enabled to raise three guns to his shoulders, and press three triggers simultaneously as soon as the quarry came into sight. It is not therefore to be wondered at that he should have acquired an exceptionally high reputation as a sportsman, and if by chance he ever failed to bring down his bird, it was only because he was sometimes careless enough to aim at the *outside* pheasant with the *inside* gun or *vice-versa*. In spite of such accidents (which may happen to the least inebriated amongst us) Lord Burlingham was almost invariably the hero of every day's sport in which he engaged. His return home became a kind of triumphal progress, and many a jealous glance was cast in his direction by his more sober comrades as he staggered up the carriage-drive, performing an original version of the Tango, with the support of two sympathetic beaters who admired his dancing almost as much as they envied his infinite capacity for alcoholic ingurgitation. At the end of the day it was generally found that his bag largely exceeded that of any other gun, and sporting members of the local Young Men's Christian Association, inspired by his example, would hasten home to break their lifelong pledges of total abstinence, hoping in this

fashion to discover the secret of Lord Burlingham's success.

I cannot, however, honestly recommend such peculiar methods to all my readers. Alcohol has a different effect upon different constitutions; it stimulates one man and stupefies another; and in the case of a sport such as shooting, where cerebral agility and alertness of vision are essential to success, an extra pint or two of cherry-brandy at luncheon may often play havoc with a man's chances of obtaining a big bag.

5.

It is the irritating habit of every variety of game, as is indeed notorious, to time its advent for the moment when the sportsman's attention has been temporarily diverted, or his thoughts have wandered to some irrelevant matter that has nothing whatever to do with the sport in which he is engaged.

When driving grouse or partridges this is especially noticeable. At the commencement of every drive the sportsman's eyes are conscientiously glued to the horizon, he is alert and watchful, and it would seem impossible for any bird to elude his observation. Gradually, however, a kind of mental lassitude supervenes; he begins to think of his balance at the bank (if

he has one), of the little ones at home crying for new boots, of the books he has forgotten to order from the library; and just as his mind has become completely immersed in similar metaphysical speculations he is roused from his reverie by the whirr of wings, and finds that a large covey has flown over his head unnoticed.

With a muttered imprecation he concentrates once more upon the matter in hand, determined that nothing shall interrupt his vigil; but in a short time he again lapses unconsciously into a condition of mental coma, and is so startled by the sudden appearance of a single bird at his elbow that he has no time to take aim before it vanishes unscathed into the offing.

It is during some such temporary bout of lethargy that a man will occasionally infringe the unwritten rules of sport, and earn the odium and contempt of his fellows by killing the keeper's best dog, shooting a fox, or slaying the favourite barndoor hen of some local farmer. A near relative of my own, who shall be nameless, frequently suffered in this way. Indeed, his natural absent-mindedness, combined with a peculiar obliquity of vision, rendered him so prone to the commission of accidental vulpicide that he always carried a small spade slung over his shoulders, so that whenever he shot a fox he could hastily dig its grave and give it pagan burial before its absence had been noticed. He was thus able for many years to evade the direct consequences of his crime, until at last, when he was caught by my uncle in the act of trying to bury a full-sized cow (which he pretended to have mistaken for a woodcock), it was felt that the conduct of his clandestine obsequies was being carried to extreme lengths, and he was never again invited to The Grange.

I myself once had the misfortune to shoot a tame parrot belonging to my host's cousin—a regrettable affair the memory of which still causes beads of perspiration to bedew my brow. I was staying at Castle Gormuck, in Aberdeen-

shire, at the time, with the old Earl of Strathbungo and Gorbals, and on the twelfth of August a large party of us were despatched to the hillside for a day with the grouse. We had been carefully warned to keep a good lookout for a pet parrot, the property of Miss MacAlister of Peebles, also a member of the house-party, which had ungratefully escaped from its cage while its owner was giving it a fresh piece of groundsel on Sunday morning, and had never returned.

“Polly” was a valuable bird. The way in which it wiped its beak upon the perch after saying: “’Ave a drink, guvnor!” was (I am told) uncannily human. And poor Miss MacAlister, who had reared and cherished it ever since it was an egg, was so greatly upset by her loss that she even went so far as to offer a reward of several bawbees for any information that should lead to its recovery, dead or alive. Hitherto, however, her efforts to stimulate the natural cupidity of the Aberdeenshire crofters had proved fruitless, and Polly still remained at large.

The twelfth was a hot, oppressive day, and after a heavy luncheon in the heather I sat for some time in my butt waiting for the grouse to fly in my direction, and trying to elude the unwelcome attentions of a host of midges. As

the minutes passed slowly by and no game made its appearance, I found myself gradually sinking into that state of agreeable post-prandial torpor which I have already described. From this I was suddenly awakened by my loader, who silently touched my elbow and pointed to a large covey that was flying straight for my butt. I lifted my gun, closed both eyes (as is my invariable custom when more than three birds are in the air at the same time), and was about to fire, when my attention was arrested by a singularly startling phenomenon. From the very sky over my head, rising clear above the flutter of a score of wings, there came the sound of a still, small, resonant voice speaking in accents that were undeniably human.

“Damn it all! Don’t push!” were the words that fell upon my astonished ears, uttered in an irritable tone which I shall never forget to my dying day. “Damn it all! Don’t push!”

Alas! too late I realized the explanation of this portent. Before I had time to restrain it, my finger had pressed the trigger, and in another moment a mangled heap of grey and crimson feathers lay at my feet. It was, of course, Miss MacAlister’s parrot that I had thus unluckily slain, and when I realized that the

innocent creature would never again wipe its mouth on the perch I am not ashamed to confess that I broke down and wept like a little child.

At the post-mortem examination which subsequently took place it was found that the deceased had been in the enjoyment of perfect health and in the full possession of all its faculties at the time of its premature demise. It was always supposed that shortly after its escape the parrot must instinctively have made its way to the nearest moor, where, by its natural eloquence, it had speedily ingratiated itself with a covey of the local grouse. By these it had probably been elected to the responsible post of leader; and it can only have been under the stress of sudden panic that its subjects could so far have forgotten the respect they owed to their chief as to wring from it those words of dignified protest which still echo tragically in my guilty ears.

Miss MacAllister was broken-hearted, and though I never made the slightest attempt to claim a single bawbee, and even suggested that her darling should be embalmed at my expense, I saw from the way in which she afterwards avoided my society that she suspected me of killing her pet for the sake of the reward she had so liberally offered. My efforts to disabuse her

mind of this being unsuccessful, I shortly afterwards left Castle Gormuck, never to return.

6.

No sportsman should ever entirely lose sight of the fact that almost all game is destined sooner or later for the pot; it should always, therefore, be shot within what is technically known as "kitchen range," and never so mutilated as to be fit for little else but mince. Nothing used to cause my uncle so much annoyance as the spectacle of his pheasants being blown to pieces by guns who did not appreciate the necessity of leaving something besides a portion of beak and a few tail-feathers for the *chef* to practice his culinary art upon. "Let 'em rise, can't you?" Sir Noel would shout with ill-concealed irritation when one of his guests had poured a broadside into some confiding bird which seemed desirous of roosting on his hat; and I have even known him go so far with an habitual offender as to take his gun away from him, slap his hands, and send him home without any luncheon.

But if my uncle waxed justly indignant with amateur butchers, he was no less strict with sportsmen who fired hopefully at game which was obviously out of shot, and would use the most appalling language when he saw birds

escaping in a wounded condition to die in some neighbouring county. He was also rightly intolerant of persons who insisted upon being accompanied by badly trained dogs—retrievers who never retrieved, pointers who couldn't point, setters that failed to set, or spaniels that seemed constitutionally incapable of spanning.

He himself set an admirable example in this respect, being for many years the proud possessor of a beautiful little cocker spaniel named "Jet," not only an admirable sporting dog but also gifted with those perfect table manners which rendered it a most agreeable household pet.

"Jet" was Sir Noel's constant companion in London as well as at The Grange, and the only person who did not altogether appreciate its presence was my dear aunt. Lady Biffin often complained bitterly of the lavish way in which "Jet's" master fed it at meals with bits of burnt toast, cheese-rind, grape-skins, and similar unappetising fragments which, as she justly observed, might well have been saved and given to the deserving poor.

In this connection I recall a rather curious incident which, unimportant as it seemed at the time, had far-reaching consequences, resulting in the severance of a business connection that had long existed between my uncle and one of our

most eminent financiers, and the ruin of an enterprise to which the former had devoted much time and thought.

One morning in London Sir Noel happened to come down rather earlier than usual to breakfast, and hastened to the side-board to help himself to a plateful of cold ham, a dish of which he was inordinately fond. He was accompanied by "Jet," who immediately sat up on its hind-legs and signified in the customary canine fashion a desire to share its master's meal. With that kindness which ever distinguished him, and was indeed his chief stumbling-block through life, my uncle proceeded to cut off the outside slice of ham—the "flywalk" he facetiously termed it—and was about to hand it to the hungry hound when he perceived that Lady Biffin had entered the dining-room and was watching him suspiciously from the threshold. Loath to be caught in the act of disobeying his wife's oft-repeated injunctions, Sir Noel had sufficient presence of mind to thrust the fragment of meat into his pocket, hum a few appropriate bars from "*La Traviata*," and murmur some felicitous remark or other on the inclemency of the weather.

Breakfast passed without further incident, and shortly afterwards my uncle entered his brougham and was driven off to the City, where

ews! he had a business appointment with old Lord Guelderstein (better known, perhaps, to a former generation as Sir Isaac Guelderstein, who made that celebrated corner in Peruvian Guano, which nearly caused an international European war).

I must explain that Sir Noel was at this time deeply interested in the flotation of a commercial enterprise in which it was proposed by some subtle process (which I have never pretended to understand) to combine the advantages of a Mutual Trust Society with the security of an Insurance Company, and thus to appeal to that large section of the public which has long grown weary of seeing its speculations unwillingly converted into investments.

The main idea of the scheme was, I believe—though I am singularly ignorant upon such matters—to induce the widow and the orphan to entrust the Company with their savings, and thus to ensure themselves in their old age against those burdens and responsibilities which are proverbially attached to the possession of wealth. It was my uncle's hope that in this way the undertaking might prove financially prosperous, while the widow and the orphan should enjoy a sufficient pittance to keep them alive and contented, but not enough to make them critical or exacting.

He had already discussed the subject with

Lord Guelderstein on more than one occasion, and had promised to draw out a prospectus to submit for his lordship's approval. When, therefore, he reached Throgmorton Avenue, he was at once shown up into a spacious oak-panelled office—over the mantelpiece of which was emblazoned the financier's family motto: "So many done, so few to do!"—and was welcomed by the great man with that cordial effusion which some anti-Semites pretend to find embarrassing.

"Dake a zeat, mine poy! Dot's right! Vot you trink? Viskey? Eh?" was the hospitable invitation that greeted him, uttered in a guttural tone which recent ennoblement had not yet robbed of its native asperity.

"No, thank you!" replied my uncle, firmly but politely, having learnt by bitter experience that it is extremely unwise to accept liquid refreshment at the hands of those with whom one is about to conduct business of a financial character.

"Believe me, my dear Lord Guelderstein," he continued, "I will not detain you more than a moment. But I have here something that I particularly wish to show you, which I am certain will prove agreeable to you."

With these words my uncle thrust his hand into his breast-pocket, where he remembered

having placed the prospectus of the new company, drew out a folded sheet of paper, and laid it on the table.

"The contents of this will interest you, I feel sure," he remarked, with that smile which (like the still more famous grimace of Helen) had

served to launch a thousand successful enterprises.

"Ach, zo!" replied his companion, momentarily lapsing into the vernacular, as he proceeded to unfold the proffered document. Scarcely had he done so, however, before he started back with a cry in which rage

and astonishment were about equally commingled.

“Vot is dis ?” he shouted angrily; “you make a nonzenze of me, eh ?” and with a quivering forefinger, Lord Guelderstein pointed to the pink object which the unrolling of the paper had disclosed, and which now lay upon the table before him.

It was all in vain that Sir Noel tried to explain away the accident. The financier obstinately refused to listen to his apologies, and in a few moments my uncle found himself being led downstairs by members of that large staff of private detectives which philanthropists like Lord Guelderstein deem it necessary to maintain in order to deal with those numerous persons who would take advantage of their innocence. Thus it was that my uncle’s pet scheme was frustrated; the widow and the orphan continued to be the pathetic prey of other less scrupulous or more fortunate promoters; and the imprudence of surreptitiously feeding sporting dogs at meals was once again made evident.

7.

Upon one other question my uncle and aunt did not invariably see eye to eye. Sir Noel objected very strongly to the presence of the

fairer sex at the covert-side, and insisted that if they *must* join the shooters at luncheon, ladies should consent to wear clothes of a sombre hue and control their natural garrulity until the day's sport was over. Lady Biffin, however, whose taste in dress was (if I may say so) somewhat *outré*, would often appear on the horizon in the middle of a partridge-drive, accompanied by all the other ladies of the house-party, arrayed in a scarlet tam-o'-shanter, a bright yellow golfing "sweater," and a skirt of the Balmoral hunting tartan. Her advent was the signal for every bird on the estate to fly back over the beaters, the keeper's well-laid schemes would (as Burns says) gang agley, and the size of the bag was, in consequence, sensibly diminished; and, of course, her suggestion that if necessary the birds should all be blindfolded, and all unpleasantness thus avoided, was ingenious but impracticable.

Even when, as the result of her husband's remonstrances, my aunt agreed to don a dark tailor-made coat and skirt and a comparatively silent hat, her practice of talking at the top of her voice to whichever of the guns she happened to be honouring with her company, was scarcely calculated to increase his chances of obtaining good sport. Indeed, the distaste for their hostess's society evinced by my uncle's guests became so marked that some of them have been

known to try to cover themselves up with dead leaves in the hope of thus escaping her notice, and I remember seeing old Major Blood-Buster-field climb a monkey-puzzle in the Park at Biffin Grange when my aunt's shrill voice heralded her approach.

Personally, I have always greatly appreciated the society of ladies out shooting; their presence seems to me to introduce an element of romance and picturesqueness into what would otherwise too often prove a dull and tedious entertainment. But I agree with my uncle that there are moments in the life of every sportsman when he would be alone, when the conversation of even the fairest of her sex is apt to cramp his style, and he longs to experience that peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away, which the hymnologist has so eloquently described.

8.

I cannot leave the subject of shooting without making some mention of the all-important question of sporting phraseology, the proper use of which distinguishes the true sportsman from his more ignorant or inexperienced fellows. Few things are more painful than to hear a man talk of having killed a "pair of partridges," of having seen "two hares" or "a party of grouse," when

he ought, of course, to have spoken of “a *covey* of grouse,” “a *leash* of hares,” “a *brace* of partridges.” And everyone who makes any pretence of having acquired some slight knowledge of sport should hasten to acquaint himself with the more elementary technical terms—“a wisp of snipe,” “a covert of coots,” “a couple of rabbits,” etc.—by which it has long been customary to express game in terms of zoological plurality.

Under the heading “Beasts in Companies” an admirable list of such phrases is given in Strutt’s well-known “Sports and Pastimes,” from which we may be permitted to extract such familiar designations as: “A sege of herons, a dopping of sheldrakes, a spring of teal, a gaggle of geese, a muster of peacocks, a bevy of quails, a dule of turtles, a fall of woodcock, a murmuration of starlings, a charm of goldfinches, a sculk of foxes, a cete of badgers, a clowder of cats,” and last (but by no means least) “a shrewdness of apes.”

To this list we may perhaps be allowed to add some of the more modern terms in use among philologists to-day, as for instance: “a susurrations of sparrows, a mumble of moles, a can of coons, a pop of weasels, a chowder of clams, a devoutness of plovers, a parcel of port, a——’ But life is short, and

the reader soon grows weary of such an inventory.

It is not, however, *too* much to claim that any man who takes the trouble to master the contents of this catalogue will not only enjoy the satisfaction of considerably increasing his vocabulary, but will also be sure of shining with advantage in any company of sportsmen in whose society he may chance to find himself. Armed with such knowledge as this it will be possible for him to sit in a comfortable arm-chair at his club, and join with perfect self-confidence in any conversation upon sporting matters which may arise.

It will indeed tend to enhance his reputation as a sportsman if he occasionally turns to some chance acquaintance and remarks (in a voice loud enough to be heard all over the smoking-room): "I flushed a fine bevy of bandicoots on Lord Meopham's* preserves last week, and wiped his lordship's eye twice!" Or, "Squire Endlicott's head-keeper tells me that two and a half wisps of curlew and a sculk of bittern have nested in Jury's Gap this autumn." Or (reminiscently), "Talking of Brighton, I shall never forget flight-shooting in Bavaria with Baron Hunyadi von Janos in 1898. Ousels were plentiful and strong on the wing; I myself

* Pronounced "Moom" (to rhyme with "Bluffingham").

bagged two leashes in less than an hour, and if I saw one wiffle of wombats I must have seen a hundred." In this way he will gradually become recognized as an authority upon sport without incurring that painful suspicion of never having fired off a gun in the whole course of his life, which is so apt to embitter a man's existence and blight his whole career.

II.

FISHING

1.

BESIDES being the most ancient and honourable of all human pastimes, fishing is the only form of sport that has been continuously practised without a break since the very creation of the universe.

The climatic conditions that prevailed at the time of the Flood rendered it almost impossible for the sportsmen of that period to take part in those pursuits to which Adam and his immediate descendants had devoted so much of their leisure in those happy days when the Eden coverts were still carefully preserved. The persistent succession of rainy days made deer-stalking an unpleasant as well as an unprofitable amusement; as the tide gradually rose it became too damp for anything but snipe-shooting and otter-hunting, and, finally, when nearly the whole surface of the world had been submerged, every variety of game was driven to the mountain-tops, where they clustered together in

pathetic groups which could prove tempting to none but the most flagrant pot-hunter. It is said that when the flood eventually reached the summit of Mount Ararat, that eminence was so thickly infested with big game that it would have been impossible to throw one's hat out of any window of the ark without hitting a wild animal of some kind or another, and a shot fired at random "into the brown" would have brought down at least a dozen specimens of the world's rarest *fauna*.

The prospect of anything in the form of a massacre was not likely to appeal to so thorough a sportsman as Noah, and when that worthy man had stowed his menagerie safely on board the ark he turned his whole attention to the capture of those denizens of the briny deep upon which his party was fated to rely for sole subsistence until the waters had sensibly subsided. It is, indeed, largely due to the fish diet upon which Noah and his family lived at this period that their descendants have acquired that colossal brain-power which finds its expression to-day within the covers of such a volume as the reader now holds in his hand.

The modern angler, who delicately throws a "dry-fly" over some translucent, willow-fringed trout-stream, may sneer at the ponderous piscatorial methods of his less dexterous

ancestors. But it must always be remembered that at the time when Noah fished for his daily bread—or, rather, his daily bream—there was not a single dry-fly to be had. The only two flies resident in the Ark had got thoroughly wet through long before they came on board, and to supply the existing deficiency of bait by sacrificing one of these valuable lepidoptera, upon whose survival the whole future of their race depended, would in any case have been the height of folly.

That some such solution of the problem crossed the mind of Japhet (the expert fisherman of the party) we have good reason for believing. As he turned a contemplative eye upon the various animals in his charge, seeking to determine which of them would prove the most suitable decoration for the bare fish-hook that he held in his hand, a perceptible shudder ruffled the surface of that sheltered community; the two worms who were lying half asleep in an upper bunk on the saloon deck, huddled more closely together for mutual comfort and support; the breathing of the ants came quick and sharp; and you could almost hear the beating of the caterpillars' hearts. It was, indeed, an auspicious moment for all the inmates of that floating palace, where so many couples lived together in what Ham facetiously described as

“*canoebial bliss*,” when the female wasp of the establishment unexpectedly became the happy mother of thirty fine boy grubs, several of whom it was rightly deemed permissible to make use of as ground-bait.

From that moment the Ark was always well provided with fresh food; its human inhabitants spent many happy hours fishing over the side, and, like that eminent British angler whose name is now a household word (though for the moment I cannot recollect it), found this edifying pastime “a rest to the mind, a cheerer of the spirits, a diverter of sadness, a moderator of passions, a producer of contentedness, and a begetter of those habits of peace and perseverance upon which so much of human felicity depends.”

Thus it was that fishing became a universally popular pursuit; Japhet’s creel fell upon the shoulders of a long line of worthy successors, from St. Peter to Sir Henry Wotton, from Mr. Isaac Walton to Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Harry Tate, and thence to my uncle, Sir Noel Biffin, than who (or “whom,” if you prefer to be ungrammatical) no modern angler ever watched a float or impaled a worm upon a bent pin with greater patience or precision.

2.

The subject of fishing divides itself naturally under four headings: tackle, bait, modes of procedure, and—I shall remember the fourth presently. Of these the first, though undoubtedly the most important, is by no means the easiest upon which to dogmatize satisfactorily.

It must, of course, be obvious that no two kinds of fish, and no two methods of angling demand the use of the same tackle; that it would be as foolish to trawl for tarpon with a light ten-foot split-cane trout-rod and a thin horsehair cast, as it would be to sniggle for lithe and saith (whatever these may be) with a wire cable attached to a hop-pole. To dwell upon a commonplace of this kind would be to waste my valuable time and weary the reader, and though the latter be a minor consideration, it is one which in certain circumstances should not be entirely overlooked. It will therefore be sufficient for my purpose to limit this dissertation upon fishing-tackle to a few words of counsel and warning, based upon a wide experience of every form and variety of angling gear with which it has been my good-fortune to become acquainted in the course of a long and (I trust) not altogether futile career.

Whether ordinary horsehair or the gut of the silkworm provides the best material for those "casts" or "traces" (as they are sometimes called), upon which the angler must to so great an extent rely for any success that he may achieve with rod and line, is a mere matter of individual taste. Some experts hold one view, while others (equally worthy, honourable, and scrupulous men) feel bound to maintain a totally opposite opinion. I am personally inclined to support both parties; for although the product of the silkworm may be as hyaline and glabrous as any equine capillament, the latter may possess those sequaceous properties which counterbalance the natural lubricity that characterizes the former, and *vice versa*. But whichever form of material it is decided to make use of, the absolute necessity of exercising the greatest care and caution in its selection cannot be too strongly urged. If horsehair be chosen, it should be obtained from the tails of those massive steeds which are commonly harnessed to brewers' drays, and not on any account from cavalry chargers, pit-ponies, or the emaciated corks that still languish obscurely between the shafts of our obsolete hansom-cabs.

An excellent brand of horsehair is that which is supplied for surgical purposes, to stitch up wounds and so forth. In my youth I often

obtained a stock of this material from a well-known chemist named Potasch, who kept a small shop in a by-street not far from Piccadilly Circus. The worthy druggist was himself a keen devotee of angling, and while waiting for my change I would constantly engage him in conversation upon the subject. It did not take me long to discover that he possessed all those moral qualities which are as useful to the fisherman as to the chemist: he was a philosopher, took a cheerful view of life, and had that happy knack of procuring the maximum amount of profit with the minimum of expenditure which is as much the key to success on the river-bank as behind the counter of a druggery.

I remember being particularly struck on one occasion by his business methods. A rather seedy-looking individual entered the shop while I was there, and asked to be supplied with something that would cure indigestion. The chemist at once proceeded to concoct a pink mixture from the numerous large bottles that stood in a row on a long shelf behind him. To a little of the contents of a vessel labelled "Grobelia Inflata" he added a few crystals of "Hyp. Phos. Sod.," poured in two or three drops of "Aq. Pur." and a dash of "Tinct. Amm.," measured out a dozen grains of "Potass. Chlor." and "Tart. Ac.," emptied

the decoction into a small glass bottle, secured the cork with sealing-wax and string, made a neat paper parcel of the whole thing, using more string and sealing-wax, and handed it with a polite bow to his customer.

“How much?” the latter inquired gruffly.

“Two shillings, if you please,” said the drug-gist.

“Two shillings!” repeated the other indignantly. “What on earth do you take me for?”

With these words the man flung a threepenny bit upon the counter, picked up the bottle of medicine, and bolted from the shop.

I was naturally somewhat surprised by such extraordinary behaviour, but the chemist remained perfectly calm and unmoved. Shrugging his shoulders in a nonchalant manner, he turned to me with that charming smile which had won my heart the very first time I ever bought one of his porous plasters.

"After all," he remarked philosophically, "I've made twopence over the transaction, so I needn't complain."

It is, as I have said, qualities such as my friend then displayed that make for success both in angling and drugging, and I was not surprised a year or two ago to learn that Mr. Potasch was retiring from business an extremely wealthy man, and had been unanimously elected a Patron of the Home for Inebriate Fishermen which the late Sir Findon Haddough founded on the banks of the Thames. His name appeared in a prominent position among the knights in the last New Year's Honours List, and shortly afterwards, when I happened to attend the annual *conversazione* held at the Brighton Aquarium by the Association of Anglo-Saxon Anglers, I was delighted to notice, in a corner of the room, under the banner bearing the motto of the Association (*Non angeli sed angleri*), my old friends Sir Permanganate and Lady Potasch conversing affably

with such eminent persons as Dr. Nux and Lady Vomica Squills, and the Bishop of Soda and Mint.

The best way of procuring ordinary horse-hair is for the angler, accompanied by a trusty friend, with their hats drawn well over their eyes, to hang about the threshold of some big brewery shortly after dawn. As the first waggon-load of casks issues from the gates, the fisherman should step nimbly forward and make a remark of a grossly offensive character to the leading drayman, dwelling perhaps on the latter's extraordinary resemblance to an organ-grinder's monkey, on his dubious parentage and obviously intemperate habits. Being a naturally passionate man, the driver will probably leap down from his perch without further ado, and offer to knock his traducer's head off. While the poor fellow is thus pleasantly engaged, and his attention has been temporarily diverted from his duties, the angler's accomplice should creep up behind the leading horse, wrench a handful of hair from that reluctant creature's tail, and escape at top speed into the offing, with his booty tightly clasped to his bosom. Later on in the day, when the angler has eventually calmed the indignant drayman by explaining to him that he mistook him for his brother, the two accom-

plices can meet at some appointed spot, and share the spoils without further interruption.

If, on the other hand, it is decided to use gut as the most efficient fabric for casts, there is no better way of ensuring the provision of perfect material than by keeping a small private herd of silkworms, from which the necessary product can be obtained fresh every day to meet the fisherman's requirements. These docile and industrious little creatures are very tame and easy to manage, will soon learn to eat mulberry leaves out of their master's hand, and can be taught to perform a number of entertaining tricks calculated to while away the longest winter evenings. At his fishing-box in Hampshire, my uncle, Sir Noel Biffin, reared a large flock of silkworms, each of whom he knew by name and grew so fond of that his face would often be suffused with tears when the gamekeeper informed him that the supply of gut was running short, and it became necessary to eviscerate another of his charming pets.

3.

It is the greatest mistake to assume that any sort of line and any kind of gut is good enough to catch a fish with. It is, however, certainly true that in times of stress a broken cast has

occasionally been satisfactorily mended with a boot-lace; and I have even heard tell of an angler who had left his tackle-box at home spending a not altogether unprofitable morning fishing for eels with a pair of braces to which he had fastened a safety-pin baited with a ham sand-

wich. Indeed, my uncle, Horace Biffin, never tires of repeating the story of the ten-pound grilse which he played for over three hours on the end of a thin line of twisted silk that he obtained in so curious a fashion as to merit description.

One summer's evening, two or three years ago, Uncle Horace made up a cheery little play-party, consisting of his wife, his sister Jane and myself, to visit that popular modern comedy, "Infrequent Mary," which was then being played to crowded houses at one of the best known of our West End theatres.

We were unable to get four stalls all together, but managed to secure two in the front row and two others immediately behind them. Uncle Horace was naturally averse from sitting next to his wife, and as the society of his sister seemed equally distasteful to him, the two ladies were persuaded to occupy the front seats, while the male members of the party sat in the two others in rear.

At the beginning of the second act I happened to notice that a small thread of silk was sticking out of the top of Aunt Sophie's gown at the back. I pointed this out to her husband, and he quickly leant forward and began very gently to pull it out. The thread, however, proved to be very much longer than he expected, and by the time Uncle Horace had extracted several feet of it and there was still no sign of his having reached the end, we realized that he was engaged upon a more arduous and complicated business than had originally been supposed. He would have preferred to avoid

any further trouble by putting the thread back, but this was now impossible, and so, with clenched teeth and a determined look on his face, he set himself to reel out yard after yard of silk from the nape of his unconscious spouse's V-shaped bodice. Beyond giving an occasional wriggle, as though someone were tickling her, Aunt Sophie remained unmoved by (and apparently ignorant of) what was happening; she was indeed far too deeply engrossed in the play to appreciate the fact that her husband was producing miles of material from her neck in a fashion which riveted the attention of the other occupants of the theatre and would have made the most expert conjuror green with envy.

For close upon three-quarters of an hour Uncle Horace continued his self-imposed task, growing more and more exhausted as he hauled up furlong after furlong of the thread; while I encouraged and stimulated him by humming a sailor's chanty in his ear whenever he seemed to be flagging. At last the silk came to a sudden end. My companion sank back into his stall with a sigh of relief and his arms full of thread, and when we afterwards wound the latter into a ball it was found to measure no less than $4,637\frac{1}{4}$ yards in length.

During the interval between the last two acts of the play, Aunt Sophie repeatedly complained

of the sudden coldness of the theatre, but gave no other sign that she was aware of anything remarkable having occurred. Uncle Horace, however, confided to me next day that when his wife reached home that night and began to undress she suddenly turned deadly pale, and rang for her maid.

It is impossible for me to repeat the conversation that ensued between these two estimable females on the subject of those intimate undergarments which my Aunt distinctly remembered having donned earlier in the evening, but which had now entirely and miraculously disappeared. Suffice it to say that to this day my poor relative imagines that when she dressed for dinner that night she must have been suffering from an attack of momentary mental aphasia, or she could certainly never have gone to the play in nothing but an evening gown, a petticoat, and a pair of stockings. Uncle Horace, of course, could easily have enlightened her, but there are some things that even the boldest husband shrinks from telling his wife, and one of these is that he intends to go fishing with a line of twisted silk composed exclusively of her *dessous*.

4.

It is generally advisable, if not absolutely necessary, for every angler to possess some slight knowledge of the theory and use of knots before he goes confidently forth to the chase. It will perpetually happen to him that he is called upon to join two lengths of gut together, to repair a broken line, attach hooks to casts, and so on; and clumsy fingers often entail the escape of a big fish and the loss of an expensive fly or a valuable bait.

Without becoming involved in an extensive dissertation on the properties of knots and the science of knotting, I may perhaps assume the truth of the self-evident proposition that, *if any plane closed curve have double points only, in passing continuously along the curve from one of these to the same again, an even number of double points has been passed through, and therefore knots which can be deformed into their own perversion may justly and without exaggeration be termed amphicheiral or even paradromic—or indeed anything you like.* This fact being once established, we may pass on to the consideration of a knot invented by my Uncle Noel, which fulfils all these conditions, has been found invaluable on a score of occasions, and can therefore be strongly recom-

mended to the reader's notice. Once it has been tied—and I admit that this is a somewhat intricate business—there is no danger of its ever coming undone. Indeed, when an elderly clergyman whom I met once in Hertfordshire asked me to lace his footwear for him one Sunday morning as he did not wish to soil his fingers, my acquaintance with this particular knot enabled me to fasten his boots so securely that he was compelled to sleep in them for nearly a week, and his curate had finally to cut them off his feet in order to stave off imminent mortification.

I can best explain the "Improved Biffin Knot," as it is technically termed, by a simple diagram:

METHOD OF TYING.

AFTER TYING.

The method of tying this knot is as follows:
Form an over-hand granny knot, pass the end round the standing part and through the bight, take two turns round the park and make a half-

hitch through the standing part, lay each end over its own standing part and through the bight, under the standing part beyond the bight, and down through the bight over its own standing part and through the bight. Form a clove hitch with the loose ends, pass them through the bight and through each other, lay one of the ends over the knot beyond the standing part and over the bight, haul the ends taut, and the thing is done.

Before quitting the subject of fishing-tackle it may be as well to offer a word or two of advice upon the use of those water-proof boots, or "waders," which form so necessary a part of every fly-fisher's equipment.

The juvenile practice of donning one's father's best evening shoes, covering these with two pairs of stout stockings, and stepping boldly out into midstream with no further protection against the cold, is calculated to induce bronchial catarrh, scurvy, housemaid's knee, and kindred ailments which leave an indelible mark upon the most robust constitution.

In the heyday of my giddy youth I would often spend sixty or seventy hours a week standing up to my waist in water, flogging the surface of some icy torrent, without giving a thought to the possible evil effects of such foolhardy conduct. Experience has, however, shown me

the folly of such proceedings, and to-day I never venture into the shallowest brook until I have carefully rubbed my feet with cod-liver oil, and encased my legs in thick waterproof waders reaching up to my neck.

Even so it is not always possible to avoid accidents. Once, for instance, when I was paternostering for pike in Perthshire, I inadvertently stepped into a deep hole in the river bed. The water immediately rushed in over the top of my waders, carrying with it a shoal of small minnows (or sticklebacks) that chanced to be in the vicinity. These creatures, in their frantic efforts to escape, coursed madly round and round inside my boots, and so tickled and excoriated my legs that I became almost demented, and was afterwards laid up in bed for nearly three weeks with acute inflammation of the hips.

In order to guard against the recurrence of so unpleasant an experience I fastened a stout leather strap round the top of my waders before venturing upon another fishing expedition. The result of this nearly proved fatal. When trying to land a six-pound grayling, on the bonny, bonny banks of Loch Lomond, last spring, I overbalanced myself, lost my footing on a slippery rock, and fell headlong into the water. It is true that the strap round my chest pre-

vented an inrush of fish, but it also checked any escape of air from my waders. The latter consequently became so inflated that they acted as lifebuoys and caused the lower part of my body to float on the top of the loch while my head remained immersed beneath its surface. I should have died miserably of suffocation but for the timely intervention of a passing shepherd, who mistook me for a German dirigible balloon that had been recently observed in the neighbourhood, gaffed me through the waders with his crook, and thus released the pent-up air and enabled me to resume that erect position which distinguishes so many human beings from some of the beasts that perish.

5.

We now come to the question of bait, under which category I may include live-bait, dead-bait, white-bait, and the ordinary artificial fly with which every fisherman is familiar.

The choice of suitable bait requires the exercise of common sense as well as some slight knowledge of the habits of different fish. Although it is on record that a perch has been caught with its own eye baited on a hook, it would be crass stupidity for an angler to attempt a repetition of this feat. One might as well imagine that

because a captured pike has been known to contain a grandfather's clock, a pianola, seventeen yards of blue ribbon, and a small corkscrew, it is therefore advisable to bait one's hook with a set of false teeth or a harpsichord. It should, however, be borne in mind that certain fish will only look at certain baits. Tarpon, for instance, are very particular as to the food they eat, and can be caught with nothing but the head of a red mullet. Parrot-fish, on the other hand, prefer hemp-seed to any other form of diet, while dogfish express a preference for mutton-bones, and it would be futile to attempt to catch the smallest catfish (or kitten-fish, to be academically correct) with anything but bread-and-milk.

The most common type of live-bait is undoubtedly the ordinary earth- or lob-worm. This is justly considered a succulent morsel by almost every species of fish, and is at once hardy and easily procurable. On warm summer nights lob-worms will be found in large quantities on any lawn or at the edge of garden paths, lying half out of their holes fanning themselves with a blade of grass, or bending gracefully over to slake their thirst with deep draughts of dew from the close-cropped turf at their feet. It then becomes a simple enough matter to creep up behind them in india-rubber tennis-shoes, seize them smartly round the waist with the finger and thumb of the

right hand, and transfer them to a jam-pot or other suitable receptacle.

I have never denied that the threading of a worm upon a steel hook entails a certain amount of suffering, and to the sensitive mind such a process is inevitably fraught with unpleasantness. Mr. H. Cholmondeley-Pennell, perhaps the greatest human authority on bait, has done excellent work in the *Badminton Library* by deploring that unnecessary multiplication of hooks—a feature of the well-known “Stewart” tackle—which, as he justly remarks, is apt to “disfigure the worm and detract from its natural appearance.” No truer word was ever spoken. It requires but a slight effort of the imagination to understand that the too lavish use of hooks is the cause of many a domestic tragedy in the worm world. One can easily picture the return to her fireside of some punctured mother worm, so disfigured by the treatment she has received at human hands that her husband turns away from her in disgust, to transfer his affections elsewhere, while her children fly shrieking from the lawn.

When required for immediate use, worms should be kept in a tin box lined with moss, in which a little brick-dust has been carefully sprinkled. This undoubtedly helps them to retain that ruddy, sunburnt complexion which will commend them to the consideration of the

most fastidious fish. They should never be carried in the angler's mouth, nor in his trousers pocket with his loose change. Nothing is more tiresome than to be unable to articulate coherently when you desire to give an order to the gillie, and the latter may have justifiable cause

for disappointment if, at the end of a long day's sport, a worm is pressed into his open palm in place of the gold coin with which it was the fisherman's intention to reward his services.

In most reputable angling clubs the use of ant's eggs as bait is strictly forbidden, partly

because this particular lure is so deadly as to render the capture of fish a ridiculously easy affair, and partly because the robbing of ant-roosts has always been rightly regarded as a distinctly unchivalrous proceeding.

The legality of baiting a line with goldfish has not yet been seriously questioned, but I understand that there exists a strong feeling amongst conjurors that this form of bait should be illegitimized. Professors of magic depend so entirely for their living upon a continuance of the world's supply of goldfish that they not unjustly claim that any action tending to the extermination of these animals is eminently prejudicial to their interests. There is, however, some talk of the matter being thrashed out in the law-courts, where an appeal has already been lodged for what is legally known as the restitution of conjuror's rights, and while the question is *sub judice* it is obviously impossible to discuss it.

It should always be the fisherman's chief aim and object to keep his live-bait as fresh and lively as possible. For this purpose many authorities recommend the administration of small doses of alcohol. This, however, should not be given with too generous a hand, or the inebriated bait tends to become lachrymose and depressed, and the angler's ends are defeated. It is generally advisable to provide oneself with an additional

ration of alcohol in case of emergency, since it demands a superhuman display of self-sacrifice to split one's last whisky-and-soda with a goldfish or apply one's favourite brandy-flask to the lips of a swooning minnow. I am, personally, very punctilious in this matter, and never stir from the door until I am assured that a quart bottle of brandy is lying at the bottom of my creel. I must, nevertheless, confess that hitherto the worms in my bait-can have seen little more than the outside of the flagon.

6.

Within the limits of a single chapter it is impossible to deal at any length with the different methods of angling in vogue among fishermen in various portions of the world. But whether it be a man's intention to sniggle for carp, to boggle for bream, to trawl for conger, to blither for cod, to snood for smelts, or merely to plummet for plaice, there are certain rules which he should invariably observe if he wishes to fill his basket.

The bass (and its relative the double-bass) can be hooked with almost any tackle on any kind of a rod, but the deep-sea bass (or *basso profundo*) must always be played *con brio* below the line. In snaring skate, gunnel, octopi, or indeed any kind of ocean fish, from the homely haddock to

the much maligned shad (whose position as the parent of the whitebait should surely entitle it to respect) a rod is far more effectual than a hand-line. With the latter it may sometimes happen, when a huge marine monster seizes the bait and bolts for the bed of the ocean at break-neck speed, that the line rushes out so rapidly through the fisherman's grasp as to cause the severest cuticular abrasion. The friction created is sometimes so great as to set the angler's hands on fire or even to amputate a finger.

A friend of mine was once dibbling for gunnets off the Isle of Wight, when an immense conger eel made off with his tackle, and before he could let go of the line his fingers had been completely severed at the knuckles, and fell with a series of dismal splashes into the sea. Portions of the missing limbs were subsequently recovered from the stomachs of various fish caught in the vicinity by the local fishermen, and it was a long time before the inhabitants of the island, as they sat round their humble boards of an evening, ceased to push away their plates of kedgeree untasted, remarking with some bitterness that my poor friend seemed to have a finger in every pie.

I need not point out the obvious dangers incurred by the deep-sea angler who fastens his hand-line to a waistcoat button and then goes to sleep at the bottom of the boat, relying upon

being awakened by the struggle of some fish that has swallowed his bait. Should such a man accidentally hook a shark he stands a good chance of being pulled overboard, or, at any rate,

of sharing a fate similar to that which befell the late Lord Bloxham, whose lamentable demise recently created so profound an impression upon London society.

“ Beau ” Bloxham will be remembered as one of the last survivals of those spacious days when members of the peerage were still regarded with respect by an admiring populace. He was always exquisitely groomed (as the lady novelists say) and dressed in a picturesque, if somewhat old-world, fashion. To see him strolling down to the House of Lords at four o'clock of an afternoon, to record his vote against the last legislative measure that had been passed by the House of Commons, exuding seals at every fob, with his shiny hat cocked saucily over one ear, was in itself a liberal sartorial education. It was Lord Bloxham's invariable habit to carry his latch-key in his right-hand trouser-pocket, on a long gold chain, the end of which was securely fastened to one of the buttons to which his braces were attached, and to this custom he owed his untimely decease.

One afternoon last summer, at about half-past four, when his parliamentary duties had been punctiliously performed, Lord Bloxham returned home and proceeded in his usual leisurely fashion to insert his latch-key into the front-door of Bloxham House, Grosvenor Square. By some unfortunate coincidence, for which Providence can alone be held responsible, Mrs. Grindelbaum, who had been paying an afternoon call upon Lady Bloxham, happened at this

moment to descend her ladyship's front staircase on her way out. The family butler, with that ceremonious air of a *grand seigneur* which he reserved for the titled and wealthy, flung the front-door open for Mrs. Grindelbaum to emerge, and the unwitting Lord Bloxham, chained to his latch-key, was precipitated into the front-hall at an incredible rate of speed. Fortunately, the gold chain snapped, and like an arrow from the bow the aged peer flew from one end of the front-hall to the other, cannoned off Mrs. Grindelbaum on to the first footman, rebounded from the first footman on to the third footman, ricocheted off the third footman on to a priceless grandfather's clock, and, after finishing the last ten yards of the course on his back, was brought up short by a portrait of the first Earl of Bloxham (painted by Vandyke) which hung at the end of the passage.

Lord Bloxham was then in his eighty-first year and, being a man of economical habits, had made it his practice, ever since the imposition of the super-tax, to save wear and tear to his false teeth by carrying them in his coat-tail pocket between meals. In the course of their owner's flight across the front-hall these articles came into violent contact with numerous pieces of furniture, and by the time Lord Bloxham reached the Vandyke he had been severely

bitten no less than six times in various parts of his person. Medical aid was soon forthcoming, but in spite of the efforts of three well-known specialists in hydrophobia, and a visit to the Pasteur Institute in Paris, the patient's injuries proved fatal and he passed away, on his eighty-first birthday, universally mourned and regretted.

7.

In all forms of fresh-water fishing concealment is the first requisite of sport. Salmon and trout are especially shy, and if they catch sight of an individual slinking along the river bank with a rod over his shoulder, the wildest attempts to capture them will prove abortive. It is a very good plan in such circumstances to disguise oneself in the skin of a defunct cow (or horse), and trot along the margin of the stream, waving one's tail in the air and mooing (or neighing, as the case may be). But the difficulty of handling a trout-rod effectively while running on all fours may easily be imagined, and on the whole perhaps the practice of getting oneself up to look like a willow, and weeping on the river bank, is to be preferred to the most life-like bovine imitation.

It is not my intention to dwell upon those modern methods of scientific fishing which are

so unsportsmanlike as to provoke the condemnation of all right-minded men. But I should be lacking in my duty to the reader if I forebore to mention the patent recently taken out by a French inventor for angling by means of a telephone—a system which would not be tolerated

in any sporting country, and only requires to be described to earn universal reprobation.

Certain fish, it is well known, emit faint sounds when alarmed or distressed: tench continue to croak long after capture, and the herring when engaged in mutual intercourse with his fellows makes a noise like a bereaved mouse. Upon this well-known fact the Frenchman bases his invention, and has contrived an apparatus con-

sisting of a telephone-receiver and a detonator, both of which are sunk in the water and connected to a post of observation on the river-bank. When any fish pass the receiver a sound of squeaking is distinctly heard above the buzzing of the local bees and the sougning of the trees. The angler thereupon presses a button, the detonator explodes, and the air is filled with fragments of dismembered fish, which can be collected at leisure in a landing-net.

I only mention this form of angling to deplore it, being well aware that a slaughter such as I have described would evoke expressions of disgust from the least scrupulous of my readers.*

8.

The true angler is usually a naturalist as well. He knows the name of every fly that he uses, and every fish that he catches, and will rightly hesitate to express his opinion of the latter's value in mere terms of the kitchen. Unlike the

* The apparatus described above can be obtained for fifty-six francs (carriage paid) from M. Henri Blume, Rue de la Framboise, Aix-la-Chapelle, and I shall be obliged if readers will mention my name when ordering it. I speak from experience when I say that it will be found a most effective substitute for the mayfly, and provide the least competent sportsman with an original and inexpensive means of adding to his bag.

ignorant tiro, he will never throw away with every symptom of disgust a fine cuttle fish that has become entangled in his line. Being well acquainted with the various cephalopodous creatures from which the best marking-ink is manufactured, he takes them all carefully home and gets his wife to mark a dozen of his new evening shirts with them. Nothing escapes his vigilant eye: he studies the domestic life of every finny creature that moves beneath the face of the waters. He can discourse at length and with passionate eloquence upon the maternal habits of the cod, an animal that has no less than 3,687,760 children every year, and in this respect provides many of us with an example which, as Mr. Roosevelt has already declared, we should do well to follow if the human race is not to become extinct at no very distant date. His joys are simple joys, his pleasures simple pleasures. The confirmed angler leads an idyllic existence, surrounded by beautiful scenery, inhaling copious draughts of fresh air, and acquiring physical health at a very small financial outlay. He may employ his thoughts for hours at a time in the noblest studies, enjoy a close communion with nature, and cultivate those higher qualities of the mind that distinguish the fisherman from his less fortunate fellows. If he is unsuccessful from a sporting point of view he

can always find comfort in the reflection that he has none to quarrel with but himself. If, on the other hand, he happens one day to stagger home with his basket bursting with fish, he will gain the universal esteem of his fellows, and as a respected member of some local Angliars' Club can devote the evening of his life to a meticulous narration of those tales of prowess with rod and line which even the most constant repetition can scarcely rob of their original audacity and imaginative splendour.

III.

BIG GAME

1.

It is obviously impossible on paper to teach a man how to become an expert hunter of big game. The knowledge necessary to success in this particular branch of sport can only be acquired by long experience; it must be sought painfully and laboriously in the fever-stricken jungle, on the snow-swept prairie, in the solitude of the backwoods, on rolling veldt or precipitous mountain peak.

The constant pursuit of big game develops physical, mental, and moral qualities of no mean order; it entails absolute soundness of wind and limb, perfect control of the temper, leonine courage, and a degree of patience that can only be attained by those who devote the best years of their lives to a study of the habits, manners, and appearance of the wild creatures whom it is their pleasant pastime to exterminate.

The successful hunter is he who knows instinctively where to look for the tracks of the

various animals whose blood he is seeking, who has discovered the exact hours at which they sleep and feed, the particular form of diet they prefer, the peculiar fastnesses they inhabit, and the best methods of compassing their premature demise. Such a man is, indeed, rarely to be met with, but when encountered he should be grappled to our bosom with hooks of steel.

2.

Among the living authorities on Big-Game Hunting, my uncle, Sir Noel Biffin, has long stood pre-eminent. For the past decade he has been annually elected President of the Battersea Bison Club, and the fact of his recent unanimous reappointment to the Hereditary Grand Mastership of the Ancient Order of Buffaloes testifies as eloquently to his reputation as a sportsman as to his personal popularity with the British proletariat. Four continents have resounded to the crack of his rifle; his name is a byword wherever men are met together to slay dumb animals. In the wilds of Spain the Andalusian peasant still speaks of him with bated breath; on the banks of the Chopé River the South African slave-trader silently drinks his health in a mixture of cocoa-nut juice and bhang; Canadian trappers have composed a song about him which they sing to their dogs round the

Alaskan camp-fires at midnight; and among the Indians of North America he is familiarly known by the nickname of Unga-Bunga, a Sioux term of endearment which may be roughly translated as "Old Man Not Afraid of Skunks."

In India in the early eighties Sir Noel's infinite capacity for making other people take pains, which has rightly been designated "genius," caused the local Maharajahs to vie with one another in the provision of bag-tigers for his entertainment. The vast number of beasts that fell to his rifle at this time may be gauged from the fact that every waste-paper basket and coal-scuttle at Biffin Grange (my uncle's English country-seat) takes the form of an elephant's hoof lined with red plush, while the coat-rack in the front-hall is constructed exclusively of the horns of defunct rhinoceri. The parquet floor at the threshold of each reception room is thickly carpeted with the skins of leopards and wolverines. These, indeed, have a playful habit of slipping away beneath the feet of the unwary visitor, causing him to slide into the presence of his hostess on the small of his back, and thus providing his fellow-guests with much food for harmless merriment. One huge tiger-skin just outside the drawing-room became so notoriously fatal in this respect that it was eventually sold by public

auction, and purchased, I understand, by Mrs. Elinor Glyn for the use of her heroines. It has since acquired further fame as a source of danger to illustrious personages, and it is even hinted that Crowned Heads—or, rather, I suppose I should be more technically correct in saying Crowned Feet—have occasionally tripped up over it.

It was in East Africa in 1905 that Sir Noel created a world's record in the slaughter of giraffes, fifteen of these engaging creatures falling to his gun in the course of a single afternoon. This feat gained for him that title of "The Butcher of Bagamoyo" which has clung to him ever since, and inspired ex-President Roosevelt to send him that autograph letter of sympathy and admiration which still hangs

in a gold frame upon the wall of my uncle's bath-room.

To Sir Noel's zoological investigations the modern natural historian is indebted for much of his knowledge of the domestic habits of the walrus—how it rises every morning at 8 a.m., partakes of a cold bath, followed half an hour later by a light breakfast of shellfish, lunches punctually at 1 o'clock off seal-blubber, and then enjoys a siesta upon a cake of ice until tea-time. He it was, too, who first observed that whereas the Indian elephant has four toes on each of its hind-feet, the African elephant has only three, a discovery which earned for him the bronze medal of the Royal Geographical Society. His classical monograph on "The Auroch: Its Treatment in Sickness and in Health" is now the most popular handbook in use among travellers to the Caucasus; and it was at his time-saving suggestion that the *Buphaga erythrorhyncha* (that curious bird which perches on the back of the rhinoceros and warns its stout friend of the approach of a possible foe) is now familiarly known among naturalists as Bernard the Boy-Scout.

3.

My own early acquaintance with the manners and customs of big game, and any success I

may subsequently have achieved as a hunter, are largely due to the practical instruction that I received at my uncle's hands. It was under his tuition that I learnt to distinguish the various tracks made by every species of living creature, and the peculiar sounds by means of which they indicate their presence. After any slight fall of snow he would lead me into the garden at Biffin Grange, and explain the logical system which enabled him to differentiate between the of Jet (his favourite spaniel), the more deeply marked

of my aunt's goloshes, and the mistakable of the garden roller; and he spent many hours teaching me to imi-

tate the shrill of the squirrel calling
- Pip - Pip!

to its mate, the blatant of the
Umph!

domestic sow, and the plaintive
Milk - oh!

of the local water-carrier going his morning rounds.

I frequently accompanied Sir Noel on the long walks which he was accustomed to take

upon his estate, after the good old feudal fashion, visiting the poorest cottagers at Michaelmas or Lady Day to remind them with a winning smile that the rent was due, and that failure to pay would result in immediate eviction. In the course of these agreeable pilgrimages he would often point out to me the many signs by which it is possible for the expert to detect the presence of animal life. To his acute eye and well-trained mind a trampled rhododendron-bed would suggest the recent passage of some heavy body; from the sound of a sudden splash in the lake he would rightly infer that someone had thrown a stick at Gilbert the goldfish; and I well remember, how on one occasion, when we came upon a bottle of beer wrapped up in a man's coat, hidden away beneath a laurel bush, my uncle had scarcely drained its contents before he rightly diagnosed the proximity of one of the least abstemious of the under-gardeners.

Sometimes, as we walked along, examining each broken twig and turning over every dead leaf with our umbrellas, Uncle Noel would pause and exclaim "Hark!" And when I had obediently harked, and was unable to report any unusual sound, he would throw himself at full length upon the ground, lay his ear to the

earth, and say, "Yes, I hear the butcher's cart coming up the avenue!" or, "Listen! Tomkins is mowing the croquet-lawn!" In this practical fashion I was taught to develop those useful powers of perception which were destined to prove of such inestimable value in after-life, when I could indulge my hereditary taste for big-game shooting, and travel all over the world in pursuit of my prey.

4.

Of the vast amount of excellent advice which my uncle then offered to me perhaps the most serviceable was contained in a hint which he once let fall as to the folly of keeping one's eyes perpetually on the ground when tracking game. This is a mistake common enough to the tiro, who is often so intent on following footprints which he may recently have discovered that he passes within a few yards of a possible victim without even noticing its presence.

It must be remembered that many hunted creatures are naturally taller than their human fellows; the eyes of the elephant, for instance, or of the moose or elk, are situated at a considerably greater distance from the ground than those of a man. These beasts can therefore see over bush-grass or undergrowth which

presents an impenetrable screen to the eye of the hunter, and are thus enabled to observe their natural enemy before he has caught the faintest glimpse of them. That this is especially the case with giraffes is notorious, and most sportsmen at one time or another in their careers have been sorely tempted to exclaim with the poet Burns:

“ Oh, wad some power the giftie gie us
To see giraffes before they see us !”

When hunting this particular animal, it is always therefore wise to provide oneself with a small portable step-ladder and a pair of opera-glasses, though some people discard the former rather clumsy adjunct in favour of the more convenient stilts. I think I may justly claim to have been the first hunter of any prominence to shoot a giraffe from the top of a step-ladder, and I shall never forget the astonished expression of the foolish creature (which was busy at the moment consuming the topmost leaves of a banyan-tree) when it turned round and suddenly found my face within six inches of its own. It did look silly !

It is extremely important, as I have already remarked, to ascertain the exact variety of food from which every species of wild animal obtains sustenance, before venturing to attack

it. Errors on this point result in much waste of time and energy, and in cases where the sportsman proposes to lure his quarry to a particular spot by means of a "bait" or

"kill," it is especially necessary to study the creature's taste in victuals before setting to work.

I once heard of a man who went to the Rocky Mountains to shoot bears, and was so ignorant

of those animals' strictly vegetarian propensities that he tied a small pig to a tree on the outskirts of Calgary, and sat in the branches for four whole days vainly awaiting the advent of Bruin. An experience of a somewhat similar character that befell me in 1894, while hunting elephants in Nepal, was founded on an equally disastrous, though perhaps more pardonable, fallacy.

Long before, as a small boy, I had happened to visit the Zoological Gardens in London, and was carrying a large bag of nuts to the monkey-house when a passing elephant rudely snatched the package out of hand, and proceeded to swallow it whole with evident gusto. Misled by the recollection of this incident, I had barely reached the hunting-ground in Nepal before I ordered my shikari to erect a "machan" (or platform) in the branches of a convenient palm-tree, at the foot of which I proceeded to tether a large cask of monkey-nuts. I then took up a commanding position on the platform (or "machan"), and waited for a well-known local "rogue" elephant named Rudolph to walk into my trap.

I need hardly say that my stratagem failed completely, and I soon discovered that the wild elephant is not to be attracted by the most succulent nuts in the world. Indeed, he

is particularly careful to eschew this form of diet, as he finds that the small shells become imbedded in his back teeth, whence they are dislodged with difficulty, and, if swallowed whole, tend to engender appendicitis.

It has always been a source of consolation to me to know that I was not the only man to draw false conclusions from a single experience, many other elephant-hunters, in days when comparatively little was known on the subject, having adopted equally unsuitable methods, of which hiding behind a piece of pampas-grass and making a noise like a bun is by no means the most futile.

5.

To my mind, the whole idea of tying up a live "bait" and concealing oneself in its immediate neighbourhood savours somewhat of the cruel and unsportsmanlike. My maternal grandmother was an annual subscriber to the funds of Our Dumb Friends' League, and I long ago promised her that I would never attempt to entice panthers in this fashion. In spite of many temptations, and in the face of much ridicule, I have resolutely kept my word.

I have, of course, no objection to offer to the practice adopted by sportsmen who expose

themselves in iron cages or burglar-proof meat-safes in some suitable locality, in the hope that lions and tigers may mistake them for the kids or pigs which they are temporarily understudying. It requires considerable courage to sit out in the jungle on a dark night, and watch the efforts of various carnivorous creatures to obtain possession of what appears to them to be a potential item in their nightly bill of fare, especially if that item happens to be oneself. Not seldom, indeed, does it occur to a man in such circumstances that he had far better have remained at home in his comfortable bed; and when he finds a full-grown leopard sedulously picking the padlock of his cage, or inserting a long talon through the bars and tickling the inmate's ribs with playful assiduity, he is still more apt to regret his temerity. Well is it for him at such a moment if his hand be steady enough to point the rifle at some vital spot in his visitor's anatomy before the creature's blind gropings are rewarded with success.

The Indian practice of snaring crocodiles by means of a hook baited with pork and attached to a long chain, which the greedy creature gorges and then retires to the bed of the river to digest, is another form of so-called "sport" which I cannot help deploring, demanding as it does nothing but brute strength on the part of the

hunter and gluttony on the part of the hunted. A much more chivalrous way of dealing with that unalluring animal—known to natural historians as “mugger” or “ghayal,” according as its nose is of the *retroussé* or Roman variety—is for the sportsman to sit on the edge of the swamp, dangle his bare legs over the water, and patiently await results. When the crocodile creeps up through the ooze and slime to sample the meal which a kindly Providence seems to have placed within its reach, and opens its jaws with an expression of hopeful expectancy, the hunter must withdraw his legs as abruptly as possible, and catch the disappointed saurian a shrewd buffet over the side of the head with a hatchet. The delivery of this death-blow requires careful judgment and an unusual amount of dexterity. By striking too soon the sportsman may miss the reptile altogether and overbalance into the swamp; if, on the other hand, he waits too long, he will probably have his legs bitten off short at the knees, and be compelled to cable home for a pair of artificial limbs before he can once more assume his accustomed place in society.*

The capture of wild beasts by means of con-

* In order to obviate this, many sportsmen don those patent tooth-proof aluminium leggings known to the trade as “ali-gaiters.”

cealed pits into which the unsuspecting creatures precipitate themselves has never particularly appealed to me. Indeed, I have only on one occasion consented to set those barbarous snares in the paths of elephants wherein they are tempted to commit suicide by self-strangulation. But there are many worthy persons who find entertainment in this kind of sport, and for their benefit I append on the opposite page a small sketch showing the best method of manipulating the noose. The diagram explains itself.

6.

I am often asked by sportsmen who propose to hunt big game in some distant corner of the globe to give them practical advice upon the choice of weapons.

It is always a good rule to leave nothing to chance, and with this in view a man may safely provide himself with the following battery:

- 1 double-barrelled shot-gun (for wild-fowl, parrots, chipmunks, etc.);
- 1 single-barrelled ditto (for single birds);
- 1 water pistol (for water-fowl);
- 1 double .450 Express rifle (for single pachyderms);
- 1 Gattling gun (for herds of ditto);
- 1 butterfly-net (for butterflies);
- 1 mosquito-net (for mosquitoes);
- 1 Bulldog revolver (for bull-moose and prairie-dogs);

A-B, path pursued by elephant on its way to drink ; C, noose ; D, heavy weight ; E, fulcrum ; F, expression on elephant's face before being noosed ; G, ditto, after being noosed.

1 fowling-piece (for fowls);
1 Punt-gun (for punts);
1 .44 rook rifle (for crows);
1 Martini .303 Cocktail;
1 small smooth bore (for small smooth boars);
1 rough bore (for wild boars);
1 catapult (when all else fails);
and (if shooting in Pomerania) 1 Pom-Pom.

Each of these weapons should be supplied with a suitable number of cartridges, shells, bullets, grape-shot, slugs, snails, brickbats, hand-grenades, bombs, etc., and the ammunition must invariably be carefully packed in zinc-lined boxes, to each of which should be attached a tin-opener.

I knew of a case where a man went to Central Africa to shoot elands, and it was not until he had journeyed up-country for several months, and was at least eight hundred miles from the nearest outpost of civilization, that he discovered that he had no tin-opener wherewith to broach his ammunition-boxes. He struggled for three days to cut a passage through the heavy zinc lids, working first of all with a boot-jack, then with a button-hook, and subsequently with a corkscrew, a shoe-horn, and an implement for taking the stones out of the hooves of zebras (which he fortunately had in his knife), but all in vain. Finally, in despair, he attempted to batter one of the boxes open with a piece of

rock. As a result of such violent usage, the case exploded, and my poor friend was transported to the coast in small fragments, each of which was reverently carried home by one of his three hundred porters.

It is in any case advisable for the sportsman to keep a number of cartridges loose in his pocket. Most varieties of game are so suspicious that when once they have seen or scented a human being they decline to wait for him to prise open his ammunition-box, but bound away into the forest while the hunter is still fumbling with his sardine-tin opener. Again, in moments of emergency, a handy spare cartridge which can be quickly slipped into the still smoking breach is often of vital importance. I speak from bitter experience. The first moose that I ever shot was a great big bull which I had tracked for over a week across the snowy uplands of Quebec. After a long and laborious pursuit, I at last came within range, and at my first shot the animal fell heavily to the ground, and lay weltering in its gore. With a cry of joy I flung my rifle away, and, turning to my French Canadian half-breed guide, clasped him to my bosom with many expressions of praise and congratulation.

So intent was I in celebrating the supposed death of my victim that I failed to see the

wounded animal rise to its feet and hasten away into the distance at full speed. I attributed my companion's frantic efforts to disentangle himself from my embrace to the natural Indian dislike of any kind of emotional display, and when at length he succeeded in drawing my attention to the moose's flight, that animal had entirely disappeared from view. After vainly following its sanguinary trail for many miles, we were reluctantly compelled to abandon the chase. I speak therefore feelingly when I urge the sportsman to reload his rifle after every shot, and never to be persuaded into thinking that any quarry has been added to his bag until his shikari has removed most of its internal organs and he himself has been photographed with one foot planted triumphantly upon its lifeless corpse.

A famous hunter once assured me that it is often possible momentarily to arrest the flight of any animal that has been missed or wounded by the simple process of giving vent to a low whistle. At such a sound the natural curiosity of the creature gets the better of its prudence, and it is tempted to stop and look round, thereby offering another target for the man who has his rifle loaded and his wits about him. Some authorities affirm that no two animals answer to the same signal, and that it is necessary to

make use of a code of whistles similar to that usually employed when summoning public vehicles—*i.e.*, one blast for a yak, two for a cariboo, three for an oryx, etc. Personally, I regard this theory as fundamentally unsound, having always found that the same note which stops a wounded Paa (*Nanotragus kirkii*) in East Africa will also check the stricken Maa (*Nanotranga chapelia*) of West Africa. In this connection a few remarks upon the proper treatment of wounded or moribund animals may be not altogether out of place.

Wounded animals are notoriously dangerous and untrustworthy, and it is often far safer to miss a lion altogether than to plant an explosive bullet in the very tip of its tail. Accidents will happen, however, in the best-regulated expeditions, and every hunter should know what steps to take—besides the “d—— long ones” of the humorist—in order to avoid the painful consequences of a hand-to-hand encounter with a punctured hyena.

Lions and tigers who have been painfully peppered in non-vital places will often turn upon the sportsman and attempt to tear him limb from limb, and the only certain cure for conduct of this kind is a bullet through the brain. A crippled crocodile will pursue its human enemy with unabated zeal across open country,

and the hunter's one chance of safety lies in climbing a tree and remaining *perdu* in its branches until the indignant reptile grows weary of waiting and goes home.

When mauled by a bison or a buffalo, it is a useful thing to remember that these animals have extraordinary sensitive snouts, and a self-possessed sportsman who is in imminent danger of being trampled to death may occasionally avoid an untimely end by the simple process of pulling the nose of his would-be murderer. Even an elephant dislikes having his nasal organ interfered with, and, like all heavy animals, entertains a strong prejudice against running down-hill. When pursued by a "rogue," therefore, it is sometimes possible to elude capture by slapping the elephant smartly on the trunk and rushing headlong down the nearest declivity with the grace and *abandon* of a Gadarene swine. A wounded bear, on the other hand, will generally take refuge in its cave, whence it is a difficult matter to entice it. For this reason many bear-hunters provide themselves with fireworks, and drop a lighted squib into the creature's lair, *habitat*, or (as the French would call it) *ventre à terre*. But if, as often happens, the cracker fails to explode, sportsmen are forced to draw lots to decide which of them shall enjoy the privilege

of descending into the brute's subterranean cavern to apply the necessary match. Like many other householders, Bruin objects very strongly to indoor pyrotechnical displays, and is wont to express his distaste in a violent fashion that is more easily imagined than described.

7.

We have heard a good deal lately of that bloodless method of shooting big game with the aid of a photographic camera, which appeals especially to humanitarians who have no intention of employing it. From the point of view of the hunted animal this system possesses many obvious advantages, though it may occasionally cause a certain amount of inconvenience to the hunter.

The name of my late friend Mr. Theophilus Polito is well known wherever the custom still survives of entertaining guests after dinner by allowing them to inspect bulky photograph albums containing faded portraits of those of their host's aunts whom they have never been privileged to meet in the flesh.

Some two years ago Mr. Polito was inspired to undertake a journey into the heart of Nubia in order to hunt the monarch of the desert in his native fastnesses. He was fully armed

with every kind of photographic apparatus, his cameras were of the latest type, and he had hired fifty Abyssinian porters to carry a special "dark room" of his own invention.

After three weeks' arduous stalking, he succeeded in approaching to within forty yards of an oasis, where a magnificent male specimen of

the *Leo Africanus* was engaged in quenching its thirst. As Mr. Polito unfolded his patent "Audax" homocentric camera and took deliberate aim at the astonished animal, the latter turned round and began to advance slowly in the direction of the photographer. Such behaviour was so out of keeping with all that he had read upon the subject in various manuals of photography that my friend became some-

what alarmed. He had sufficient presence of mind, however, to draw his pocket Kodak and fire two snapshots, right and left, at the approaching beast. Then, as the lion still continued to draw near, he gave it three instantaneous exposures with a heavy "Bijou" reflex magazine camera, loaded with aluminium plates.

"Quite still, please," he murmured, instinc-

tively taking off his hat with that suave smile which ever endears the photographer to his fellows.

"Now then! Look pleasant, if you please!" he added, clicking his fingers in the air, as he pressed the bulb of his last weapon, a folding panoramic camera with collinear lens and an anastigmatic shutter which had never yet failed him.

The lion had now been taken in eight different positions,—full-length, *carte-de-visite*, cabinet, and as a group—but showed no signs of having had enough, and was lashing its tail with a loud rumbling sound which caused the photographer a good deal of uneasiness.

“That will be all to-day, thank you!” he managed to stammer out, as he made a bee-line for the dark-room which the Abyssinian porters had long since abandoned. But still the unsatisfied creature advanced upon him, licking its lips in an unpleasantly suggestive fashion.

To make a long story short, my poor friend was finally devoured by his sitter; his plates were seized and destroyed, and Science was left to lament the loss of one of the most promising amateur photographers that this country has ever seen. The moral of this tale is self-evident.

8.

On the question of dress and equipment suitable to the jungle or the desert many volumes might easily be compiled. It will serve the present writer's purpose to enumerate a few of those essential articles without which no sportsman's outfit can be regarded as complete.

It is at any time a great mistake to overdress

oneself, and “on safari” such a mistake is liable to cost a man dear. He should strive, therefore, to be as lightly clad as is compatible with warmth, being, however, careful to provide himself with several changes of underclothing; and during the rainy season he may carry an umbrella and a mackintosh, in case of rain. Food should be packed in waterproof hampers, and the amount taken must, of course, depend upon the size of the caravan to be catered for.

Camp outfits and provisions may usually be purchased comparatively cheaply at the various trading posts from which sporting expeditions start. At 'Nbongo (West Africa), to take a single instance, the highly respected firm of Snetslinger, trading under the name of The Sportsman's Universal Provider Company, Limited, supply ready-packed hampers suited to the pockets and appetites of every class of customer. I am enabled by their kind permission to quote the following examples from their illustrated catalogue:

HAMPERS.

SIZE A.—Price 20,000 riis (about 15s. in English money).

1 Turkey, Goose, or Joint.	1 Christmas Pudding.
1 Glass of Collared Brawn.	1 Rich Fruit Cake (4 lbs.).
1 lb. Tin of Tea.	1 lb. Table Salt.
1 Box of Figs or Crackers.	1 Tin Best Mustard.

SIZE B.—Price 40,000 riis (about 30s.).

1 Extra Large Ham.	1 Box of Mixed Nuts.
2 lbs. Sausages.	1 Case of Red Pepper.
1 Bottle of Ginger Wine.	1 Rich Fruit Cake.
1 Bottle of Worcester Sauce.	2 Bottles of Port.
1 Glass of Ox Tongue.	1 Box of Figs.
1 Bottle of Whisky.	1 Tin of Mixed Biscuits.

Mr. Snetslinger has courteously permitted me to glance at his album of unsolicited testimonials, from which I may make the following typical extracts:

Mr. Selous writes: "I have never tasted anything like your red pepper."

Colonel Blood-Blusterfield writes: "Your Worcester Sauce recalls the delicious flavour of fifty years ago."

Mr. Smith writes: "Send me another quart of your ginger wine at once. (The first bottle was corked.)"

Sir William Wotherspoon writes: "Your Mixed Nuts are the most mixed nuts I ever cracked."

H.S.H. the Grand Duke Dimitri telegraphs: "Before using your Figs I suffered with sleeplessness, anæmia, and ingrowing hair. Please collar me another Brawn," etc., etc., etc.

Besides the comestibles I have mentioned, the sportsman will be wise to take with him the following pieces of camp furniture:

1 Portable Wrought Iron Washstand.	1 Hanging Trousers Rack.
1 Single Rail Towel-Horse.	1 Canvas Bath.
1 Hanging Wardrobe.	1 Tallboy (Gent's Ward).
1 Sleeping Bag or Sack (1).	1 Housewife.
1 Medicine Chest.	1 Yard Mosquito Netting (2).
1 Ton Best Coloured Beads.	1 Mackintosh Sponge-Bag.
1 Pocket Filter (2).	1,000 yards Best Wire.

N.B.—(1) By sleeping head downwards in the sleeping-bag it is sometimes possible to avoid taking a mosquito-net. (2) Confirmed alcoholists need not burden themselves with a pocket filter.

Next to the medicine-chest (to which I shall refer presently) the beads and wire are perhaps the most important items of the whole outfit, and deserve a word or two of special mention.

A great deal of the success of an expedition depends upon the willingness of the native guides, porters, gun-bearers, and other camp-followers to enter into the spirit of the game, and afford the hunter their loyal and ungrudging support. It is therefore prudent to keep on good terms with one's native employees, and for this purpose a supply of beads and wire is invaluable.

The normal pay of *pagazi* (or porters) in Africa is from one to one-and-a-half blue beads per month; if, however, they have been especially energetic in the construction of a *boma* (or *zareba*), or have built a particularly strong *zareba* (or *boma*), they may safely be rewarded by the gift of an additional bead or two of some other less expensive colour.

Beads should be paid regularly on quarter-day, and a stamped acknowledgment demanded; if a native refuses to produce this receipt, his blue bead should be taken away, he should be

fined five pink beads, and soundly flogged. Only thus can he be taught to respect those pioneers of civilization in whose path the waste places grow green and the desert blossoms like a rose.

Again, it is often possible to enlist the services of native chiefs and the heads of savage

villages by presenting them with a small piece of wire. Care should, however, be taken that *plain* wire is used for this purpose, as the attempt to ingratiate oneself with a friendly sheikh by draping a yard or two of *barbed* wire round his bare neck, is calculated to cause misunderstanding, and may lead to unpleasantness.

In dealing with natives, it is a great advan-

tage to possess some smattering of the language of the country which they inhabit. A sportsman will be much looked up to who can talk airily in East Africa of such things as *kiteweo*, *neapara*, *potosi* ; in India, of *howdahs*, *jemadars*, *khitmagars*, *kummerbunds*, *jinrikshas* ; in South Africa, of *biltongs*, *disselbooms*, *veldtschoen*, *donkerhocks*, *sjamboks*, and *aasvogels* ; in Red India, of *wigwams*, *fire-water*, *Tee-pees*, *pocahontas* ; and so on. I will not attempt to explain the meanings of these various phrases, partly because they have for the moment escaped my memory, but chiefly because this is a volume on sport, and not a slang dictionary.

The hunter's medicine-chest should contain a plentiful supply of tourniquets, splints, and bandages, as well as the more ordinary lotions, sedatives, and plasters of domestic hygiene. Owing to the carelessness of inexperienced sportsmen, it may at times be necessary to deal with those serious bullet-wounds upon which the blue pill and the bottle of embrocation exercise but little remedial effect. That such injuries are common there exists ample evidence to prove. As an example of the risks which sportsmen run, we may cite the well-known story of the American hunter whose zeal so far outran his discretion that he could never see anything moving in the jungle with-

out having a shot at it. One day, when he and a few friends were beating a large copse for deer, he suddenly fired five shots into the thickest corner of the wood.

"All of you boys, come out of there!" he shouted anxiously.

His fellow-sportsmen hurriedly issued from the copse.

"Are you all out?" he inquired excitedly. "One, two, three, four. Where's Jake? Ah, there you are, Jake. Are you all out? Sure?"

"Yes," they replied, "we're all out; the whole party's out."

"Hurrah, then!" exclaimed the sportsman—"hurrah! I've shot a buck!"

It is the greatest mistake to load up a medicine-chest with innumerable stimulants. Alcohol is undoubtedly a valuable remedy for certain diseases, but in the case of most of the ailments common to sportsmen its too liberal application often produces fatal effects.

More than half the deaths resulting from snake-bites may be attributed, not so much to the reptile's poison as to the methods usually employed in attempting to counteract the mischief. It has, for instance, long been customary for sportsmen, when any one of their number is stung by a cobra, to dose him liber-

ally with whisky every ten minutes, and walk him up and down all night long, in order to prevent his falling asleep. As the consequence of these familiar malpractices, the wretched man usually succumbs, not (as his comrades fondly imagine) to the effect of the cobra's bite, but rather to alcoholic poisoning, accentuated by sheer physical fatigue and loss of slumber.

Whisky in moderation may possibly be beneficial as an antidote to snake-bite, and this fact is so generally recognized that in certain of the Prohibition States of America the only means of obtaining a drink consists in getting stung by a snake. My Uncle Horace used to tell the story of a friend of his who was visiting one of these unpleasantly temperate districts, and, feeling somewhat bilious, innocently applied to the local doctor for a tot of whisky.

"Very sorry, but I can't give it," said the scrupulous physician. "It's against the law."

"Is there, then, no way of getting a drink in this infernal country?" asked the luckless man.

"No way, except by being stung by a rattlesnake," replied the leach.

My uncle's friend hurried out at once to the nearest wood in search of an obliging reptile; but after scouring the whole neighbourhood

for several hours in vain, was forced to return with his mission unaccomplished.

"It's no use," he remarked with a sigh of disappointment. "A stranger hasn't a chance in these parts! Every snake in the district is already booked up three weeks ahead!"

9.

No hunter of wild animals can consider his education complete until he has mastered those technical terms which are in use when speaking of different varieties of Big Game. My Uncle Noel, ever somewhat of a literary purist, once rebuked me most severely for remarking that I had seen several "hippopotamuses."

"Hippopotami, you mean, I suppose?" he said in that frigid tone which he usually reserved for the Vicar of the parish when the latter came to ask for a subscription to the Church Organ Fund.

"Yes," I replied meekly; "yes, what I meant to say was that I had observed a small herd of hippopotami."

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed my uncle angrily, "has the boy received no classical education at all? A herd of hippopotamorum, Reginald, if you please!"

I will not dwell further upon a painful inci-

dent, which, indeed, I would never have mentioned save in the hope that it might be a lesson to all would-be sportsmen to endeavour to speak glibly of such things as ibices, buffali, and even of pumæ, mongeese, and walri, with that total lack of self-consciousness which can only be the result of earnest study and constant practice.

IV.

HORSEMANSHIP

1.

THE horse is undoubtedly the noblest of all the four-footed animals that minister to the needs of man. There are nevertheless many estimable persons to whose imagination this particular quadruped makes little or no appeal; who find its society singularly uninteresting; who do not know what on earth to say to it (except "Woa!" and "Gee up!") when they see it.

It is, of course, a mere platitude to assert that the appreciation of horses is an hereditary rather than an acquired taste. The simple fact of being born with bandy legs is not sufficient to enable a man to feel thoroughly at home in a loose-box, unless he is also naturally imbued with that passion for horseflesh which expresses itself in tight trousers, short side-whiskers, and a certain obliquity of moral vision that seems inevitably to infect those who spend the greater portion of their existence in the stable-yard.

On a former occasion I was once inspired to remark that "those whom the dogs love lie young," and I might justifiably have added that in like manner a fondness for horses would appear to blind human beings to the value of those humbler virtues upon which the whole structure of our social edifice is based. Take, for example, the case of my cousin, Leopold Biscay Biffin. Here, if you like, was a boy who started life full of promise, with every prospect of a bright future in store for him. He was born, if I remember rightly, in the Bay of Biscay, on board the s.s. *Leopold*, while his mother was travelling in a leisurely fashion round the world for the sake of her health. At an early age his infantile precocity served to endear him to all his fellow-passengers, and he won the hearts of the entire crew by the smiles (partly, no doubt, attributable to indigestion) with which he rewarded their humblest efforts to amuse him. When I tell you that before he was six months old he had already called the deck-steward "Daddy" on two notable occasions, you will readily understand his popularity. When the Captain kindly gave him his gold watch to play with, and he promptly dropped it overboard, Baby Leopold is said to have exclaimed, "Gumble bumble boo!" so distinctly that his proud mother

might justly boast that few infants of his tender years could express with such lucidity a desire that the engines should be stopped, the lifeboat launched, and the missing timepiece recovered.

At school the boy took every prize offered for divinity and Scripture history; could reel off a list of the Kings of Israel and Judah as glibly as you or I can recite the names of our modern patrons of the Turf (and with somewhat similar results); was able to distinguish at a glance between major and minor prophets, without reference to any Biblical "Who's Who"; and seemed, indeed, in every way fitted for that career of useful endeavour in the Diplomatic Service

to which his parents had long ago mentally assigned him. He failed, however, to pass the qualifying examination: partly, I believe, owing to the abnormal intelligence of his fellow-competitors, and partly to prejudice on the part of the examiners, who resented his translation of the French sentence, "L'Anglais, avec son sang-froid habituel," into: "The Englishman, with

his usual bloody cold." He was consequently forced to renounce all hope of ambassadorial fame, and reluctantly consented to occupy an office stool in his father's bank in the City.

In the nursery Leopold had long ago evinced

that excessive fondness for equine society which ultimately proved his undoing. His passionate attachment to a certain dapple-grey rocking-horse was pathetic in its intensity, and he could scarcely bear to be separated for a moment from his favourite. So high, indeed, was his opinion of this animal's powers that he once laid his brother Rupert ten to four (in

acidulated drops) that he could rock his horse higher and faster than Rupert could rock their baby sister's cradle. On this occasion his youthful prescience may be deemed phenomenal, for if the rocking-horse had not overbalanced and stunned his brother, and if the baby had not indulged in a series of convulsions, as a result of what golfers would call "overswinging," Leopold would most assuredly have won his wager, and thus have created a precedent which he was never destined to repeat.

In later life, when he was not absenting himself from the bank for the purpose of attending suburban race-meetings, he spent his time and money backing outsiders to win the Gold Cup or the Cesarewitch, and buying special editions of the evening paper to discover that these animals had failed to justify his confidence. It is not therefore altogether surprising that long before he came of age Leopold's debts to various bookmakers should have assumed such gigantic proportions that his typewriter was mortgaged up to the hilt, and he had been tempted to appease his clamorous creditors with a number of his father's cheques, upon which he had taken the precaution of inscribing a very passable imitation of the parental signature.

The misguided youth was eventually persuaded to leave the Dear Homeland at the

expense of his relations, and emigrated to America, where it was generally felt that he might enjoy a wider field of operations and one better suited to his peculiar gifts.

He is now employed as a book-agent by an American publishing firm which makes a speciality of supplying polyglot Bibles to illiterate persons of colour; but after office hours his old passion for horseflesh reasserts itself, and on Saturday afternoons he habitually drives a hearse for a well-known Virginian undertaker. Indeed, the last I heard of him was to the effect that he had been arrested by the police of Wiggsville, Va., and fined five dollars for racing another hearse down the principal thoroughfare of that thriving city.

2.

Driving is an accomplishment for which most people consider themselves to be naturally well equipped—a pursuit in which they would indignantly repudiate the need of instruction. One may nevertheless affirm, without fear of contradiction, that eight out of every ten persons who attempt to indulge in this fascinating pastime are ignorant of the very rudiments of the art, and quite unfit to be entrusted with a pair of reins.

It is not sufficient to mount the box-seat of

a carriage, wrap a horse-blanket round one's legs (taking care to allow one's feet to protrude below the rug), seize a rein in each hand, and, by alternately jugging their mouths and making noises like a chicken in distress, encourage one's team to proceed in the required direction. Something more than this is demanded of the true horsemaster. Between him and his charge such a complete understanding should be established that the intelligent beast will instinctively anticipate its driver's wishes, almost before they are expressed. It will therefore be quite unnecessary for him to exhibit those acrobatic feats upon the dicky which too often tend to render the amateur whip supremely ridiculous.

I have known an inexperienced driver to perch himself so precariously upon the box that whenever his horse stumbled he stood (or, rather, sat) in imminent peril of being pulled right off his seat and thrown headlong into the road. I even remember a peculiarly indifferent professional coachman, in the employment of old Lady Blenkinsopp, whose behaviour suggested that of an anthropoid ape rather than the conduct of a man with an immortal soul. Once, when the pair of horses he was driving ran away with him in Hyde Park, this wretched man thrust his feet against the splashboard of the victoria, and leant so far back in his attempt

to stop them, that his hat fell off upon the head of his mistress in the carriage behind. By some extraordinary coincidence, it landed, right side up, on the small Parisian toque of Lady Blenkinsopp, who was far too fully occupied in watching the antics of her coachman to appreciate the novelty of her headgear. It was, indeed, the spectacle of this distinguished

lady driving seven times round the Park at a hand-gallop, wearing a black silk top-hat adorned with a shiny cockade, that suggested a return to that Early Victorian fashion in feminine millinery which was one of the features of last year's London season.

■ I need hardly dwell upon the absolute necessity of taking the reins in one's hand before

mounting the box of a carriage. A spirited team will often start off as soon as they imagine the coachman to be in his place, and nothing looks sillier or is more dangerous than an attempt to pilot a pair of mettlesome horses through the streets of a crowded city with the sole aid of a whip and a few cries of despair. The reins must, of course, be held firmly in one hand, so as to leave the other free to manipulate whip and break, both of which implements should be used as sparingly as possible.

At times a careless driver will allow one of the reins to get underneath the tail of his horse. Should such an accident occur, it is fatal to attempt to disengage the rein by main force. Guile is the only secret of success in such circumstances, and by tickling the horse gently on the flank with the whip, at the same time giving vent to a loud buzzing sound, it is occasionally possible to deceive the animal into believing that it is about to be stung by a gad-fly. In the interests of self-protection it will swish its tail in the direction from which the attack is to be expected, and the rein can then be hastily withdrawn before the misguided animal finds out its mistake.

A whole volume might easily be written upon the proper use of the whip; and by the coachman

of a "four-in-hand" this weapon requires the most delicate and careful handling.

The late Sir Isaac Cumberbatch was one of the earliest pioneers of the Coaching Club, and used to "tool" his spanking team of chestnuts round Battersea Park every morning during the season, to the admiration of all beholders. But to the very end of his distinguished career he never satisfactorily acquired the art of "catching" his whip, and scarcely a day passed without his getting the thong entangled in the wheels of his coach, in the branches of overhanging trees, or even round the ears of aristocratic passengers whom he had generously invited to share the perils of his matutinal pilgrimage.

The climax was reached one afternoon in the summer of 1906. Sir Isaac unfurled his whip with the intention of administering punishment to an off-leader that insisted upon cantering while its colleagues were trotting; the lash flew out with a loud swish, encircled the two grooms who were sitting with folded arms upon the back-seat, banged their heads sharply together, and held them so securely fastened round their necks that both perished from strangulation before they could be released. The tiresome consequences of so regrettable an accident need not be unduly emphasized. For several days

—until, indeed, he had ordered two new ones—Sir Isaac had no grooms to run to the heads of the horses, and the inconvenience resulting from such a state of things may well be imagined.

3.

If it is no easy matter to become a first-class whip, success in the saddle is even more difficult of attainment. From the very outset riding presents obstacles which it requires all a man's courage and patience to surmount. Few sportsmen have not experienced that strong disinclination to horse exercise which fills the human breast with a sense of foreboding on a fresh winter's morning, when a frisky steed is brought round to the front-door before breakfast, and one is expected to leap light-heartedly into a cold and slippery saddle.

The very act of mounting is often fraught with danger to the beginner, and before attempting to do so he should make quite sure that his stirrup leathers are of suitable and equal length. No task is more difficult than that of altering the length of a stirrup-leather while seated on the back of a restive horse, with only one hand free to manipulate the stiff buckle; and few things are more prejudicial to grace or comfort than riding with one stirrup

six inches higher than the other. If possible, too, the rider should get a groom to hold the off-stirrup while he is mounting, so as to counterbalance his weight and avoid the risk of pulling a loosely-girthed saddle round. He should also take care that his boots are not so wide as to become inextricably fixed in the irons; and, to prevent such a *contretemps*, his boots and, if necessary, his feet, should be planed down to the required size by the nearest cobbler or chiropodist.

When actually ready to mount his horse, the sportsman should place the animal in such a position that its off-side is close to a wall or tree, so as to make it almost impossible for it to back away from him. Otherwise it may often happen that the foolish creature has conceived so violent a prejudice against its prospective rider as to feel impelled to turn round and round as soon as ever he puts his foot in the stirrup, thus forcing him to hop round after it in a vertiginous and extremely undignified fashion. My uncle, Lord Porpentine—"Squirrel" Porpentine, as he was familiarly called—once hopped after his horse in this way for nearly an hour and a half before he was able to vault into the saddle. At the end of that time, the pedometer which he always carried in his pocket marked a distance of seven miles, and

he was so tired that he dismounted and went back to bed.

Uncle "Squirrel" owed his nickname to a peculiar accident that happened to him when he was still a young and inexperienced rider, long before he became Master of the Crouchley. He was out with the North Dorset one fine December day, mounted upon that reliable old hunter, Boanerges, which was then his favourite, and afterwards carried him so gallantly for over eighteen years. From early youth he had always made a practice of obeying that ancient adage which bids the sportsman ride "fast at timber and slow at water," and had trained Boanerges to do the same.

On the occasion of which I speak, however, while galloping along the edge of a plough near Stepney Bottom, well at the head of the hunt, Lord Porpentine was suddenly confronted with a stiff post and rails on the far side of which ran the narrow rivulet that connected the local sewage farm with the beds of water-cress for which this part of Dorset is justly famous.

It seems that my uncle failed to realize the presence of the stream, whereas Boanerges was fully aware of its existence. What, therefore, happened was that his lordship rode at the post and rails much faster than his mount, and when the sagacious animal pulled up

somewhat abruptly to examine the obstacle, its rider went right on without stopping, and landed on his head in the rivulet.

To empty the sewage from his boots, to disentangle the watercress from his hair, to cross the stream, and climb the post and rails, was the work of a moment, and in less time than it takes to describe Lord Porpentine had caught Boanerges, and was vainly endeavouring to mount him. Owing to the gross carelessness of a groom (who, I am glad to say, was afterwards dismissed without a character), the girths had not been buckled sufficiently tightly. As soon, therefore, as the rider put his foot into the stirrup, the saddle began to turn slowly round; and the more strenuously Lord Porpentine climbed up, like a convict on the treadmill, the faster the saddle revolved, until at last, when the rest of the field came up, his appearance and behaviour so closely resembled those of a squirrel in a cage that some particularly witty member of the hunt—and they can be very witty in North Dorset, though they don't often take the trouble—offered him two hazelnuts and a piece of parsley if he would allow himself to be photographed in that position.

Uncle Porpentine was by this time making about thirty-five revolutions a minute, and so intense was the friction set up by these manœu-

vres that at any moment the spectators anticipated seeing Boanerges burst into flame. As the saddle came round for the forty-eighth time Lord Porpentine declined the wit's offer in somewhat curt language, and, with that iron nerve which was truly characteristic of the man, persisted in what was obviously a hopeless task. The situation was mercifully saved by the girths breaking, when both saddle and rider were hurled to the ground.

4.

The tale of how, on another occasion, poor Boanerges very nearly met with a premature and untimely death is one that has been told in every handbook on hunting ever published. This does not, however, appear to me to be a sufficient reason for omitting to reprint it in these pages.

It was while Lord Porpentine was hunting six days a week in the Pugsley country, making his headquarters at Market Rushforth, that the incident occurred to which I allude. Hounds had found at Grinley Covert, and were running fast over grass, with Lord Porpentine, on Boanerges, as usual close behind them. Through Bumpington they streamed, across the valley of Stanley Galtworth, by Pulkinghorne Wood, past Compton

Rickaby, skirting Wardley Binfold and Lower Marton. And it was just after reaching the Vale of Dogmore, and within a hundred yards of Grub's Copse, where they eventually killed, that poor old Boanerges put his foot into a rabbit-hole and turned a complete somersault. Uncle Porpentine managed to fall clear, and rose at once to his feet; but Boanerges lay still on the sward, his protruding tongue and rapidly glazing eyes suggesting in ominous fashion that he would never carry his master again.

"He's done for!" said the huntsman, who rode up at this moment.

"Broke 'is bloomin' back!" added the First Whip.

"Better put an end to his sufferings," suggested a bystander, who had been following the hunt on a bicycle, and, having failed to be in at the death, was naturally thirsting for blood. Already several members of the hunt had reverently removed their hats, as they stood in a sympathetic circle round the gallant animal's death-bed, while the huntsman hastened to borrow two pennies from the bicyclist to lay upon the creature's fast-closing eyelids.

In vain did Lord Porpentine call his steed by name, chafing its stiffening limbs with trembling hands, and attempting to thrust his own flask of brandy down the unconscious

animal's throat. Boanerges lay still and gave no sign of life. At length, realizing the futility of further efforts, my uncle was persuaded to knock at the cottage of a local farmer, and begged the loan of an old single-barrelled gun, with which that worthy declared that he had scared many a rook from his ripening corn.

With the tears streaming from his eyes, he cocked this fatal weapon; with a shaking hand he aimed it at the head of his old favourite; with an unsteady finger he pressed the trigger. A deafening explosion ensued, and the old gun flew into a thousand pieces, blowing away the hats of the more reverent members of the hunt, shattering the bystander's bicycle, and killing twelve couple of hounds.

As the smoke cleared away, it was noticed that Boanerges, who was apparently none the worse for the affair, had risen to his feet and was cantering home in the direction of his stable, leaving the bicyclist to search for his pennies in vain.

It subsequently transpired that the farmer had stupidly forgotten to warn Lord Porpentine that he had rammed a cork down the barrel of his gun in order to keep out the winter damp, and it was to this piece of carelessness that the horse owed its escape from death.

Thus it came about that Boanerges was able

to carry its master for many a long day, until, when it was nearly thirty years old, Lord Porpentine, not caring to sell so faithful a friend, presented the animal to his mother. The Dowager Lady Porpentine was delighted to be able to provide Boanerges with a kind home, and at Mumsey Grove it spent the declining years of its life, happily enough, harnessed to the mowing-machine from 6 a.m. until luncheon-time, and dragging a heavy garden roller up and down the private golf-links during the remaining hours of the day.

Lord Porpentine was naturally much distressed at the havoc he had wrought among the hounds, for, although an ardent motorist, habit had not yet imbued him with that sublime indifference to canine life which renders many of our amateur chauffeurs such attractive members of society.

Only the summer before he had been much upset when he ran over a retriever just outside the gates of Mumsey Grove in circumstances that excited some comment at the time, and caused the incident to become unnecessarily celebrated. The story of this accident has also been very often related, but, since it happened to my own uncle, I cannot understand why I should not be allowed to repeat it here.

On the day to which I refer, Lord Porpentine

was turning in at the lodge gates, in his six-cylinder De Pouget Lancard, when he noticed a farmer walking along the adjacent hedge-row with a gun over his shoulder and an elderly retriever at his heels. The motor was certainly not doing more than forty-five miles an hour,

and it was therefore quite clear that the dog had no possible excuse for running out into the middle of the road and practically thrusting itself up against the bonnet of the car. But whoever was to blame, the result was the same, and in another moment Lord Porpentine felt his off tyres bumping heavily over a bulky

obstacle. He only managed to stop the car in time to see the dead body of a retriever stretched in the dust of the road behind him, while its master stood over it with a tragic look upon his face.

"I'm really awfully sorry," said my uncle, who was ridiculously soft-hearted. "I do hope the dog was not a great favourite."

"Pore ole Bob!" replied the farmer, as he knelt beside the dog; "I've 'ad 'im nigh on fifteen year, come Michaelmas."

"Dear, dear! Well, I'm afraid nothing I can do will bring him to life again. But if I can compensate in any way——"

A wan smile lit up the man's expressionless features.

"Here's a couple of sovereigns," added Lord Porpentine, handing over the coins. "I hope you'll buy yourself a younger dog next time."

"Thank you kindly, my lord, I'm sure."

"I'm afraid, too, that I've rather put an end to your day's sport," continued the motorist. "And by-the-by," he asked, "what is it that you can possibly find to shoot at this time of year?"

"To tell you the truth, my lord," the farmer answered, with some natural hesitation, "I were just a-goin' to shoot this pore old dog o' mine. 'E's been ailin' some time, and——"

Lord Porpentine did not wait to hear the end of the sentence, but with tightly compressed

13.

lips he pulled the starting-lever, and turned his car up the carriage-drive.

My uncle was a man who could never bear to think that he had been defrauded, and it was

only by dint of putting nothing in the offertory bag on Sunday for nearly a year that he eventually came to feel that he had made up the financial loss which Providence had thus so unfairly imposed upon him.

5.

Success in the hunting-field is not to be achieved without long and often bitter experience. But there are a few elementary rules with which the humblest sportsman should be acquainted if he wishes to follow the hounds without disaster to himself or shame to his friends.

In any smart hunting country, in the shires or in the provinces, there are three unpardonable sins which it is always open to the tyro to commit: he may head the fox, he may jump on the hounds, he may be improperly dressed.

By making a point of following some competent leader you will avoid heading the fox; but you should not dog your pilot's heels too closely, or you may jump upon him when he falls at a fence, and thus incur his very natural indignation.

When I first began to hunt, I used to attach myself to Colonel Spongewell, a well-known thruster whose memory still lives in the hearts

of all who remember him at all. Few men possessed so intimate an acquaintance with the highroads and byroads of the Belvoir country, or knew as he did the exact whereabouts of every gate and ford in Leicestershire. To follow such a man was in itself a liberal education, and one to which I owe much of my subsequent prowess in the hunting-field.

Rather a curious incident occurred to my leader and myself one day when the hounds were running along the Cottesmore boundary between Folkingham and Grantham. Just south of Aswarby we trotted across a grass field separated from the highroad by a low fence. There was no time to go back and look for a gate, so Colonel Spongewell set his teeth and put his old horse, Highwayman, at the obstacle. Highwayman refused, and I managed to pull up my Baronet in time to prevent his following suit. Thereupon, out of sheer kindness of heart, and with the intention of encouraging the Colonel's mount to negotiate the fence, I drew my hunting-crop and endeavoured to strike Highwayman a shrewd blow across the quarters.

By some unfortunate accident the thong curled round the Colonel instead of round his horse, and became caught up in the two buttons at the back of his pink coat; while Baronet,

alarmed by the crack of the whip, suddenly swerved round and set off across country at a sharp pace.

In those days I made a practice of tying my crop to my wrist, so as to avoid dropping it whenever I opened a gate, and having to dismount every few minutes to pick it up. The consequence was that, before I could unfasten it, I had pulled the Colonel out of his saddle, and was trotting away with him in the direction of Burnley Fitches. In this ignominious fashion I trailed the unfortunate man in my wake like that cloud of glory of which the poet Wordsworth has written so eloquently, for about twelve miles, past Sleaford, from Rauceby to Leadenham, until we were brought up by a stiff oxer near Welling Gore.

I am told that the spectacle we afforded was most diverting. Indeed, I recollect that the yokels whom I persuaded to carry away the battered Colonel on a hurdle were so amused by the recollection of the accident that they had to lay down the improvised stretcher several times on their way to the Cottage Hospital in order to indulge their desire for hearty laughter. This was my first and last experience of what I believe to be technically known as a "drag-hunt," and I have no wish to repeat it.

One good tip Colonel Spongewell gave me, which I found of inestimable value in later life. This was to carry a spare horse-shoe in my pocket whenever I went hunting. It was thus possible for me, when I came to a particularly unalluring jump, to dismount and lead my horse round it; and if other sportsmen expressed surprise at my apparently pusillanimous behaviour, I had only to hold up the horse-shoe with a melancholy expression, when their scorn was swiftly converted into sympathy.

It is, as I have already remarked, an unpardonable offence to appear in the hunting-field in ill-fitting or slovenly attire. When an Australian relative of mine came out for a day with the Pytchley, dressed in a pair of cycling knickerbockers and a scarlet golfing blazer, with a straw hat perched on the back of his head, the Master of that famous pack took his hounds home at once, and very rightly, too. I myself, in younger days, incurred the suspicion of the field, and found myself an object of derision at the covert-side, through wearing the knee-buttons of my leather breeches *at the side* of my leg instead of *in front*.

It was all in vain that I pointed out to the hunt secretary that the buttons ran into my shin-bone and caused me the most exquisite pain if worn in the correct position. He

“capped” me for two guineas with averted eyes that spoke eloquently of his outraged feelings, and utterly declined to listen to my apologies. Since that day I have taken the greatest care that my costume should never offend the most scrupulous member of the hunt. After all, what is a varicose vein or two in the calf of the leg compared with the delight to be derived from the consciousness of being appropriately garbed ?

Hunting is, of course, essentially a pastime for the physically fit, and as the years advance I find myself less and less able to indulge in it. In my old age, indeed, I confine myself almost exclusively to what is known as “Hunting by Train,” a sport that I can confidently recommend to the most timorous of my readers.

Whenever I travel in a first-class carriage from one part of England to another, instead of reading the papers or falling fast asleep over a book, as so many men make a practice of doing, I keep my eye glued to the window, and in imagination follow a pack of hounds across a line of country running parallel to the railway.

In this way I have often run for forty minutes without a check, jumping the various brooks and fences that presented themselves to my vision in a manner that gave me the most intense delight and, would have surprised my friends.

I remember once following an imaginary fox that we found just outside Potters Bar Station at 11.13 a.m., and running him to ground at 3.7 p.m. the same afternoon in a tunnel not a mile south of Leeds. I was so excited that I could scarcely eat my luncheon in the dining-

car, and my nervous fellow-passengers were so astonished and alarmed by the play of facial expression I indulged in after jumping a huge post and rails north of Hitchin that they moved to another compartment. My horse took the bit between his teeth as we steamed into Luton, and in my efforts to pull him up before he jumped on any of the hounds, I suddenly rose

in my stirrups and bumped my head somewhat severely against the luggage-rack, thereby inducing a slight concussion of the brain. It was, indeed, a splendid run, and one that I shall remember all my life, and hope to describe to my grandchildren when they gather round my knee on winters' evenings by the fireside.

6.

It is very far from my purpose to weary the reader with advice as to the breaking or training of refractory horses. I may, however, be permitted to say a not inappropriate word or two upon the treatment of those minor vices with which every rider may be called upon to deal.

It is said to be possible to cure a horse of rearing by breaking a bottle over its head directly it begins to show signs of wishing to stand upon its hind-legs. Personally, I have never found this method to be of the slightest use, and in the case of a polo-pony of mine, called Weaselface, which I baptized in this fashion with no less than three dozen bottles of Apollinaris, the result was perfectly futile. Indeed, though I subsequently broke a magnum of Perrier Jouet '93, two jars of Oxford marmalade, a box of Carsbad plums, and a flask of Odol, over the obstinate creature's head, I

failed altogether to wean it from its offensive habit.

A far more effective cure, in my opinion, consists in pulling the horse over backwards in such a manner as to make it fall on its spine and strike its head upon the stable scraper. This, however, demands extreme dexterity and agility on the part of the rider, who must hastily dismount as soon as the horse loses its balance, and allow the animal to complete the latter portion of the performance entirely alone. Should the horseman omit to leave the saddle in good time, there is every likelihood of his being crushed to death beneath the body of the falling steed, when the cure for rearing will have been effected at a somewhat extravagant cost.

In the same way, on the principle that "a burnt child dreads the fire," it is possible to treat a horse addicted to kicking or biting, and make it realize by painful experience that indulgence in these unattractive vices entails consequences as unpleasant to itself as they are to others.

Everybody knows the story of the bee-keeper who became so tired of being stung that he devised a plan for teaching his industrious pets to respect the sacredness of his person. Having made a collection of all the stings that

had at various times been left in his body, with the aid of a little seccotine he arranged these in rows on the back of his wrist, with what are known as their "business ends" uppermost. The very next bee that alighted on his hand had scarcely time to unsheathe its weapon before it was badly stung in the lower part of the back. No less surprised than annoyed by this unexpected attack, the sagacious little animal hurried home to the hive, where the news spread like wildfire, and thereafter the delighted bee-keeper was left severely alone.

The horse-master who adopts some such method as this will obtain similar results. Before approaching the heels of a notorious kicker, he should take steps to protect himself with a steel shield made of the metal with which first-class battleships are armour-plated. Then, when the animal lashes out at him, it will hurt itself far more than it hurts him, and by the time it has dislocated its fetlocks two or three times in the attempt to pierce his guard, will renounce the pernicious habit of kicking, and be reduced to a condition of agreeable docility.

A savage horse that rushes at its owner and bites him is more difficult to deal with. One of Napoleon's most famous generals, as he tells us in his "Memoirs," who owned a mordacious charger of this type, succeeded in bringing the

creature to reason by thrusting a hot roast leg of mutton into its mouth whenever it flew at him with open jaws. It may, however, occasionally happen to the reader to be attacked by a ferocious horse at a moment when—owing perhaps to forgetfulness on his part or to some false notions of domestic economy on the part of his wife—he does not happen to have a roast leg of mutton about him. He may have temporarily mislaid it, or have left it behind upon the library table. In such a case I strongly and earnestly advise him to leave the animal alone; in fact, the sooner and the quicker he leaves it alone, the better chance will he stand of escaping serious injury.

A great friend of mine was looking a gift-horse in the mouth, one afternoon, when the ill-mannered beast—I mean, of course, the horse, not my great friend—resenting this intimate dental scrutiny, tried to bite him in the eye. Not having a leg of mutton to thrust into its jaws, a bottle of soda-water to break over its head, or indeed any other punitive implement in his possession, my friend thought that he would leave the misguided creature alone for a little. In the endeavour to translate thought into action, he succeeded in covering the space separating the stable-yard from the front-door—a distance of nearly seventy-three yards—in less

than seven seconds. In this way my friend unwittingly constituted a record in the annals of amateur athletics which has only since been broken by the three famous American runners, Heinrich Schlegel, Olaf Stjernhjelm, and Giovanni Pacchiarotto, who won such *kudos* for the United States at last year's great Olympic Games. This, however, as you justly observe, has nothing whatever to do with horsemanship.

MINOR SPORTS

V.

RETIRED GOLF

1.

It has been roughly estimated by competent statisticians that within comparatively recent times the game of golf has increased the cost of the State pension list by an annual sum of not less than £200,000. Before the Scottish national pastime had attained its present almost universal popularity, it was the fashion for superannuated officials who were past their work to betake themselves to cheerless villas in the neighbourhood of Camberley or Canterbury, where they strove to mitigate the tedium of a miserable existence of enforced leisure by writing violent letters to the newspapers to complain of the decadence of their native land.

Veteran Civil Servants spent the evenings of their lives giving the dog a run in a suburban lane, or tricycling to the local post-office to inquire if there were any letters for Pondicherry Lodge or The Chestnuts. Retired Major-Generals were compelled to simulate a fictitious

interest in intensive gardening or philately; grey-headed Rear-Admirals of the Blue wasted upon their wives or domestics that wealth of cosmopolitan invective which they had laboriously acquired in various parts of the world in the course of a hectic and successful naval career. Imprecations that had sent a shudder of apprehension rippling from stem to stern of a British battleship spent themselves harmlessly upon the hardened ears of devoted helpmeet or female retainer; the rich beauty of a lurid vocabulary that had been the envy of many a quarter-deck was lost upon the jobbing gardener, while objurgations that had driven able-bodied seamen to cling in terror to the aft hatchways left the boot-boy comparatively cold.

Thus, thwarted at every turn, hemmed in by the narrow boundaries of parochial life, with no outlet for his energies, no safety-valve for those eccentricities of temper that he had cultivated so assiduously in every corner of the globe, the retired official became a prey to those morbid self-analytical thoughts which, fostered by periodical attacks of gout, and liberally stimulated with doses of rare old tawny port at two shillings the bottle, led often enough to a premature and untimely decease. Major-Generals perished of suppressed passion before they had reached seventy; Admirals exploded

at an even earlier age; Indian Civil Servants acquired the fatal bath-chair habit while still in their prime; and few pensioners survived for any length of time to enjoy the £200 or so a year with which a grateful country rewards those who have devoted the best part of their life to its service.

This sad state of affairs has been mercifully put an end to by the discovery of a game which not only prolongs the span of human existence and reduces the ranks of the chronically moribund, but also invests the lives of the aged with an interest that unquestionably enhances their domestic happiness, and renders many of them quite tolerable husbands and fathers.

The victim of advancing years, of senile decay, of incipient dotage, may find in golf a panacea for, a palliative of, almost every mental and physical disability under which he happens to labour; the martyr to that nervous irritability which too often accompanies second childhood is supplied with a fresh channel for the expression of those thoughts which, if unhealthily restrained, cast their shadow over home-life and bring discord into the family circle.

I knew a retired Army Colonel who at one time used to make his wife's existence a positive burden to her by abusing the cooking; who habitually sat at meals in a gloomy silence

that was only broken by the sound of his plate being pushed away from him with a snort of disgust. To-day, since he has taken to golf, this man is an altered being, displaying a healthy appetite for whatever food is placed before him, and talking happily away all through

dinner upon the subject in which] he is now absorbingly interested. Often, indeed, his flow of genial garrulity continues until long after bedtime; he will keep his wife awake half the night describing the three perfect putts he made upon the last green; he will rouse her at 2 a.m.

to tell her of a mashie shot which he had forgotten to mention at dinner, and far into the dawn his voice can be heard explaining to a snoring and unconscious spouse that he would most assuredly have done the fourth hole in six if only he hadn't missed his drive, required three strokes to get out of a bunker, and taken four more to hole out.

Again, a Rear-Admiral of my acquaintance, the violence of whose language had long rendered him an insupportable inmate of any respectable household, became a reformed character once he had learnt to play golf. After spending a strenuous day hacking his ball from tussock to tussock in the "rough" at Walton Heath, he would return home so hoarse and exhausted as to be unable to utter a single word of reproof to his family. In the Navy he had been justly considered unique as a master of invective; but on the golf-links he often became inspired by adverse fortune to surpass even his own earlier efforts, and the heights of eloquence to which he soared, the maledictory phrases which he spontaneously coined in his attempts to do justice to his outraged feelings, earned the admiration of local Masters of Hounds, and would have wrung reluctant tributes from the most imaginative fish-porters in Billingsgate.

2.

It is not my purpose in these pages to deal with the technicalities of golf, nor yet to emulate the literary labours of such expert essayists as Braid, Vardon, or Taylor. Of what is known as "Advanced Golf" these writers have treated in a manner which less competent masters of English prose may well have cause to envy; they have covered the whole ground so completely that nothing remains to be said upon this particular aspect of the game.

Very little, however, has yet been written upon the subject of what (for lack of a better term) I may venture to call "Retired Golf"—that is to say, golf for the elderly, for players whose handicap ranges between 18 and 36, who may truthfully be said to have one foot in the grave and the other almost continually in some bunker. And it is to these, as well as to the mentally deficient, the morally and physically infirm, and to all natural and incurable foozlers, that I propose to address a few words of counsel and encouragement, in the hope that by so doing I may possibly help to improve their game, and thus add not a little to the sum of human happiness.

The whole secret of success at retired golf, as everybody nowadays admits, lies in the

ability of the player to strike the ball *without moving his head*. The constantly repeated injunction to "keep your eye on the ball" is, indeed, very often misleading, this optical immobility being only enjoined as the most practical method of ensuring that the head shall be kept perfectly still.

Few men, alas! are privileged to possess swivel-eyes, and for those fortunate beings who are thus naturally equipped with the advantages usually monopolized by chameleons it is easy to remove the gaze without shifting the head. But with the majority of mankind the eye cannot be raised with impunity, the temptation to lift up their heads—after the fashion of the Psalmist's everlasting gates—at the moment of hitting the ball being almost irresistible. Many systems have therefore been invented by golfers anxious to break themselves of this pernicious habit, but it will be sufficient for my purpose if I describe the two most successful now in vogue at St. Andrews.

The first (and perhaps the simplest) consists in wearing a tall hat in which a number of small sleigh-bells have been carefully concealed. It then becomes the player's chief ambition to strike his ball without ringing the bells, and whenever he succeeds in so doing he may be quite sure that, whatever other fault he may

have committed, he has not moved his head. That occasionally, even in such circumstances, his stroke falls short of perfection may be accounted for by the fact that he has pulled his arms in, pushed his elbows out, shifted his feet, altered his stance, lost his balance, or been guilty of one or other of the thousand minor crimes with

which the path of the golfer is ever beset.

The top-hat method, however, possesses certain inevitable drawbacks, some of which are so patent as scarcely to require mention. I remember once at Sandwich, when I happened to be wearing the sleigh-bell form of headgear, and was strolling along the fairway in a very

musical fashion, a parlourmaid came running out of an adjacent villa, under the impression that I was the local muffin-man, and, pressing sixpence into my unwilling palm, besought me to supply her with half a dozen of my choicest crumpets for her mistress's afternoon tea. Not happening on this particular afternoon to have

any crumpets about me, my confusion may well be imagined.

On another occasion, at Brancaster, I was followed for miles along the "pretty" by some two hundred bleating sheep, who had mistaken me for the bell-wether of the flock; and when a couple of short-horn cattle joined the procession, the congestion upon the putting-greens became so great that, at my opponent's urgent request, I consented to doff the offending hat, and bury the sleigh-bells in a bunker.

A much simpler way of keeping the head immovable consists in tying a stout string to a tooth in the lower jaw, passing the end through one's legs, and getting a caddy to hold it tightly behind one's back while one is addressing the ball. In this case any attempt to jerk the head up results in the loss of a favourite molar, and it is safe to assume that a man of even moderate intelligence will gladly renounce the most seductive of bad habits before excessive indulgence therein has left him completely toothless. To prove the efficacy of this system I have but to mention that in the summer of 1907 I succeeded in reducing my handicap from 32 to 28 at the negligible cost of two wisdom teeth. Need I say more?

I cannot honestly recommend the practice in vogue among some of the older habitués of our

Lowland golf-courses who paint a large human eye upon their golf-ball, and have it teed up in such a way that it glares upon the player with a passionate intensity which makes it almost impossible for him to look away.

This may be satisfactory enough on the tee; unfortunately, the painted eye will not always remain uppermost when once the ball is in play, and it becomes a difficult matter to negotiate a successful approach shot with a ball that is either gazing invitingly into an impending hazard or seems to be winking sardonically at one from the "rough."

The late Lord Chorlesbury always used a ball of this kind, and I shall never forget the panic that ensued among the nurses and children who spend their days on the beach to the right of the third tee at North Berwick when what appeared to be a gigantic human (or, as some of them thought, Divine) eye fell in their midst from the blue vault of heaven above.

Two French governesses, professed atheists, who happened to be bathing in the sea, and were at the same time engaged in a theological discussion in which they ridiculed the alleged immanence of a Supreme Being, were converted then and there to a mild form of agnosticism, and reluctantly admitted the plausibility of

that uncomfortable doctrine which presupposes the perpetual presence of a Divine Power "about one's bath, and about one's bed, and spying out all one's ways."

In spite of this system, however, Lord Chorlesbury was probably the most erratic driver in the world. He is the only man I have ever met who could strike his ball so far back on the heel of his club that it would speed through his legs at right angles from the tee, and injure an inoffensive caddy standing behind him. To play as his partner or opponent was to take one's life in one's hand; and it was with especial reference to his peculiar methods that the Bishop of Deal composed that well-known hymn "For Those in Peril on the Tee," which has since become so popular with mixed foursomes on every seaside course in Christendom.

3.

Once the player has learnt to control the movements of his head he may be said to have mastered the game of golf, and can confidently set forth to give an exhibition of his prowess upon the most crowded links without any very serious internal misgivings. There are, however, one or two minor points of golfing etiquette with which it is as well that he should be

acquainted if he desires to be regarded as an attractive partner or a tolerable opponent.

When two second-class players start out together from the club-house to enjoy a friendly match, it is always considered proper for each of them to deprecate his own skill, and express modest doubts as to his ability to provide his companion with a good game.

"I don't feel as if I should be able to hit the ball at all to-day," he murmurs diffidently. "I haven't played for weeks."

"Nor I," replies his friend. "I expect you'll beat me hollow. I've got a groggy elbow, too."

"I'm sorry to hear that," says the first. "To tell you the truth, I'm not feeling very fit myself. We sat up playing bridge last night till any hour, and——"

"I never sleep well in this place; I don't know why it is, I'm sure. And with my groggy elbow——"

"You ought to give me a stroke a hole, at least——"

"My dear chap! What's your handicap?"

"I don't believe I've got one. I play so little. What's yours?"

"Mine? Oh, mine's anything between eighteen and twenty. And then with my groggy elbow——"

"How do you and Jones play together?"

“ Oh, he beats me easily. At least, last time we played he gave me a half and won, six up; but then I must admit I had the most infernal luck and got into every single bunker on the course. I began right enough; did the first hole in nine, the second in eleven, and the third in eight. After that I seemed to go all to pieces.”

“ Suppose we play even ?”

“ Righto ! After all, so long as we have a decent game, it doesn't much matter who wins.”

And at golf, fortunately, a decent game can always be obtained. It is, indeed, one of the chief charms of this attractive pastime that, by means of a system of tactful handicapping, players of every degree and class may be evenly matched against one another in a fashion that can seldom be accomplished at other games. A single bad lawn-tennis player will ruin a whole set; at croquet or billiards the man who is matched against a champion spends most of his time idly watching his opponent playing, and only issues at rare intervals from a retirement into which he is almost immediately driven back. At golf, on the other hand, the receipt of a few strokes enables an indifferent performer to hold his own against a superior adversary, and there are other methods by

which golfers of varying skill can be placed upon an equal footing.

It is, of course, notorious that the player who is permitted under the terms of his handicap to shout "Boo!" in the ear of an opponent three times in the course of a round, just as the unfortunate man is addressing his ball, possesses an advantage which should always enable him to secure the match. The right to "Boo!" need never, as a matter of fact, be exercised, the mere knowledge that this exclamation is perpetually dangling like the sword of Damocles over his head being as a rule quite sufficient to put the most experienced player off his game. With eighteen bisques and a couple of "Boo's!" I should be quite ready to challenge Vardon himself.

4.

Golf has frequently been labelled a selfish game by persons who do not indulge in the sport; nevertheless, it may be justly affirmed

that scarcely a round passes without providing opportunities for a display of generosity, patience, and other kindred virtues, of which unselfishness is the very essence.

It is, for instance, an essential

characteristic of the true golfer that he should be able to praise an opponent's good strokes and sympathize with his bad ones in a natural and whole-hearted fashion, and at the shortest possible notice. When he is four down at the turn, and his adversary lays his second shot

dead, or when his rival's drive drops like a stone into a bunker, it is no easy task to exclaim "Well played!" or "Bad luck!" (as the case may be) in tones that carry conviction. "In thinking of the sorrows of others," as a great philosopher once remarked, "we forget our own," and the truth of this saying is nowhere more apparent than upon the golf-links.

The perfect golfer should always be ready to listen with a kindly ear to all the reasons his opponent insists upon giving him for missing various easy shots; he should at the same time remember that nobody really cares for unsolicited information of this kind, and should refrain from remarking, after he has foozled a particularly easy mashie-shot: "My ball was lying in a hole!" "I looked up!" or "My caddy gave me the wrong club!"

Long experience upon the links teaches one to be genially tolerant of the mathematical miscalculations of others. It is a strange thing that men who invariably add up a bridge score correctly—City magnates, captains of industry, masters of finance who can tell offhand the profit they have made on 460 Canadian Pacific ordinary shares when the stock rises $3\frac{5}{8}$ —often display a lamentable incapacity for estimating the exact number of times they have struck a golf-ball between the tee and the green.

Persons of unblemished reputation and scrupulous integrity will entirely forget whether they took three or four strokes to get out of a bunker; the fact that their first drive went out of bounds, and that they were forced to play a second shot from the tee, escapes their memory in a way that non-golfers might deem incredible. It therefore often becomes a task of uncommon delicacy to remind an adversary of strokes that have apparently made no sort of impression upon his memory, without seeming to cast aspersions upon his honesty of purpose. And when, on the other hand, he adduces conclusive evidence to prove that one has taken eight shots to reach the hole, after one has confidently declared oneself to be "dead" in five, it is difficult not to temper one's apologies with resentment.

The art of winning or losing gracefully at any game is never a very easy one to acquire, and at golf it is only a whit less objectionable to evince signs of unconcealed elation at being "five up" than it is to stride along with a pale face and set jaw, declining to utter a civil word in reply to one's opponent's sympathetic comments, just because one happens to be "five down."

My cousin, Colonel Waters, was one of those players with whom it was impossible to play

unless he chanced to be winning. The look of concentrated loathing which he cast upon a more fortunate rival was enough to spoil the pleasure of any game, and as soon as he became "two down," he would adopt an attitude of mute melancholia that rendered him the least desirable golfing companion in the world. At Hoylake, indeed, Colonel Waters was very generally known as "Siloam"—he had, they flippantly said, such a troubled face!

In one respect alone is it fair to say that golf is a selfish pastime; it is perhaps the only game that a man can pleasurably and profitably play *all by himself*.

An attempt to play lawn-tennis all alone is seldom satisfactory; indeed, my uncle, Horace Biffin, is one of the few men I ever heard of who seems to have derived any amusement from this form of entertainment. Even so the result was often more interesting for spectators than for the single player. You see, Uncle Horace was compelled by the exigencies of the situation to lob his service very high into the air, in order that he might be able to run round to the other side of the net in time to return the ball; and he never dared to send it back with any violence if he wished to sprint round again in time to take his return. At the back of his mind, therefore, there lay the perpetual con-

sciousness that he could always defeat himself if he desired, and this deprived the game of much of its interest, and robbed the player of a good deal of his natural zest. Uncle Horace, indeed, would often become so tired of rushing wildly round to the opposite court to take his own services that he was tempted now and then to serve eight consecutive faults into the net, so as to bring the set to an end; and it is not to be wondered at that, long before he had reached the age of eighty, he should have decided to renounce lawn-tennis in favour of golf.

At the latter game, as I have already remarked, a solitary player can enjoy a sufficiently exciting game either by matching himself with Bogey or by playing two balls, one against the other, from the tee. Colonel Waters, to whose eccentricities of conduct I have alluded above, when he began to find it increasingly difficult to persuade anybody to play with him, adopted the latter system, to his own and everybody's extreme satisfaction.

He would start out in the morning with two caddies, two sets of clubs, and two balls—a "Silver King" and a "Colonel"—and engage in the most thrilling contests against himself, from which he invariably emerged victorious. In these games he had no chance of displaying those peculiarities of temper which rendered him

so unpopular among his fellows, for his rage at being laid a stymie by himself was mitigated by his feelings of joy at having laid himself a stymie; and whenever his "Silver King" rolled into a bunker, he found comfort in the fact that his "Colonel" was lying safely on the "pretty," or *vice versa*. Furthermore, he was enabled to invest the game with a spice of inexpensive adventure by laying a small shade of odds against either ball, and at the end of the day he could extract a morbid pleasure from writing himself a cheque for the amount he had won and lost, and sending it to the bank upon which it was drawn, to be placed to the credit of his account. Would that all gambling transactions—as the dear Dowager Bishop of Monte Carlo once said to me—would that all gambling transactions could be conducted so innocently, with so inconsiderable a loss of treasure and of *amour-propre*!

5.

Among advanced Socialists and other persons who entertain exaggerated views upon the Dignity of Labour, the use of a caddy to carry clubs and construct tees is regarded as a grave blemish upon an otherwise harmless pursuit. With equal justice might one resent the employment of a groundman to roll the pitch

after each innings at cricket, or consider that the presence of a professional marker detracted from the merits of billiards.

The first-class caddy is in no sense of the phrase a beast of burden; for the time being he becomes the sympathetic confidant, often the autocratic adviser, of a man who is probably his superior socially, intellectually, and financially. Indeed, the friendly intercourse between player and caddy paves the way for that better feeling between class and class which in these latter democratic days affords so hopeful a sign of social regeneration.

As I write these words I cannot help recalling a touching scene that indelibly impressed itself upon my mental retina, and to a great extent bears out the truth of my contention. It was on the links at Lossiemouth, last summer, where one of the greatest living British statesmen was anxiously inspecting his ball as it lay in the rough about thirty yards to the right of the eleventh hole. Uncertain as to which club to select for so important an approach shot, he turned for counsel to his caddy, a small Scottish lad of some ten summers. The pair formed one of the prettiest pictures imaginable: on the one hand the grey-headed but perplexed statesman, gravely urging the advisability of taking a mashie; on the other the ragged, bare-footed,

tousle-headed urchin, insisting upon the use of a niblick. From the serious expression upon the eminent politician's face he might well have been consulting a Cabinet colleague upon some

question of vital import to the Empire, and I watched with interest to see the upshot of their deliberations.

It was all in vain that the hard-headed Minister of State, the man in whose hands lay the destinies of a great people, pleaded for his

mashie; the bare-footed urchin stubbornly shook his head, and with an imperious gesture thrust the niblick into his employer's hand. Shrugging his shoulders in that resigned fashion that the House of Commons knows so well, the statesman took the proffered club, and in another moment had laid his ball within six inches of the hole. Do you wonder, dear reader, that as I turned away from this moving scene, with a lump in my throat and the tears starting to my eyes, I should have felt that I had at last learnt something of the qualities that render constitutional party government possible—that I had discovered, perhaps, some inkling of what it is that makes us Britons what we are? Yes—or, rather, no.

6.

There comes a day, alas! in the lives of all of us when, under the stress of advancing years, the field-sports in which we were wont to indulge lose much of their pristine charm. The ping-pong racket is relegated to the lumber-chest, the skates hang rusting in the pantry cupboard, the beribboned oar is sent with the discarded cricket-bat to swell the Vicar's jumble sale, the croquet-mallet languishes among the grandchildren's perambulators in the telephone-room.

But though the niblick becomes a burden and the desire to drive a long ball from the tee fails, the golfer need not give way to utter despair. Even in his dotage he may still hope to extract a not altogether exiguous pleasure from striking a captive ball into a net in the back-garden, and can find endless satisfaction in the task of converting the lawn-tennis court into a putting-green for "clock-golf." And when at last he is no longer able to leave the house, he can amuse himself by laying out a miniature golf-links in his wife's drawing-room, and dodder round with a couple of clubs, seeking to establish a record for the course.

In "house-golf" (as it is called) the various articles of domestic furniture will usually supply all the hazards required, though these may be further supplemented, if necessary, by obstacles imported from outside. Thus, a hip-bath filled with the moss-fibre in which last year's bulbs were grown makes an excellent bunker; two waste-paper baskets piled upon a low book-case add to the difficulties of a mashie-shot from the sofa on to the hearth-rug, where an inverted saucer adequately fulfils the purpose of a hole.

In the drawing-rooms of most of the Stately Homes of England little courses of this kind have been planned by loving hands, and the aristocratic inmates are thus provided with a source of

innocent occupation that the most selfish Socialist could scarcely grudge them.

It is true that old Lady Chorlesbury used to point with horror to the holes made by her husband's niblick in the best Wilton carpet, and found but little comfort in his solemn promise to replace the divots; she nevertheless realized that it would be cruel to deprive the old gentleman of such a means of solace in his declining years, and at Chorlesbury House "drawing-room golf" was always winked at, if not actively encouraged.

I happened to be having tea there one evening last winter when Lord Chorlesbury tottered in on the arm of his valet, and challenged me to a friendly game. To humour him I consented to play, though I had no nails in my boots, and was forced to borrow the butler's clubs.

On his own home links, I need hardly say, I was no match for my host, his knowledge of the course giving him a decided advantage, as was soon only too apparent. At the very first hole—a dog-leg hole round a lacquer screen, with a china-cupboard guarding the green—after being stymied by a bust of the late Dr. Livingstone and having on two occasions to lift my ball without penalty from casual ink on the writing-table, I lost my nerve. And when, at the second, I found myself in a hopeless lie behind

a marble clock on the mantelpiece, I picked up in despair. I shall never forget his lordship's delight, later on in the game, on his becoming "Dormy two," when a pretty approach shot of mine was caught by the keyboard of the piano, and I hooked my next into the coal-scuttle

(taking three to get out), while with a fine lofting shot over an occasional-table my host laid his ball dead on the hearth-rug in four.

Lady Chorlesbury watched the game with interest from a chair near the window, and it was tacitly agreed (in accordance with a local by-law) that whenever a ball struck her on the

head and bounded off into the rough, the player should be allowed to have the stroke over again; while if it remained in her lap, she should be regarded as "ground under repair," and the ball be lifted without a penalty.

Lord Chorlesbury was indeed a true sportsman; to the very end of his life he helped to keep alive that spirit of sport upon which our Imperial greatness so largely depends. One of his last acts was to despatch a postal order for five shillings to the Olympic Talent Fund when it seemed possible that the subscriptions might fall short by some £90,000 of the desired total. At his lamented demise, *Golf Illustrated* published a lifelike portrait of him, which I have cut out and hung in the spare bedroom; and when I am slicing badly, or have temporarily lost the art of "putting," I go and gaze at this picture of the man who provided the world with a perfect example of all that a Retired Golfer should be, whose handicap was never less than 30, but who never gave up hope. Peace to his mashies!

VI. VILLAGE CRICKET

1.

It would, of course, be presumptuous to attempt at this period of the world's history to say anything original upon a subject so hackneyed as cricket. No Englishman requires instruction in a pastime with which he is familiar from his birth, nor is there any necessity to recommend so deservedly popular a pursuit. For, although there has of late been much idle criticism of the game, and many foolish suggestions have been made for enlivening it from a spectacular point of view, there seems little likelihood of its ever being ousted from the high place it still holds in the public favour.

To the ignorant and uninitiated cricket may doubtless occasionally appear a dull and dreary sport, just as in like fashion chess may seem tedious enough to the unintelligent onlooker, while the hectic delights of "spilikins" are commonly hidden from the gaze of the casual observer. Even experts have at times been

known to fall into a troubled sleep in the pavilion at Lord's on a hot summer's afternoon while watching the manœuvres of a couple of conscientious batsmen who have taken an hour to compile twenty runs, and are evidently labouring under the delusion that they are engaged in an eight-day match. But although it may be true that first-class cricket does not appeal to every taste, there is one form of the game which no sane person can fail to enjoy. This particular branch of the sport in question can never justly be called tame (if a branch could ever be designated by so inappropriate an epithet), since it combines the peculiar charms of American baseball with the excitement of the Spanish bullfight and much of the anxious futility of patience. I refer, as I need hardly add, to what is technically known as Village Cricket.

Village Cricket! What blessed memories those two simple words recall to the minds of most of us! We seem to behold once more the village-green of our happy youth, with the Jubilee Pump at one end competing ineffectually with the "Bull and Kingfisher" at the other. We see the little church—recently restored by Messrs. Burling and Glammer, who have picturesquely fitted the Norman Tower with a steeple and replaced the unhygienic stone font

(in which William Rufus is said to have been baptized) by a more sanitary, modern contrivance of porcelain and pitch pine—overshadowing the tin “Wesleyan Workmen’s Club”; the post-office, where acidulated drops and giant bull’s-eyes are ever on sale; and the blacksmith’s shop, with its glowing forge, where doubtless the anvil’s music still thrills the youthful bosom. We smell the scent of wallflowers wafted from the Vicarage garden, mixing with the warm fragrance of new-mown lawn and the less agreeable perfume of the children as they stream from the school hard by. We note the athletic figure of the worthy curate, dragging the roller back and forth across that exiguous patch of comparatively smooth turf opposite the porch of the village inn where the rival teams have already gathered to refresh themselves for the coming contest.

See! Here comes the young Squire on his bicycle, clad in immaculate flannels, and bearing the long green canvas bag whence he shall presently extract that supply of bats, pads, and other cricketing paraphernalia with which the village sportsman invariably omits to provide himself. Already the bails are being reverently laid upon the stumps by Mr. Bunting, Lord Bumblefoot’s butler from the Manor House, a stately, pontifical figure whose fitness for the

post of umpire is as unquestioned as that of his colleague Mr. Turmats, head-gardener at the Vicarage, who is fulfilling a similar office at the other end of the pitch.

The Reverend Alfred Pertwee, than whom no more robust Christian ever intoned the Athanasian Creed, is busy arranging the "fields."

Jasper Marling, the blacksmith, moistens the ball in the most natural manner possible, preparatory to delivering a series of those deadly "daisy-cutters" which have made his bowling famous throughout the countryside, from Chipping Winston to Goudbury—aye, and as far afield as Rollington and Murk End! The two sturdy batsmen who are to open the match for the Mins-

hurst eleven advance from the little white scorer's tent, where the landlord of the "Bull and Kingfisher" sits with moist pencil poised to record the first incident of the day's play. In another moment Mr. Bunting will give the

signal, Jasper Marling will grasp the ball in his gnarled fingers, and the great match will commence.

2.

This is neither the time nor the place to describe in detail a game of village cricket. But for the benefit of any of my readers whose experience thereof may be limited, who may, however, at any moment be called upon to engage in this delightful sport, I propose to give one or two hints that I myself have found infinitely useful on such occasions as I have been tempted or coerced into taking part, whether in the character of captain, umpire, batsman, bowler or fieldsman (commonly called "field").

The captain's position is one, as I need hardly say, of extreme responsibility. To be successful he needs common sense and tact, he must be a diplomat as well as a born leader of men. It is for him to arrange the order in which various members of his team shall bat, and he will invariably find that the individual distaste for going in first is only surpassed in intensity by the universal objection to going in last. In such circumstances he will require unusual powers of persuasion to solve a complicated and often painful problem.

When his team takes the field, the choice of

bowlers rests with him, and it is he who must dispose the "fields" in the positions best suited to their peculiar talents. Should Jasper Marling bowl eight consecutive "no-balls," should four of the left-handed "lobs" of 'Erbert Perks (the stableman from the Hall) be hit over the Wesleyan Workmen's Club, while the last ball of the "over" goes skimming through the roof of the Vicar's greenhouse, it is for the captain to hint as delicately as possible that a change of bowling would be advisable. When Bill Turmats (the umpire's son), who is standing in a trance at "long-leg" among the tall nettles that surround the Jubilee Pump, has on three separate occasions shown a marked disinclination to allow a skied catch to impinge upon his tender palms, it is for the captain to suggest that his position in the deep field might be more suitably occupied by the young Squire, and that Master Turmats should take the latter's place at "point," where, if a ball comes at all, it will probably not give him time to get out of its way.

The captain should, in fact, be a man of strong personality, who can control his team in such a manner as to avoid any undue friction arising from jealousy or disappointed hopes. He must, in a word, inspire perfect confidence, and for this purpose nothing is more valuable than the ability to win the toss for innings. That this feat can

be achieved without fraud or trickery I am assured by a very keen devotee of village cricket, a well-known writer, of unblemished reputation, deeply honoured and respected by all who know him, who has kindly explained to me the secret which I now propose to pass on to my readers.

Let us assume that the rival teams are mustered in the bar parlour of the "Bull and Kingfisher" before the game begins. While the pint pots are being replenished for the tenth time the captain of the visitors comes up to you and suggests in a friendly fashion that you and he should toss for the choice of innings.

"By all means," you heartily reply, fumbling in your pocket just long enough to allow your antagonist time to produce a coin from his own.

"*You* cry," he generously exclaims, as he spins his shilling into the air, where it gyrates for a few seconds before finally falling to the ground.

This is your opportunity. Before the shilling has come to rest you must shout, "The Bird!" in a loud, clear voice. Having done so, walk across to the spot where the coin is now lying, and, after a brief inspection of its exposed surface, add: "Hooray! we've won the toss!" You can then turn to your rival with a word or two of sympathy, as you break the news to him that you intend your team to bat first.

It does not in the least matter whether the

shilling falls on its head or on its tail. If you have cried "The Bird!" with sufficient vigour and self-confidence, the visiting captain will politely assume that this is a local term for whichever side of the coin is uppermost, as, indeed, you may perhaps deceive yourself into fancying that it is. Your decision will consequently be accepted without argument, all parties will be satisfied, and you can stroll across to the tent and put on your pads with a comparatively easy conscience. I may add that I myself have practised this method for the last two seasons and have never known it fail. Indeed, it is to a large extent due to my skill in winning the toss that this year I have again been elected captain of the Little Wilmington Wanderers, a post that I am otherwise wholly unqualified to fill.

3.

Next to the captain it may truly be asserted that the umpire occupies the most important position in the village cricket field. It is not enough that he should be thoroughly acquainted with the laws of the game, be a man of wide experience and alert eye, prompt to decide knotty points, of unquestioned integrity, and, if possible, unrelated by marriage to any of the players. Besides all this he must be well versed

in those questions of subtle etiquette, those chivalrous niceties of conduct, the practice of which may be said to distinguish village cricket from the more serious game played upon county grounds. If, for instance, the Earl of Bumblefoot condescends to take part in a local match, and before he has made (let us say) half a dozen runs is unluckily caught at the wicket, it is the duty of the umpire to say "Not out!" in a clear voice just as his lordship starts to walk away towards the pavilion. In like fashion he should continue to say "Not out!" to any appeals that may be made until Lord Bumblefoot has compiled some five-and-twenty runs. Then, and not before, is it permissible to give the Lord of the Manor "out," if it is quite plain that the elderly nobleman has enjoyed as long an innings as he desires and would welcome an opportunity for repose. Again, if young Viscount Memlingham, Lord Bumblefoot's half-witted heir, elects to bowl for an over or two, the discreet umpire will close his eyes to any "wides," or "no-balls," and, should the bowler deliver a well-directed full-pitch that strikes the batsman on the head, and appeal for "leg before wicket," he will say, "Out, my lord!" without a moment's hesitation.

Among an umpire's most responsible duties are, first of all, the duty of giving a batsman

“guard” (or “block” as it is sometimes entitled), and secondly the duty of calling “Over!” when five (or in some cases six) fair balls have been delivered by any one bowler. The task of giving “guard” requires no special aptitude. As soon as the batsman holds his bat in front of the wicket and clears his throat loudly enough to attract the umpire’s attention, the latter should respond by gazing earnestly down the pitch, holding his right hand in the air and wagging it gently from right to left. In answer to these signals the batsman will at once move his bat in the direction indicated. The umpire should then waggle his hand from left to right, and when the batsman has replaced his bat in its original position he can remark, “Two leg!” return to his place beside the wicket, and allow the bowler to commence his deadly work.

The duty of counting the balls in any “over” is not always so easy as it sounds. The umpire’s thoughts may wander, or his attention may be temporarily diverted by extraneous incidents, such as the straying of a cow upon the pitch, the sight of his offspring tumbling down the Jubilee Well, or the still more harrowing spectacle supplied by those members of the batting team whose innings are happily over and who are tracing their eager footsteps towards the “Bull and Kingfisher.” Again, when a bowler has

delivered four “no-balls” and a couple of “wides,” when his three next balls have been hit out of bounds and twenty minutes have been spent searching for them among the Vicar’s calceolaria, and when the tenth ball accidentally takes a wicket, it requires uncommon mathematical gifts to enable an umpire to remember how many more balls the bowler is justified in delivering.

In order to facilitate this arduous task some umpires provide themselves with five (or six) pennies, which they place in a convenient pocket, and then, as each ball is delivered, transfer one of these coins to another pocket, until the supply is exhausted and they may conclude by a system of logical computation that it is time to shout “Over !” I remember, however, doing this once with rather disastrous results in 1885 at Tonbridge, where a Pan-Anglican Synod was being held, and a cricket match—“High Church v. Low Church”—had been arranged between two clerical teams on the county ground. (It may here be said that in other respects the game proved an immense attraction, and the gate-money, which was devoted to a fund for the conversion of infidels and heretics, is said to have achieved wonderful results in Asia Minor, where the two Turkish converts were so benighted that they had never realized that they were infidels or heretics until

assured of this fact by the worthy Anglican prelate, whose mission it was to enlighten them.) On the occasion of this match I unfortunately forgot that the pocket in which I secreted my little umpire's hoard of coins was already occupied by a certain number of loose pennies which I habitually kept there for the purpose of tipping taxi-drivers. It was not until a High Church bowler had sent down eighteen consecutive balls and the crowd began to "barrack" us that I realized that my supply of copper coinage would outlive the patience of the public, and hastily shouted "Over!" just as the indignant populace began to set fire to the pavilion.

4.

The conduct of the batsman upon a humble village cricket ground differs in but the smallest particulars from that of his brother batsman at Lord's or the Oval. Unless, however, he wishes to acquire a reputation for pride and vain-gloriousness, which he will find it difficult to live up to, he should be very careful never to appear at the wicket attired in more than *one* pad. If he conscientiously finds it necessary to protect his fingers from a fast bowler he may also wear *one* glove, but it must be a *left hand* glove and should be worn on the *right* hand.

The downfall of the batsman's wicket whom he is destined to follow is the signal for him to hurry out of the refreshment tent, where he has been artificially stimulating his courage, and help his predecessor to doff his pad. This he should transfer to his own left leg with as little

loss of time as possible, buckling it as he walks to the wicket—always a difficult task—or perhaps soliciting the assistance of the umpire. As soon as he has been given “guard” (as explained above) he must proceed to excavate a trench about six inches deep, a foot in rear of the popping-crease, and when these digging opera-

tions are completed he should walk slowly up the pitch, carefully levelling any uneven portions of the ground, rooting out plantains, removing stones, and patting the sward with his bat wherever he deems such treatment necessary. Then, glancing round to see where the various "fields" are stationed, he should moisten the palms of his hands, twirl his bat two or three times round his head, and face the bowler with such confidence as he may possess.

Half the success of making a big score at village cricket lies in the batsman's ability to establish a "funk" in the ranks of his opponents. This may sometimes be done by advancing up the pitch with one's bat raised in a threatening attitude as soon as the bowler begins that little run which is to terminate with the delivery of a ball. From sheer terror the bowler will probably send down a loose full-pitch to leg which can be hit into the cemetery for six, and when this process has been repeated several times his nerves will be completely shattered and there is no reason why the batsman should ever get out. Of course, if the bowler keeps his wits about him he has merely to lob the ball over the batsman's head and the wicket-keeper will stump the latter before he can return to his crease; this, however, is a risk that must be faced.

Custom lays down certain minor by-laws

governing the conduct to be adopted by a batsman whose innings is at an end and who wishes to return to the pavilion or tent with ease and dignity. Should he have scored, say, a dozen runs he may walk calmly away from the wicket, unbuttoning his glove as he goes. If his score has reached twenty, his return to the tent will be greeted with wild applause, when he should break into a slow trot as he approaches the spectators, touching his hat every few yards in acknowledgment of their cheers. Should he have compiled fifty runs he may start running directly he leaves the wicket and sprint briskly and with bared head to the shelter of the tent. If, however, he has made what is technically known as a "duck's egg," he should avoid all expressions of annoyance, should never throw his bat away with an oath or attempt to break it across his knee, but he may pardonably creep on all fours from the wicket to the back entrance of the "Bull and Kingfisher," and there drown his woes in the only satisfactory fashion possible.

5.

There are certain minor rules of etiquette to which the village bowler should conform if he wishes to command the respect of his peers. It is usual, for instance, when the captain of your

side asks you to try a few "overs" at the church end, to express surprise at his choice of a bowler, to say that you haven't had a ball in your hand since you left school (which is, of course, a lie) and that you're afraid your arm will be very stiff.

You should then remove your hat and hang it on the umpire, take off your "sweater" and drape it round that worthy's shoulders, give him your watch and chain, your silver cigarette case, your pipe and (after counting it carefully) any loose change you may have

in your pockets. If, however, you feel impelled to remove your boots—as may sometimes be necessary if the wicket is wet and slippery—you should on no account hang these on the umpire, but rather place them neatly together behind the stumps, where they will be in nobody's way.

You may then try a preliminary ball or two at the side of the pitch, though it invariably happens that the wicket-keeper fails to stop these trial balls and a certain amount of delay ensues while they are being retrieved from the Jubilee Pump. When you feel that your arm is sufficiently loose, measure out the run that you intend to take behind the wicket, mark the starting-point by digging your heel into the turf or erecting a cairn of daisies, and take good care to attract the batsman's attention before you deliver your first ball.

The bowler who can fill his antagonists with panic is clearly half-way on the road to success. This can sometimes be done by assuming a ferociously professional air, and with this in view it is always a good plan to alter the position of as many of the fieldsmen as possible before you start to bowl. Beckon to "cover-point" to come closer in, ask "third man" to draw a bit wider, signal to "long-leg" to go deeper—move the fields about, in fact, in any way you like so long as by so doing you create in the batsman's mind the impression that you really do know something about the technical side of the game. If, too, you can so arrange matters that your first ball should strike him in a vital part he will be more than ever inclined to treat any subsequent balls with redoubled respect.

Personally, I have often found that by taking a very long run of about a hundred yards, dodging behind the umpire at the last moment, and bowling the ball from the side of the wicket where the batsman least expected to see me, I have often succeeded where other more skilful bowlers failed. Peculiar forms of action are also at times efficacious. I used at one time to be able to make the batsman think that I was about to deliver a slow left-handed "googly," and then suddenly sling in a swift right-handed "grub" while the wretched man's eye was still riveted upon my waving left arm. Again, I would sometimes follow a slow ball right up the pitch and dance about in front of the batsman as though with the intention of catching him out off the end of his bat; this, however, required considerable courage, and I gave it up in 1907, when an unaffrighted player drove the ball back at my head with such violence as to knock out six of my teeth, and then proceeded to run eight runs while I was still searching for missing molars among the plantains.

6.

For the fieldsman there is no particular code of manners. The great thing for him to remember is that the ball should be fielded and returned

to the wicket as quickly as possible. In order to save a boundary hit it is quite allowable to jump on the ball, but the practice of throwing one's bat at it in a vain attempt to arrest its flight has fallen into abeyance (if not desuetude).

Experience alone can teach a man who is stationed in the deep field how to run towards a high catch in such a fashion that although he will seem to be covering the ground very rapidly there is really no danger of his reaching the ball before it touches the ground. Should he miscalculate the distance and find it impossible, with decency, to prevent the ball falling into his hands (whence, of course, it will rebound upon the sward), he should point apologetically at the sun (which is probably behind his back) or pretend to nurse a wounded finger. It is as well to remember, too, that whenever a ball hits a batsman's pad, it is correct for *every* member of the fielding team to shout "How's that?" in as confident a tone as possible, and thus perhaps by sheer force of sound intimidate the umpire into saying "Out!"

Some people, I admit, consider this a practice that should be viewed with disfavour—that it should, in fact, be placed in that category of reprehensible acts which are so entirely out of place in village cricket that it will be only necessary to mention one or two of them here. When,

for example, a ball strikes one's bat and bounds into the wicket-keeper's hands, it is not considered good form to rub one's elbow as though suffering acute pain, nor will such action deceive anybody. Again, nothing is so criminal as for a wicket-keeper to pretend to throw the ball back to the bowler, and then, when the batsman, assuming that he is immune from attack, walks out into the pitch to inspect a worm-cast, to seize the opportunity of stumping him. Last of all, let me say that the bowler who draws a batsman's notice to an imaginary aeroplane in the sky, and then slings down a fast "yorker" that takes his wicket, is only one degree less base than the deep field who pretends he has lost the ball in the long grass and then, when the umpire and both batsman come to help him to find it, picks it suddenly from his pocket and tries to throw down the untenanted wicket. These things, I need hardly say, are not done on any of those village cricket grounds where Englishmen consort together to engage in the best of all games, and incidentally to acquire those sterling qualities that help to make England what she is.

Much of our national greatness, believe me, depends upon the lessons our fellow-countrymen have learnt from time immemorial upon many an obscure village green. Never was truer word

spoken than by the Iron Duke when he said that the Battle of Waterloo was won upon the playing-fields at Eton; the memory of this immortal epigram still sends a thrill through the breast of every true Englishman, unless, of course, he happens to have been privately educated in a clergyman's family at Wigan. Patience, chivalry, perseverance, all our national virtues are to a great extent the fruit of early training on the cricket ground. To it we owe the dogged determination, the fearless courage, which express themselves to-day in that square, resolute jaw that Britons have inherited from a long succession of cricketing ancestors; indeed, we may justly affirm that it is largely due to village cricket that, as the Psalmist so felicitously puts it, the chins of the fathers are visited upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation.

VII.

SPRING AND WINTER PASTIMES

1.

IN April, when public gardens are ablaze with hyacinths and tulips, when park attendants cunningly set out their verdant chairs to lure pennies from the pockets of any suburban denizens who may be willing to brave the terrors of a London Sunday, the heart of the average man is informed with the blithe and jocund spirit of the spring. His pulse beats quicker, his blood courses more rapidly through his veins, he makes the bathroom welkin resound with matutinal melody, and it is with a happy smile that he pops into some local druggery to inquire the price of spring tonics.

Alone among his fellow-men the true British sportsman bemoans his fate. With a melancholy mien he wanders aimlessly from club to club, perusing the illustrated papers without interest, and impatiently awaiting the advent of the next meal. He who is always supposed to have made a speciality of "going out and killing

something" now finds himself reduced to the painful necessity of killing time. His "hammerless ejectors" have long since been relegated to their leather case in the gunroom; his spurs are hanging disused on the harness-room wall. Not until August will he be able to fire another cartridge in the direction of some retreating wild-fowl, and many months must elapse before he can cry "Yoicks!" (or whatever the relevant exclamation may be) as "Pug"—which I understand to be one of the most convincing synonyms for Reynard—steals into the open from Garrowby Gorse and is soon heading for Three Bottom Spinney, and so by Bumpstead Wold to Market Overt and Compton Rickaby, leaving the "lady-pack" far behind, etc. . . .

2.

True it is that the spring offers a temporary respite to many of those wild animals to whose extermination the governing classes of these islands devote so much of their time and talents; but there are still forms of sport, less sanguinary though no less exciting than hunting or shooting, in which at this season a man may appropriately and pleasantly indulge.

I was reminded of perhaps the most satisfactory of these yesterday morning, when I

accidentally tore three leaves off one of the fifteen "Robert Burns Calenders" which well-meaning relatives had pressed into my reluctant hand at Christmas, and on the leaf thus exposed to view read the following:

"April 12. Feast of St. Thaddeus. *House-Hunting Begins.* 'There's nae luck about the hoose.' "

Thoughts of many a happy house-hunt of the past came rushing to my mind, bearing in their train a flood of fragrant memories. Once again I was an irresponsible young man with no intention of leasing (still less of purchasing) a "commodious West End family residence," and yet hastening from square to square, from avenue to terrace, armed with "orders to view" innumerable "mansions" in the most fashionable parts of the metropolis, buoyed up by the determination to probe the secrets that lie hid behind the chill façades of Park Lane and Grosvenor Square, to discover once and for all "How the Other Half Lives."

Since those days I have been occasionally compelled to engage more seriously in the pursuit of practical house-hunting, and though the pleasures of the chase are sensibly tempered by its disappointments, I can thoroughly recommend the sport to persons of leisure who find the time hang heavy on their hands.

Before setting forth to "view" houses, many people consider it advisable to call at the office of a house-agent, into whose sympathetic ear they may pour the tale of their needs. In this sinister apartment, where the gloom is accentuated by the gauze blinds that shroud the windows, the potential customer becomes afflicted with a curious form of mental aphasia. When questioned as to what part of London he prefers to live in, he can only reply vaguely that he doesn't much care, so long as it isn't too far off. "Ah," says the agent hopefully, as he turns the leaves of a formidable ledger, "I think I have the very thing. Brancaster Square. Eight bedrooms, billiard-room, plenteous offices, nominal ground-rent; only twenty minutes from the Marble Arch."

Why people should always express the situation of their domiciles in terms of the Marble Arch is one of those insoluble mysteries with which no man has yet successfully grappled. The attractions of the Marble Arch are of so elusive a character as to defy detection: it fills no long-felt want in a man's life. He cannot get his hair cut there, or buy a box of cigarettes or a couple of stalls at the Empire. Personally, I have no use for the Marble Arch; I should not care if I never saw it again. And yet whenever I inquire of some acquaintance where he is now

living: "Oh," he answers lightly, "only ten minutes from the Marble Arch!" (My poor friend, I am not deceived! I know well that those ten minutes must be spent threading the devious and dingy purlieus of the Edgware Road until at length some obscure terrace is reached on the north side of Paddington, far beyond the parish boundaries of any Marble Archdeacon!)

When the house-agent has gathered from your maunderings that all you require is a large residence with an exiguous rent, situated within hail of tubes, buses and theatres, facing south, with plenty of air and light, and close to the Park, he will make out a long list of vacant houses and press it into your hand, with a number of "orders to view." You then stagger out of his office in a bemused condition, spring into a taxi, and hasten to the first address mentioned on your list.

After ringing the bell you stand on the doorstep for a quarter of an hour, while a female of unalluring aspect peers up at you from the basement, and then retires to complete her toilet. By dint of perpetual ringing you may eventually lure this caretaker from her subterranean lair, when she will half open the door, gaze at you with marked disapproval and inquire suspiciously whether you possess an order of admittance.

Should you go house-hunting on your own

account, without the assistance of an agent, there is no need to be alarmed by the knowledge that you are not armed with the required pass. All you have to do is to murmur, "Bruggins, Mullett and Gripe!" or "Booker and Madge!" in the resolute voice of one whose intentions are strictly honourable, brush the caretaker aside, step into the hall and proceed with your domiciliary researches.

Once inside you are immediately struck by the taste in decoration displayed by those persons who are justly anxious to get rid of their houses. The umbrella-stand, cunningly fashioned from the off fore-leg of a defunct elephant, suggests that the master of the house is (like yourself) a sportsman, while the seven enormous oars, tied up with blue ribbon, which adorn the staircase wall, speak volumes for his prowess on the sliding-seat.

Your guide now throws open a glass door at the top of the front stairs and ushers you into "The Rockery."

The purpose fulfilled by this apartment presents the house-hunter with one of those problems which add fresh zest to his pursuit, as, mastering his emotion as best he may, he passes on to an inspection of the back drawing-room. Here the inevitable presence of dull windows of frosted glass lends to the place a

suggestion of dentist's "parlour," which still further depresses the visitor's spirits. The view from the windows is harmless enough, consisting of a few stable-roofs and a chimney or two, but the very existence of such a terrible thing as

a mews is apparently considered so indecent that it must be concealed by the presence of opaque panes of ground glass, casting a blight upon every room which they adorn.

"Would you care to see the basement?" the caretaker now wearily inquires, to which the

correct answer is "No!" It is then permissible to drop a shilling into the female's open palm, to hurry past the oars and the elephant's foot, and so out into the comparatively fresh air of the street.

No regular house-hunter can fail to be struck by the strange passion for christening one's residence by some fantastic name, which becomes more accentuated the farther one gets away from the centre of the metropolis. The owner of No. 100, Berkeley Square, would never dream of calling his house "Holly Villa" or "Kapoota"; you may walk up and down Park Lane for hours without finding a single "Mayhurst," a "Hill Crest," or a "Pondicherry Lodge"; and I have searched Eaton Place and Grosvenor Gardens in vain for any sign of an "Albion Cottage," a "Dunedin," or even an "Eversleigh." But beyond the four-mile radius every householder seems to compete with his neighbour in the invention of subtle and suggestive names to paint upon his doorposts. "Ferndale" jostles against "Belmont," and "Ocean View" gazes gloomily cross the noisy street to "Mon Repos" opposite. In this fashion does man's pathetic attempt to stamp his humble possessions with his own individuality express itself, and perhaps the sense of human happiness is increased by the possibility of thus investing

so ordinary an address as, say, 207, Roundabout Terrace, Crouch End, with all the meretricious glamour that attaches to such titles as "Holme Lacy," "Monkey Puzzle Lodge," "Sandringham," or even "Staggerholme."

There are, however, few things more depressing than the contemplation of row upon row of villas thus unsuitably adorned, and with a sigh of relief the house-hunter hastens to his humble residence in Chelsea or Bloomsbury, where the thought of the abodes inhabited by his fellows causes him to regard the old home with renewed tenderness and affection. The day's sport is ended, but the chase can be resumed on the morrow, and, indeed, indefinitely, until at last the quarry is run to ground and the sportsman turns his attention to other game.

3.

Among spring pastimes none perhaps is pleasanter than the old-fashioned sport which used to be known as "picnicking." Five-and-twenty years ago, when most of us were considerably younger than we are to-day, the simple delights connected with an *al fresco* meal ranked high in the list of rural attractions which country life presented to the imagination of the average man. That practice of consuming food in the

open air, which combined the maximum of personal discomfort with the minimum of sustenance, possessed a certain indefinable charm which many people found to be altogether irresistible. The picnic was the commonest and most popular form of entertainment provided for the delectation of country-house guests, and denizens of the Stately Homes of England would have looked upon a spring day as wasted if some portion of it had not been devoted to the pleasant task of eating jam-sandwiches on an ant-heap or in a bed of stinging-nettles. To be able to enjoy one's tea out of doors on some bleak, wind-swept hillside, or in the seclusion of a midge-infested glen, was regarded as one of the chief advantages of a country existence; and elderly persons of both sexes wrestled firmly but politely with one another for the privilege of carrying hampers full of cold food to the top of some local eminence which had been fixed upon as a convenient site for the proposed picnic.

The selection of a suitable spot was always fraught with enormous difficulty, being usually determined either by the necessity of obtaining a picturesque view of the surrounding landscape (without which the choicest cucumber-sandwiches and the richest seed-cake would appear insipid) or by the convenient proximity of that spring-water and combustible fuel which were

rightly considered of such paramount importance.

In days before "Thermos flasks" and "Etnas" had robbed picnicking of half its pristine glâmour, the boiling of a recalcitrant kettle over a fire composed of damp wood was the task to which the picnicker looked forward with anticipations of the profoundest joy. While members of the fairer sex opened the hampers and spread their contents upon the mossy sward, the men were despatched to scour the woods for dead branches and fill the kettle at some wayside stream.

As a result of their labours a bonfire of such ferocity was eventually kindled that it required no little skill and courage to balance the caldron above this blazing pyre. The act always involved the spilling of much valuable water, and the scorching of many a masculine cheek, and generally ended in the lid of the kettle being accidentally dropped within that vessel, whence it could not possibly be retrieved by human hands unwilling to experience the old-fashioned Ordeal by Boiling Water. Meanwhile some pessimist had discovered that the milk had turned sour, or been left behind at home, and the party was reduced to drinking a decoction of tea-leaves and wood-smoke, which it was a comparatively easy matter to distinguish from

the delicate beverage customarily served at the tea-tables of the well-to-do.

Picnickers, fortunately, come of a hardy stock, and can make light of troubles which would break the spirits of less resolute and dauntless men; with commendable self-restraint they remove intrusive pine-needles from the butter, extract the writhing bodies of moribund wasps from the jam, and smilingly hand each other the battered remains of a packet of bruised egg-sandwiches which some member of the party has been unconsciously making use of as a hassock. They provide the world with a striking lesson in stoical patience and fortitude when they attempt to find a solid resting-place for their brimming teacups among the roots of a beech-tree, or endure without a murmur the acute pain that comes from sitting down suddenly upon an unexpected fir-cone; and no man who watches them packing dirty plates into a basket that has somehow grown too small to contain them, can withhold a tribute of ungrudging admiration.

The growth of a sudden distaste for picnicking is a sure symptom of the approach of middle age; the consciousness of a strong disinclination to share one's tea with the minor lepidoptera of the forest is a landmark in a man's life which he cannot afford to disregard. And if this is

true of the individual, it is equally true of the nation, proof of the incipient senility of our native land being therefore within the reach of anybody who cares to take a census of modern picnickers.

To-day, indeed, the picnic as a rural pastime has fallen into disrepute, and seems unlikely to regain its ancient popularity. The fashion still prevails to a certain extent in the upper reaches of the Thames, where many worthy people derive an unholy pleasure from leaving broken bottles, banana-skins, and scraps of greasy newspaper on the grounds of those riparian landowners whose notice-boards threaten the trespasser with the utmost rigour of a legal prosecution; but elsewhere the number of picnickers has sensibly diminished.

Most men seem to prefer the joys of golf to the delights of consuming buttered scones on down or mountain-side, and women—though naturally born picnickers—are beginning to realize that the much-overrated bosom of Mother Earth supplies but a poor substitute for the chair and table which the gourmet regards as indispensable to comfort at meals. Roman Emperors and their courtiers seemed able to eat satisfactorily in a recumbent position, and but seldom suffered from “luncher’s cramp” (if we are to believe Ovidius Naso); but the ordinary

Briton too often finds the effort of balancing himself on one elbow while he drinks his tea calculated to induce a severe attack of those "pins and needles" to which even the most experienced picnicker is at times prone.

Under the baneful influence of that modern love of luxury of which we are all the victims, the practice of picking and nicking, which long survived the rigours of our English climate, is at last threatened with extinction. Even sportsmen who were once content to recline at midday under a hedge, with a hunk of bread in one hand and the wing of a cold partridge in the other, must nowadays repair for luncheon to some comfortable tent, or to the privacy of a keeper's cottage-parlour. There is every reason to suppose that in another twenty years the picnic will take its place beside the hansom-cab and the Greenwich fish-dinner, among the many "links with the past" that supply subjects for newspaper correspondence during the Silly Season.

4.

When the days begin to draw in and the light grows too dim to enable the sportsman to indulge in a game of golf later than four o'clock, members of the leisured classes would find the time hang heavy on their hands were it not for

those timely descriptions of different varieties of "Amusements for Dark Evenings" which our more enterprising daily newspapers are so fond of printing for the benefit of their readers.

As I sit hour after hour in my cheerless attic, composing those literary masterpieces which nobody has either the time or the courage to peruse, it is always a source of comfort to me to know that elsewhere more fortunate persons are being compelled to engage in those entertaining pastimes of which the halfpenny Press provides us with such thrilling accounts.

In many a drawing-room in South Kensington happy guests are being blindfolded and made to plunge reluctant hands into bags of flour or soot; the boudoir of many a mansion in Bayswater resounds with the delighted cries of middle-aged people who, with their hands tied behind them, are fishing with their teeth for apples floating in bowls of unfiltered water. And so the darkest evenings pass merrily by, and I console myself with the knowledge that the fatuity of nations is never wholly eclipsed.

Of all winter sports, however, it is quite safe to say that none can compare for racy charm with that which is popularly known as Christmas shopping.

Christmas shopping, like the composition of

a final will and testament, is one of those things which human beings are universally disposed to defer to the last possible moment. Like that visit to the dentist which we have so long intended to pay, and so long postponed, it is a duty which we put off semi-consciously from day to day, until suddenly the Feast of Gifts is at hand and we find ourselves wholly unprepared for its fitting celebration. Then follows that terrible scramble for presents, that seething turmoil of frenzied customers and harassed shop assistants, from which we issue, bruised but triumphant, with our hands full of gilt photograph frames, our pockets bulging with aluminium cigar-lighters, an anthology of amorous verse under each arm, and a copy of the Puce Fairy Book grasped firmly between our teeth.

Alone to those who appreciate the delights of American football does shopping of this strenuous order appeal with any degree of pleasure; only for the young and active purchaser can one crowded hour of such glorious strife be worth an age of more leisurely marketing.

“One must be poor,” says George Eliot, “to know the luxury of giving;” but one must be rich to be able to afford such a luxury, though it is always possible for the wealthiest, by constant practice, to become sufficiently poor to appreciate it. Christmas is *par excellence* the

one season of the year when munificence is not only fashionable but necessary. Generosity, which at other times occupies an inconspicuous position in men's thoughts—being often associated with “good nature” as one of the few redeeming virtues of the scapegrace and the spendthrift—becomes common enough in December, when the most parsimonious are impelled to unbutton their purses, and the most miserly give way to seasonable bouts of liberality. The habit does not long obtain, and with some justice may the cynic ridicule that prevailing epidemic of generosity which would seem to be only infectious for a brief winter month, and to which men are apparently immune during the remainder of the year.

It is, indeed, the modern fashion to sneer at Christmas presents, to complain of the trouble attached to their purchase, of the burden entailed in their receipt and acknowledgment. But the habit thus criticized is one which we should be loath to forego; the attitude of mind that it engenders is essentially a wholesome one, the ordeal undergone by giver and recipient is not altogether intolerable. Christmas has a beneficial effect in more ways than one. It inspires a spirit of unselfishness in the heart of man, and it also stimulates the inventive genius of the whole human race. For, while the choice

of suitable offerings gives free play to the imagination of a million purchasers, thousands of manufacturers vie with one another in the production of novelties that shall appeal to the jaded taste of the most fastidious buyer.

The utility of a gift is a matter of very secondary consideration; what is primarily needed is something that shall appear expensive and can never be justly accused of satisfying any earthly purpose or supplying any possible long-felt want. The shop-keepers of the West End have long proved themselves adepts at providing articles which fulfil these essential conditions; they have raised the cult of the futile to the level of a fine art.

The choice of goods with which their shelves are amply furnished is suited to the needs of all classes of customers. The wealthy may purchase jewelled umbrella-handles or enamelled bell-pushes which the recipients reverently display in drawing-room show-cases, and which need never be desecrated by the addition of an umbrella or the connection of an electric wire. For persons of more moderate means there are miniature electric torches for which no one has ever yet found a use, patent cigar-lighters that seldom light (save on rare and painful occasions in the trousers-pocket), nocturnal clocks, which, when a button is pressed by the insomniac,

reflect the time upon the ceiling—an invaluable possession for persons who happen to be paralyzed or who make a point of sleeping on their backs.

Those of us who cannot afford such luxuries as these may always fall back upon boxes of picturesque purple sealing-wax, leather pocket-books too bulky for any ordinary pocket, walking-sticks with pencils hidden in the handle—a source of infinite delight to all who wish to combine a country walk with the conduct of their business correspondence—and silver pencils containing leads of three different colours, so useful for writing red letters (or blue books), or for inscribing “Nonsense!” indelibly upon the margins of library volumes. While for the mean

and needy there are always plated cigarette cases, warranted not to hold more than four cigarettes; calendars that provide one with an apt daily quotation from the poets; and almanacs which supply information upon such entrancing subjects as the close time for hares, the birthday of the Venerable Bede, of the late Prince Consort and Fred Archer, and the date upon which it becomes lawful to shoot a pheasant.

Pocket diaries, indeed, can be things of beauty and joys for ever. There is nothing more agreeable for the business man than to turn to his diary for January 10 and learn that upon this particular date "Snipe-shooting Ends" or "Pike-sniggling Begins." It fills him with a pleasant sense of mystery and awe to read that he is to-day unconsciously celebrating the "Feast of St. Botolph the Sublime." With a resigned look he relinquishes any hope he may have cherished of shooting a rocketing snipe or two in Eaton Square on his way to the City, puts together his trout-rod, pockets a dozen worms, and turns his footsteps in the direction of that fountain in Piccadilly where the pike rise so freely at this season. Or, if the thought of St. Botolph and his sublimity are uppermost in his mind, he may discard his fishing-rod in favour of the more appropriate Prayer-Book, which he borrows from his wife. When, however, the

pocket diaries take the form of *waistcoat*-pocket diaries, half an inch square, the difficulties of consulting are greatly enhanced by the fact that few men have taken the trouble to supply themselves with the portable microscopes necessary to their perusal.

I once attempted to use a tiny engagement-book of this kind, only to discover the impossibility of making legible notes upon the exiguous space provided for this purpose. No one, indeed, but some expert in micrography (or microcalligraphy, as modern philologists call it)—one of those meticulous scriveners who waste half a lifetime transcribing the Nicene Creed on the face of a postage stamp—could hope to enter a dinner engagement upon its miniature pages.

5.

The problem of how to select gifts suitable for our nearest and dearest without incurring undue expense is a cause of annual perplexity. We have learnt by experience that as far as children are concerned the toy that costs eighteenpence will often provide quite as much pleasure as its more intricate and elaborate fellow that is priced at half-a-guinea. But it requires courage of no mean order to present one's favourite godchild with a sixpenny rag-

doll, when one is conscious that the little darling's parents would have preferred a miniature electric railway which might have helped them to while away many a long winter's evening.

During the process of wracking one's brains for original ideas on the subject of juvenile gifts, one is occasionally apt to forget that the young have an inconvenient habit of growing up with a rapidity that may cause one's offerings to look exceptionally silly and unsuitable. I know nothing more mortifying than to visit a small nephew and niece, armed with a rattle and a woolly rabbit, and to find the boy sitting in an Eton jacket reading "Sonnets from the Portuguese," while his sister is playing Handel's "Largo" with supreme self-confidence on the violin. On the other hand, it is almost as easy to err in the opposite direction, and there is something infinitely pathetic about the forced, wan smile of thanks with which a fond mother accepts the copy of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" which you have brought for her six-months-old infant.

One of the many obstacles that a man has to contend with at this season of the year is the terrible temptation to keep for his own private use the Christmas presents that he has bought to give to other people. A great friend of mine once confessed to me with tears of shame that

his library was almost entirely composed of books which he had purchased at various times as gifts for his relations, but had been unable to part with when the crucial moment arrived.

I myself remember somewhat guiltily appropriating a mechanical model of the Forth Bridge which I had bought for a little godson, but which appealed so irresistibly to my natural love of architectonics that I felt impelled to secrete it in my own stocking on Christmas Eve. In the footwear of my little friend I substituted a most interesting volume on "Block Basalts and Other Ignatheatous Phenomena," which I had intended to present to a scientific acquaintance. For the latter I purchased a lovely Sheffield inkstand at an old curiosity shop in Baker Street, but when it came home I realized at once that my learned friend would never appreciate its full beauty, and so I sent him instead a pocket almanac which I had that morning received from my wine merchant. Thus everybody was satisfied, and the Sheffield inkstand is still the chief feature of my writing-table.

For those of us who are too lazy to embark upon the sport of choosing presents for our friends, it is always possible to fall back upon the Christmas card—that most depressing of all Yule-tide productions, which has suffered much

of late from the neglect of the aristocracy, but is still popular in the palaces of Kings, in provincial households, and in the steward's room.

The comic card of greeting is fortunately almost extinct. Our artists no longer depict butcher-boys making butter slides for the policeman, dogs running away with sausages, or elderly ladies falling headlong into snowdrifts—subjects whose humour has long lost its pristine freshness—though we still occasionally come across pictures of cats in aeroplanes and spinsters standing beneath the mistletoe passionately waiting for someone to take liberties with them. As a rule, indeed, we find nothing but the most serious subjects portrayed upon the modern Christmas card: King Arthur is starting forth in quest of the Grail; King Alfred is suffering from that attack of absent-mindedness which proved him to be an indifferent stillroom-maid; King Charles is busy roosting in his favourite oak, and so forth. While, for persons who are still sentimentally inclined, there are always beautiful snow-scenes, with a happy suggestion of holly and Yule-logs in the foreground, and an angel or two in the offing, inscribed with Tennyson's famous lines:

“ Ring out the old, ring in the new !
Ring, happy bells, across the snow !”

which possess all the most admirable qualities of poetry, save that of rhyming.

Whether the gifts that we shower upon our friends at Christmas take the form of valuable trinkets or cheap greeting-cards, the fact remains that both the presentation and the receipt of these seasonable objects carry with them a profound sense of depression which casts a shadow over the lives of many. As we look round at our collection of pen-wipers, string-boxes, paper-weights and paper-cutters, and recall the many equally futile gifts that we have been inspired to lavish upon our acquaintance, we may often feel inclined to quote the prayer of the little child who besought Providence ("Harrods be thy name") to "forgive us our Christmasses, as we forgive them that Christmas against us."

VIII.

THE BULBARIUM

LAST Monday evening I dropped in upon my cousin George Biffin at his mother's house in Westminster, on my way home from the City. I found him sitting in his shirt-sleeves in that small back room which for some occult reason he refers to alternately as "My Study" or "The Library."

"Hooray!" he shouted, rising to greet me as I entered. "You're the very man I'm looking for. You're just in time to help with my Bulbarium!"

"Your what?" I inquired, with pardonable curiosity.

"Reginald, I'm ashamed of you! Your classical education has been sadly neglected. Bulbarium," he explained, "is a phrase of obscure Latin origin, derived from the two words *bulbus*, a bulb, and *arium*, an area or place, signifying a place for bulbs, a bulbary."

"I've heard of a *bilberry*——" I began.

"These," he continued, cutting short my ob-

jection, as he pointed to two large, round-shouldered sacks leaning wearily against the coal-scuttle, "these are the supplies of moss-fibre and crushed oyster-shell. Here are the bulbs"—he indicated a number of paper bags with white labels, carefully arranged upon the writing-table—"and if you'll follow me down

to the telephone-room I'll show you about forty vases, bowls, pots, and soup-tureens, which I have prepared for their reception."

I have always entertained a morbid dislike of telephone-rooms, but George was already leading the way thither and I could not refuse to accompany him. On the floor of that chill and cheerless apartment stood a large bath con-

taining a tin water-can, while all around was ranged row upon row of empty jars of every shape and size.

"Are you going to have a bath?" I innocently inquired, observing these familiar preparations.

"No, no," he answered testily; "that's what we mix the compost in."

"Mix the what?"

"Compost; the technical term for moss- or cocoanut-fibre."

"Oh, I see. But why not call it moss- or cocoanut-fibre?"

George ignored my question. "I've borrowed mother's hip-bath," he said. "I don't believe she wants it a bit—hips have gone completely out of fashion this year—and it's the very thing for the job. By the way," he added, "I wish you'd be an angel——"

"No," I interrupted firmly, "I utterly decline to be an angel. From earliest childhood experience has taught me that the angelic function invariably entails running upstairs and fetching something, and I'm much too old to run anywhere."

"Oh, very well," he sighed resignedly; "I suppose I must go myself. Don't touch anything till I come back," he enjoined as he left the room.

George was only away about three minutes

(during which I successfully resisted the temptation to touch his mother's hip-bath), and returned laden with the two sacks that I had already noticed in the study.

"I've brought a book of the rules, too," he remarked, "so that we shan't do anything silly."

"Speak for yourself," I said; "personally——"

"Look out!" My sentence was never completed. "Stand clear of the gates!" he shouted, as with a vigorous heave he emptied the contents of the sacks into the bath.

For a few moments the atmosphere was filled with thick yellow dust; my eyes and lungs were choked with grit, and I could only splutter painfully in my attempts to recover breath.

"Sneeze into the bath!" said George, who hated waste of any kind; "not on the linoleum! Now then, look alive," he added peremptorily. "We must do this thing properly. You roll up your sleeves and churn the fibre and the shell together, while I keep the mixture damp with water from the can."

I tried in vain to point out that this was a grossly unfair division of labour; my cousin was adamant, and with a heavy heart I set to work.

"I say, just look at my nails!" I exclaimed

a few moments later, when I had claimed and been granted a short period of repose.

“That’s all right,” said George carelessly. “I’ll lend you my nail-brush before you go.”

“Nail-brush? A steam-plough wouldn’t make any impression on my hands after this!”

I could not help recalling the beautiful old poem beginning:

“There is a garden in her face,
Where roses and white lilies grow,”

and wondering whether any modern bard might possibly be inspired to similar flights of fancy by the garden in my nails; but I knew it would be useless to try and explain such sentimental thoughts to George.

He was studying a small pink pamphlet he had produced from his pocket, and his brow was furrowed with care.

“You go on mixing,” he ordered, “while I put charcoal in the bowls.”

“What for?” I asked.

“‘To absorb impurities and keep the compost sweet,’ that’s what it says here.” He pointed to the book of regulations.

“Oh!”

“I hope you’re not letting me put in too much water. It says here that about four quarts to the half-bushel is enough.”

“ My dear George,” I expostulated, “ I may know how much a *quart* is——”

“ If *you* don’t nobody can !” he remarked, with meaning.

“ But how on earth am I to tell what half a *bushel* is like ?”

“ They don’t seem to have taught you anything at all at Eton,” he complained. “ Surely you remember your table of avoirdupois ? Two pecks one gallon—er—two gallons one peck——”

“ But what in heaven’s name is a peck ?”

“ Wait a minute; it ’ll come back to me directly. Two pecks one bushel; two bushels one rod, pole, or perch; two rods, poles, or perches, one——”

At that moment a large lump of soaking fibre that I was engaged in kneading eluded my grasp and flew into my left eye, causing me to utter a somewhat unparliamentary expression.

“ Reginald, I’m shocked !” said George.

“ *Ell !*” I repeated; “ two perches one ell; two ells one rood——”

“ Extremely rood,” my cousin agreed.

“ Never mind,” I continued. “ The compost is ready now. Bring up the bowls and let’s fill them.”

George held each jar in turn while I packed it with sodden fibre, until at last the supply of

receptacles was exhausted and the bath was nearly empty.

"There," I said, with a sigh of relief; "that's all over!"

"All over the linoleum," muttered George. "Look what a mess you've made!"

"No matter," I replied cheerfully. "You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs. What does the well-known hymn say?"

"We plant the bulbs and scatter
The fibre on the floor,
But——"

"That 'll do," George grunted. "The question now is, where are we to put the bowls? It says here"—he turned once more to the pamphlet—" 'The jars or vases should be kept in a dark but airy cellar. To ensure success they must have constant care, like a mother gives her young children.' "

"That's all very well, George. I know I'm old-fashioned and all that, but I must insist that very few mothers dampen their young children, and then put them in a dark and airy cellar."

"I believe they'd do best under mother's bed," said George, disregarding my criticism.

"But would that be healthy or hygienic?"

"For mother, do you mean, or the bulbs?"

"They're ticklish things," he added, after a moment's thought. "It says here that they

must on no account be kept too wet, but that if they become dry, even for half an hour——”

“Like me,” I suggested. “Mixing fibre’s a thirsty occupation.”

“If they get dry for even half an hour,” he repeated, “they go blind.”

“That’s just what I meant.”

“Yes,” he continued, “mother’s bed’s the very place. She’ll never know.”

“Poor mother!” I could not help remarking. “Butchered to make a Roman Hyacinth!” But the allusion was wasted upon my cousin.

With a great deal of effort we carried the bowls upstairs, one by one, and deposited them beneath the maternal couch. When at last our labours were at an end we descended to the library, thankful that our task was safely accomplished.

As we entered the room George gave a sudden start, and I saw his gaze riveted upon the paper bags that strewed the writing-table.

“Good Lord!” he gasped.

“What is it?”

“We’ve forgotten the bulbs!” said George.

IX.

RAGGING

EVERY sincere and conscientious attempt to increase the gaiety of nations must merit the respect that all genuine philanthropic effort evokes. The man who can make two smiles grow where one grew before is rightly entitled to be regarded as a public benefactor, and to label my cousin George Biffin a drone, simply because he is under no necessity to work for a living, would be as unjust as it is obviously discourteous.

It may, indeed, be safely asserted that in the course of a brief and apparently otiose existence Cousin George has done more than most of his contemporaries to augment the sum of human happiness. As the result of his persistent labours, light and laughter have invaded many of the earth's darkest and most desolate places, while innumerable lost and broken souls have found fresh comfort and courage in the contemplation of his facetious activities.

It is now some ten years since George was

inspired with the brilliant notion of forming what he called a Society for the Promotion of Human Gaiety, and it would be no idle boast to claim that during the whole of this happy decade the Society has fully earned the title so felicitously conferred upon it by my cousin at its inception.

Like all successful institutions, the S.P.H.G. (to give it the popular name) is controlled by a small and select committee, of which I am the Managing Secretary, my cousin is the Vice-President, while to his aged mother have been entrusted the duties of Honorary Treasurer. The fact that Mrs. Biffin is partially blind and completely bedridden detracts but little from her capacity to fulfil the delicate financial functions associated with her office, since, although she is not too blind to sign cheques, she is sufficiently bedridden to be unable to spring across to the bank and stop their payment; her physical disabilities therefore qualify her in a peculiar degree for the important post to which she is annually and unanimously re-elected.

It is not necessary to explain that the by-laws and regulations of the Society are all framed with one object—namely, to stimulate healthy human laughter by any innocent means that may occur to individual tastes. The vulgar practical joke is actively discouraged; the cruel

hoax is tabooed; and a member who balances a sponge above his hostess's bedroom door, lines an uncle's hat with mustard, or gratuitously rings a fire-alarm, is usually requested to resign. No wonder, then, that the roll of membership increases every week, and that almost every practical joke of any importance successfully perpetrated during the last few years has been planned at the headquarters and carried out under the auspices of the S.P.H.G.

George and I have always regarded publicity as an essential concomitant of success, and in the crowded street we find the most suitable arena for the display of those mirth-provoking qualities which it is ever our ambition to cultivate and develop. It has long been our custom to devote one whole day of every week to the claims of the Society, and on Monday morning last, when my cousin called for me at my club, and we set off together down Pall Mall, I was in the proper frame of mind to carry out the harmless project that we had already carefully discussed.

Selecting the first innocent stranger whom we observed approaching in the distance, we fixed him with a radiant smile which increased in cordiality as the space that separated us diminished. We could see our victim vainly racking his brains to try and remember who on earth

the strange couple could be who seemed to know him so well, whom he did not recollect ever having previously laid eyes on. He must finally have come to the conclusion that he had probably made our acquaintance on board ship, or in some Swiss hotel, and that his memory had played him false; for by the time he was within ten yards of us he had evidently decided to do what was apparently expected of him, and his face lit up with a polite but somewhat nervous grin of recognition.

This was, of course, the signal for George and me to assume a look of frigid hostility, as, glaring ferociously at him, as though indignant at his impertinence, we passed him coldly by.

It was pathetic to watch our victim's genial smile freeze upon his lips; and when he looked round and saw us smiling at someone farther up the street, he seemed inclined to kick himself with annoyance.

George and I repeated this process with different strangers until we reached Trafalgar Square, buoyed up the while with the consciousness that we were supplying our various victims with stories to tell to their wives when they reached home, and were thus infusing gaiety and colour into many an otherwise drab and dreary household.

A strong gale was blowing round the base of

Nelson's Column, and as we stationed ourselves at the breeziest corner of the plinth my cousin and I foresaw that we should not have long to wait before carrying out the second part of our morning's programme.

In less than ten minutes a particularly violent gust of wind swept down the square, and, as we had hoped, lifted the hat from an old gentleman's head and bore it gracefully away towards Charing Cross. Before its owner had time to start in pursuit, I was at his elbow and had placed a delaying hand upon his shoulder.

"What is it?" he inquired pettishly, while the truant hat careered madly across the path of approaching omnibuses.

"Excuse me," I remarked politely, "but I thought I ought to tell you; your hat has blown off!"

With a muttered oath the old gentleman shook me off, and was once more about to dart away in search of his headgear when George stopped him.

"What do you want?" roared our victim, by this time completely upset.

"I beg your pardon," said George in his suavest tones. "I trust you will forgive me for mentioning it; but I felt you would like to be told. The fact is, sir, your—your hat has blown off!"

At this moment a gallant policeman, risking

his life in a worthy cause, succeeded in disentangling the elusive topper from the mudguard of a National Steam Car, and bore it towards us in a much battered, but not irreparable, condition.

If you could have seen the tears of joy that filled the eyes of hardened bus-conductors, the

smiles that illumined the faces of weary bank-clerks on their way to work, as they listened to our old gentleman's views on the folly of well-meaning officiousness, you would have realized that our efforts had not been vain, and that many a human being that day had good cause to bless our public-spirited behaviour.

As founders of the Society for the Promotion of Human Gaiety my cousin George Biffin and

I were perpetually seeking fresh fields for the exercise of our talents. It was not always easy to devise entirely new schemes for the successful stimulation of healthy human laughter, but George was no great stickler for originality, and would unblushingly adopt methods invented by other members of the Society that had been reported favourably upon when employed by their creators. Thus, on one occasion he disguised himself as an honest British artisan, and, armed with pick and shovel, excavated so vast a portion of the wood pavement outside the Ritz Hotel that the whole traffic of Piccadilly was held up for several hours at the very height of the London season; and it was his frequent habit to ring the bells of houses in Berkeley Square and solicit the loan of a little piece of groundsel for an ailing bird that existed only in his imagination.

But when he undertook to carry sunshine into the gloomy portals of our national post office, George Biffin showed himself to be a more than usually hardened and confirmed plagiarist. One of London's leading actor-managers, for many years a respected member of our S.P.H.G., had already covered the ground here very thoroughly, but this notorious fact did not deter my cousin from an attempt to emulate the master's achievements.

"Come and help me buy a stamp," said George one afternoon, as we were strolling together along the crowded streets, in a vain endeavour to kill time.

Unsuspectingly I allowed myself to be led into the nearest post office, where a number of rather untidy young ladies were sitting behind a long grill, engaged in their various avocations.

"Excuse me, miss," said George politely, lifting his hat to a hard-featured young person whose particular section of the railing was labelled "Inquiries," "but can you oblige me with a stamp?"

"Other end of the counter for stamps!" curtly replied the damsel, as she turned her back upon us and proceeded to arrange her hair in a small pocket mirror.

"I beg your pardon, I'm sure," remarked my cousin, as we moved away in the direction indicated.

"Forgive my interrupting your labours," he courteously exclaimed, a moment later, to the lady in charge of the stamp department, who was absorbed in the perusal of what was probably a love-letter. "I don't inquire out of mere curiosity, but because it's rather important that I should know. Have you got any stamps in this post office?"

"What kind of stamps do you want?" asked

the clerk, as she hurriedly thrust the letter away in the bosom of her dress.

George pondered a moment. "What kind have you got?" he inquired suavely. "I rather thought of having one of those little square ones with a portrait of His Majesty"—here my cousin reverently raised his hat—"on one side, and some nice gum on the other; but I'm not particular."

The assistant drew a large portfolio of stamps from a drawer in the counter, and laid it open before us.

"Penny, halfpenny, twopence-halfpenny, six-penny," she explained briefly, pointing to the different varieties offered to our notice.

"Look, Reginald!" My cousin's voice was vibrant with enthusiasm. "Look at those lovely green ones! I think I ought to have one of those, don't you? Halfpenny, are they? Well, I can run to that, I dare say. Shall we each have one, Reginald, or do you feel more drawn towards the mauve kind?"

"I'm not sure," I answered. "The mauve ones would certainly go better with my yellow boots; but still, they're more expensive——"

"The great thing," said George, "is not to settle in a hurry. I've always heard that when one has actually bought a stamp the post office refuses to take it back. It's one of their rules, I believe. Tiresome, but there it is!"

He turned to the young lady behind the counter.

"Will you show me those delicious green ones again?" he begged. "I don't think I should ever weary of looking at them. There's something so fresh, so virginal about them. They suggest Spring, and gooseberry tart, and *crème de menthe*, and all those delightful things, and I don't suppose we really need be afraid of arsenical poisoning, need we?"

"How many will you require?" asked the maiden with some natural petulance, as she once more exposed the sheet of halfpenny stamps to our admiring gaze.

"Only one," George replied, "only one; but it must be a particularly good one. You see," he added, "I'm not buying it for myself, but for a friend who lives in the country, and he's such a keen philatelist that I shouldn't like to disappoint him. Last time I sent him a postcard he was very much annoyed because I'd forgotten to send a stamp with it. I believe he had to pay quite a lot of money before the postman would surrender it."

By this time a long queue of customers had formed behind us, and the lady clerk's patience was becoming exhausted.

"Do you desire a halfpenny stamp, sir, or not?" she asked angrily.

“Yes,” said George, “I do. I desire it passionately; I don’t feel I can survive another moment without it.” He carefully inspected the large supply before him, anxiously examining each specimen with the air of a connoisseur.

“I think I’ll have *that* one,” he remarked at last, pointing with a quivering forefinger to a stamp in the very centre of the sheet.

With an indignant snort the assistant tore a stamp from the outer edge of the sheet and thrust it through the railing, slamming George’s halfpenny into the till with every symptom of annoyance.

My cousin slowly produced a postcard from his pocket, affixed his new purchase to one corner of it, and moved along the counter until he found himself once more face to face with “Inquiries.”

“Forgive my bothering you again,” he said to the now familiar clerk who presided over that part of the desk, “but could you tell me one thing? If I put this postcard into a pillar-box this afternoon, will it reach Birmingham to-morrow morning?”

The young woman was evidently ruffled by George’s manner, and suspected him of trying to make fun of her.

“Of course it will,” she replied, with a scornful laugh. “What a ridiculous question!”

“Not quite so ridiculous as it seems,” said George. “You see,” he explained, “the post-card happens to be addressed to Manchester!”

Raising our hats to the various inmates of the post office, George and I left the building, much exhilarated by the result of our afternoon’s work.

X.

SUNDAY BRIDGE

1.

IN those old-fashioned homes where the traditions of our puritanical forefathers survive, and the Sabbath is still rigidly and reverently observed, the enjoyment of all purely secular forms of entertainment is severely discountenanced, if not actually forbidden, on Sundays. Where such antiquated notions prevail the problem of how to spend the evening profitably, without shocking the susceptibilities of the weaker brethren, is one that constantly demands a satisfactory solution.

During dinner on Sunday evening the conversation has been appropriately centred upon ecclesiastical matters; the new curate's peculiar rendering of the proper psalms for this morning's service, as though he were giving an imitation of a dyspeptic goat calling to his mate, has provided a stimulating subject of discussion for those members of the house-party who attended matins. A kindly host, becoming pleasantly

reminiscent with his second glass of port, has narrated his personal experience of the various senile and incompetent clergy whom he has appointed to livings from which it has subsequently proved impossible to remove them. The shortcomings of the local choir, and the particularly blatant bleating of the village blacksmith have been duly criticized. The organist's original attempt to enliven the Litany by the introduction of a spirited Gregorian cake-walk accompaniment, played exclusively on the black notes, has evoked unfavourable comment. The meal, indeed, has passed merrily enough, and with the advent of coffee and cigarettes the sterner sex has settled down to a comparison of golf handicaps and nervous ailments with a zest that age cannot wither nor custom stale.

After dinner, however, when the guests are once more assembled in the drawing-room, there frequently follows a period of intolerable tedium; the habitual card-players of the party think bitterly of the games of chance they are not permitted to indulge in, while the confirmed gamblers are apt to respond somewhat curtly to their hostess's tactful suggestion that they shall sing hymns or play "Musical Chairs."

On such occasions a warm welcome awaits the inventor of any game that shall combine the forbidden charms of Bridge with the attrac-

tions of that theological variety of dumb-crambo in which the players are sent out of the room and expected on their return to express pantomimically a number of words that rhyme with Elijah, Abimelech, or Og the King of Bashan.

It is therefore no exaggeration to claim for my uncle Lord Porpentine that humanity owes him a heavy debt of gratitude for having devised and popularized the pastime of "Sunday Bridge," which it is my purpose to describe as briefly as possible in these pages.

2.

My uncle, as everybody knows, is a strict Sabbatarian, and at the same time so enthusiastic a card-player that "High Church and High Play" might well be the family motto of the Porpentines. For the last forty years he has been an honoured member of the Portman Club, where what is known as the "Porpentine Declaration"—*i.e.*, declaring "No Trumps" with a guarded queen and two tens, and finding four aces in your partner's hand—has earned for him an enviable notoriety. At Mumsey Grove, his country-seat in Dorset, he attends evensong at the village church with admirable regularity, and reads the lessons in a clear, ringing voice which can easily be heard above the

steady sound of oral suction that proceeds from the choir, where the fragrant fumes of peppermint and bull's-eyes rise like incense to the corrugated iron dome. And it was at Mumsey Grove, one memorable Sunday evening, as he sat wearily turning over the pages of a number of old photograph-albums, that Lord Porpentine

was inspired to conceive and sketch out the first rough draft of that game which he afterwards so successfully developed and amplified under the now familiar name of "Sunday Bridge."

For this absorbing pastime no cards are required, their place being taken by those family photographs of which a sufficient number can always be procured in any large country man-

sion. It was ever Lord Porpentine's practice on Sunday mornings to make a tour of the house, collecting photographs of all sizes and varieties from old-fashioned albums or from the frames in which they languished in obscurity on wall and mantelpiece during the other six days of the week. These photographs he divided into packs of fifty-two, the number of packs depending upon the number of players available. In the evening after dinner Lord Porpentine's guests were invited to select their partners for "Sunday Bridge," and sat down in parties of four at the various small tables provided for the purpose. Each table was supplied with a pack of fifty-two photographs, carefully shuffled, and the game was then conducted very much on the lines of ordinary Bridge.

3.

RULES OF "SUNDAY BRIDGE."

1. *The Deal*.—All four players cut for partners. Those who cut the two highest (that is to say, the two *ugliest*) photographs play together. The deal falls to the player who has turned up the lowest (or *least repulsive*) portrait, he and his partner having the choice of seats, and usually choosing the arm-chairs. The dealer, after dealing out all the photographs, beginning with the player on his left, looks at

his hand with an expression of delight or dismay (as the case may be), and proceeds with what is called the "Declaration of Frumps."

2. *The Declaration of Frumps*.—In "Sunday Bridge" the pack is divided into five suits, and the declarations can be classified under the following headings, each of which possesses a different value:

	Value per Trick.
<i>Babes</i> (i.e., photographs of infants under the age of fifteen)	2
<i>Cubs</i> (photographs of male persons over fifteen)	4
<i>Damsels</i> (photographs of females over fifteen)	6
<i>Herds</i> (photographic groups of two or more persons)	8
<i>Royals</i> (photographs which represent or include members of the Royal Family) ..	9

It is also permissible for a player to declare *No Frumps* when he holds a good all-round hand of sufficiently hideous photographs. In this case each trick is worth twelve.

3. *Honours*.—In the *Babe* suit any photograph of an infant in *long clothes* or in *no clothes at all* counts as an honour. In *Cubs*, *Damsels*, *Herds*, and *Royals*, all photographs of persons in *uniform*, *evening dress*, or *fancy costume*, count as honours. In *No Frumps* all portraits of persons over eighty years of age, or groups of more than eighty individuals, are known as "Aces" and count as honours above the line.

4. *Mode of Scoring*.—The scoring is similar to that in vogue at Bridge, it being always borne in mind that the *ugliest* card invariably takes the trick. In the case of the *Herd* (or group) suit, where it may sometimes be difficult to determine which of two groups is the more hideous, the question must be settled by *adding together the total ages* of the component members of each photograph, and deciding in favour of the more senile group.

5. *The Joker*.—A spice of excitement and a dash of devilry may be added to the game by the introduction of a “Joker.” For this purpose it is generally customary to assume that any photograph that represents or includes a *dog* or the *mother of the dealer* is to be considered a “Joker.”

4.

It is ever a tiresome performance to try to explain any card game on paper with that amount of lucidity which is necessary if one wishes to be understood by readers of average intelligence. I propose therefore to describe a typical rubber of “Sunday Bridge” in which I once took part at Mumsey Grove, in the hope that I may thus perhaps be able to convey some sort of idea of the pastime of which I am so feebly endeavouring to treat. My partner on

this occasion was Miss Emily Wicklow, Lady Porpentine's first cousin, to whom I was happily engaged to be married; and we had for opponents Lord Porpentine and Colonel Blood-Busterfield, both old and experienced players.

We cut for deal, and Miss Wicklow turned up a low *Babe* (a faded daguerreotype of Lord Porpentine on a rocking-horse at the age of three) and thus secured the deal. She gave herself a poor hand, however, and was forced to leave the declaration to me. I at once made *Herds*, holding five of this suit with two honours, being well provided with *Cubs* and having but a singleton *Babe*. Our opponents expressed themselves "Content," and the game commenced.

Colonel Blood-Busterfield began by leading a small *Damsel* (an early photograph of Lady Porpentine, taken after her first Presentation at the Court of Queen Victoria); I laid my hand on the table, and my partner capped the Colonel's card with a slightly uglier portrait of one of Lord Porpentine's aunts. Our host then played a singularly unalluring *carte-de-visite* of his maternal grandmother, but Miss Wicklow was able to take the trick with a revolting cabinet photograph of Mrs. Potthoffstein (a friend of the family) as Rosalind in an amateur performance of "As You Like It" (when, as a matter of fact, I believe nobody did like it at all).

So far the game had proceeded very satisfactorily for us, and, thanks to my deficiency in *Babes*, my partner contrived to establish a double-ruff, after she had got rid of her single *Herd*, and we won four tricks without much difficulty.

In the second game we were not quite so successful. Colonel Blood-Busterfield made *Damsels*; I led a very unprepossessing group of Oxford undergraduates, taken in 1856, before Lord Porpentine had been sent down from Balliol; Dummy's hand produced a still less agreeable photograph of the house-party at Mumsey on the occasion of our host's silver wedding; my partner put on a card representing the battalion of Territorials of which Lord Porpentine was Honorary Colonel; and everything promised well for us until Colonel Blood-Busterfield cunningly played a large flashlight photograph of the members of the Gourmand Club, taken at the banquet held last year to celebrate the tercentenary of the discovery of caviare.

The next ten minutes were spent arguing over this trick. I justly pointed out that the Territorial battalion, besides being almost inconceivably hideous, was nearly, if not quite, as numerous as the club group. The Colonel and Lord Porpentine, however, insisted that the

Gourmands were more physically repulsive than the Territorials, and we finally were compelled to decide the question (in accordance with Rule IV.) by adding up the ages of the individuals in both photographs. It was then found that the dinner group represented some 30,000 years, and beat the soldiers by about five centuries. Our opponents eventually won five tricks in *Damsels*, totalling thirty, which gave them the game.

5.

It was now my turn to deal, and after glancing through my hand I unhesitatingly declared *No Frumps*. This I could well afford to do, as I had three aces (a portrait of the first Lord Porpentine at the age of ninety-eight, on the Woolsack; a reproduction of Mr. Sargent's "Methuselah" from the Boston Public Library fresco; and a group of Crimean Veterans photographed in their customary workhouse garb). I also had a long suit in *Babes*, with three Honours (all quite nude), and a guarded Queen of *Damsels* (Lady Porpentine's sister, a singularly plain woman who devoted her life to good works and was known to the suburban poor as the Terror of Tooting: the photograph showed her in convict's dress on her release from prison two days after she had been sentenced to five

years' penal servitude for wrecking a train in the cause of Woman's Suffrage).

Lord Porpentine opened the new game by leading a small *Babe*; I covered this with a Biblical picture-postcard of the Infant Samuel, from Dummy's hand; Colonel Blood-Busterfield was short in this suit and had to throw away a *Cub*; and with an exclamation of triumph I played a peculiarly atrocious kodak of a nude infant lying on a horse-hair rug sucking its toes with an expression of ineffable fatuity.

"*That's* ugly enough to take *any* trick!" I remarked to my partner; but the words had scarcely left my lips before I realized that I had said the wrong thing.

Miss Wicklow suddenly became crimson in the face, and, rising from the table in a very dignified manner, declared that she wasn't going to stay there any longer to be insulted.

"What on earth do you mean, my dear Emily?" I inquired in dismay.

"You know perfectly well," she replied. "That is a snapshot of me, taken by Aunt Ella when I was two years old. I shall never, never speak to you again!"

Needless to say the game broke up in confusion, and in the morrow's *Morning Post* a small paragraph informed interested readers that the marriage arranged between Miss Emily

Wicklow and her broken-hearted fiancé would never take place. But though I thus at one fell swoop lost both bride and rubber, my passion for the game has never cooled, and the first day of every week sees me strolling off at half-past four o'clock in the direction of the Portman Club to spend a profitable (but I trust reverent) afternoon playing "Sunday Bridge" for "offertory (threepenny) points," with, perhaps, a hymn-book on the rubber.

PADDING

XI.

“ N ” OR “ M ”

“ WHAT’S in a name ? ” says Juliet (or is it Romeo ?) in that famous love-scene on the balcony which most of my readers know by heart.

“ That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet ! ”

And yet, as we listen to the exquisite phrases falling in melodious cadence from the lover’s lips, do we not sometimes find ourselves wistfully questioning the truth of Juliet’s (or Romeo’s) reflections ? Is it correct, as Shakespeare would seem to suggest, that names possess no essential significance, no subtle power to influence or affect our judgment of the things that bear them ? I wonder.

It is not often that I find myself in total disagreement with the Swan of Avon, with whom, indeed, as a rule I see eye to eye upon most matters. And I am naturally loath to traverse the statement of a writer for whose genius I

have but recently expressed my respect in the material form of a five-shilling donation towards that excellent scheme whereby it is proposed to keep his memory green by pulling down St. George's Hospital and raising in its place a Repertoire Theatre for the production of plays which the public does not want to see. Nevertheless, I cannot help feeling that the expenditure of a little earnest thought would have saved the poet from allowing one of his most lovable characters thus idly to underestimate the importance of appropriate nomenclature.

Let us, however, take the Bard at his word and try for a moment to imagine what would happen if flowers were to be rechristened, if the rose could exchange her name for that of, say, her kinsman the scabious or Egyptian rose, of the starry stinkwort of the hedgerow, or the saxifrage of the rock-garden. Would she continue to smell as sweet as ever in the public nostrils, do you think? I doubt it.

Suppose, for instance, that some impassioned lover, infected with Shakespeare's indifference to the value of names, were to address to his betrothed a valentine couched in the following terms:

“ My love is like a pink, pink scabious,
That sweetly springs in June !”

Would not the engagement be broken off at once, and the lady obtain substantial damages for slander from any decently sentimental British jury? Would not the least eloquent counsel in the world find it an easy matter to convict the luckless lover of any form of culpable malfeasance, from simony to champetry?

Again, what view of Robert Browning's art should we hold were he thus to describe his Patriot's triumph:

“It was stinkworts, stinkworts, all the way,
And polyanthus (or, to be academically correct, polyanthi) mixed in my path like mad”?

Can we believe that if it had been truly said of Bailey's heroine that

“She wore a wreath of saxifrages,
That night when first we met,”

we should ever have desired to renew the acquaintance? or that, had there been a bower of *calceolaria* by Bendemeer's stream, the nightingale would have sung round it all the night long?

I will not labour the point, however, for I am sure that by this time even the most unintelligent of my readers must have caught some glimpse of my meaning, and will agree with me that the value attached to a name cannot lightly be disparaged. And if this is true in the case

of a mere flower, that smiles to-day and to-morrow dies, how much truer must it be with reference to a human being, one who can justly say: "Je ne suis pas la rose, mais j'ai vécu avec elle !"

"He that hath an ill name is half-hanged," says the proverb, accurately enough, as many a wretched man has discovered who is burdened, like Amos Cottle, with an appellation little fitted to "fill the speaking-trump of future fame." How often has some inherited patronymic proved an insuperable obstacle to success ? How often, through the carelessness or cruelty of his nearest and dearest, has a man been so ridiculously christened that he may justifiably complain in after life that his godfathers and godmothers "did for him" at his baptism !

I myself, alas ! have discovered by painful experience that my most unfortunate surname stands as an impassable barrier between me and the attainment of my loftiest ideals.

"When I die," I often remark with ill-concealed emotion, as I help myself liberally to a fourth glass of my light Australian malmsey, "you will find the word 'Biffin' engraved upon my heart in letters of blood !" And in spite of the entreaties of a succession of importunate washerwomen I have obstinately refused to allow my handkerchiefs to be

marked with the name that I deem so sinister and so unsuitable.

I shall never forget how profoundly affected I was, in the early summer of 1897, when

Lady Benzoline Brinsmead, to whom I was then affianced, reluctantly jilted me on the grounds that it was absolutely impossible for her to assume such a name as mine. I had

met Lady Benzoline for the first time at a bazaar held in aid of Our Dumb Friends' League, when I was so captivated by her charms that she had no difficulty in persuading me to purchase the entire contents of her stall.

By the time I had bought seven hygienic hand-embroidered nose-bags at four guineas apiece I knew that I loved her passionately, and she was beginning to suspect that after all my intentions were honourable. I proposed to her on the spot and was accepted, and it was not until my fiancée had received my little cheque in settlement of her bazaar account that she discovered my name and realized the appalling sacrifice that she was called upon to make on the altar of love. The idea of becoming Lady Benzoline Biffin was from the first repugnant to her sensitive aristocratic nature, and the longer she thought about it and the oftener she wrote the word upon her blotting-pad the less did she relish the change in store for her. It was in vain that I pointed out the obvious advantages attached to the similarity in our initials, which would save her the trouble of having her luggage repainted, and preclude the necessity of re-marking the more intimate articles of her personal attire.

"No!" she exclaimed at length, when the flow of my protestations had momentarily ceased.

“ I love you with a passion that mocks the power of words; but I can never, never become a Biffin. Never ! ” And to this decision she adhered unflinchingly, in spite of prayers, threats, lawyer’s letters, and the well-meant intervention of her aunt, Lady Emily Wother-spoon, whose husband had deserted her within two days of their marriage and made her very happy.

Lady Benzoline’s father, the proud Earl of Blitheringvernon and Waddyminster, whose name (as my readers are doubtless aware) is pronounced Bungling and Wopster, with that sagacity which distinguishes the Governing Classes of these Islands, suggested that the difficulty might be overcome if his potential son-in-law would consent to alter the spelling of his name from “ Biffin ” to “ Beophegan,” or even “ Bolphoun.” This I eagerly agreed to do, but, alas ! my attempt to evade the hereditary millstone that Fate had hung about my neck met with little or no success.

At a huge banquet held at the Metropole by a number of public-spirited English gentlemen and members of Parliament, to protest against the principles upon which the internal administration of other countries was conducted, I, Reginald Bolphoun, was called upon to propose the health of H.H. the Tycoon of Bunga-Bunga,

at that time suffering oppression at the hands of the Czar. But when the toastmaster, in a stentorian voice which echoed through the banqueting-hall, announced: "Silence, if you please, ladies and gentlemen, for Mr. *Buffoon*!" I at once forgot all the brilliant impromptus I had so carefully prepared, and was forced to sit mutely down "with all my music in me." I thus disappointed a number of most worthy persons who had looked forward to a humorous condemnation of the governments of alien nations with hopes which the toastmaster's suggestive version of the orator's name had raised to fever pitch. "This," as the saying is, "was the last feather in the camel's cap."

If an idiotic surname too often proves an intolerable burden, what shall be said of the grim tragedy that shadows the lives of those luckless beings whose parents have provided them with utterly inappropriate labels at the font? It is the modern fashion for members of the so-called "lower" classes to supply their children with aristocratic Christian names unsuitable enough to damn the career of the most hopeful offspring. The late Lord Brancaster once informed me that when he was engaging a new third footman, in the Jubilee year, he was compelled to ignore the claims of the four most suitable applicants for the post, solely because

they were named Percival, Cyril, Marmaduke, and Aubrey. The vacancy in his lordship's pantry was eventually filled by a man of poor physique, whose calves were not more than five or six inches in circumference, and whose only recommendation lay in the fact that his name happened to be Thomas.

A very natural prejudice exists against the employment of domestics with fancy names. In many households, indeed, it is the custom to call every new footman John, regardless of the feelings of his sponsors, and thus avoid the danger of having to ring the bell, and say: “ Oh, Montague, kindly telephone to the Stores and countermand that threepennyworth of shrimps which her ladyship ordered for tea.”

I am bound to confess that I myself was once acquainted with a confidential groom called Lancelot, who kept his horses in wonderful condition—there wasn't a spavin in the whole stable—and I have known two instances of most worthy chauffeurs bearing the names of Stanley and Cuthbert; but these were undoubtedly exceptional cases, and it may be laid down as a general rule that no self-respecting household should dream of employing a domestic thus picturesquely christened. Many a bright young steward's-room boy has consequently set forth upon his promising career, bearing the fatal

name of Horace, and has never risen beyond the lowest rung of the domestic ladder. Many a "tweeny" named Hermione has started cheerfully enough in the scullery of some ducal mansion, never to attain the coveted post of kennel-maid. One has but to look around one to note the truth of this statement; for though one may meet many a Horace cleaning the boots and sleeping in the bicycle-shed, many a Hermione washing the dishes in the scullery, no one has ever yet encountered a Horace in livery or a Hermione dusting the legs of the grand-piano in the drawing-room.

Some sociologists have been known to propound a theory to the effect that the degree of sympathy or dislike with which one instinctively regards a particular name corresponds exactly with the feelings inspired by some individual of one's acquaintance who may happen to bear it. With this I cannot pretend to agree. The name of Albert, for instance, is one that I especially abominate, and yet I am not conscious of entertaining a grudge against any particular Albert in the flesh. Indeed, I am only personally acquainted with three Alberts, of whom one is a hairdresser, another a Memorial, and the third a biscuit. I confess that I like the biscuit best, but my sentiments towards the other two are perfectly amicable. Again, I

have always been prejudiced against Biblical names. Like the poet Swinburne, I can truly say that

“ I shall never again be friends with Moses,
I shall hate Susannah my whole life long ! ”

And yet many of the people who have been most kind and helpful to me, who have lent me their money on note of hand alone, and whom I can never hope to repay, have been called by such names as Isaac or Reuben.

Finally, let us consider the name of Henry. In the princely Prussian family of Reuss it is the custom for every single male member to be named Henry. At Christmas-time, when they are all assembled round the Yule-log, and the grandmother exclaims: “ Good heavens ! if I haven’t forgotten my spectacles again ! Henry, do be a dear and run upstairs to my bedroom, and see if you can find them. If they aren’t on the table or under the sofa they must be in the window ; or perhaps they aren’t there at all ” — it is then a delightful and moving sight to watch no less than seventy-six persons, their ages ranging from three to ninety-two, spring to their feet and surge towards the staircase, a serried mass of Henries. Now it would be obviously impossible for any relative of the Reusses to love the whole family, individually

and collectively, and yet he might very easily love the name of Henry. Have I made my meaning clear ? I hope so.

No, we must look deeper for an elucidation of the mystery. The fact is that—as the Mystics say—certain names produce vibrations which unconsciously affect us favourably or the reverse, without regard for the actual individuals they represent. Thus, in my own case, the name of Tabitha always suggests a maiden aunt residing in a Cathedral Town with an asthmatic dachshund and a parrot; Bertie is to me a member of the *jeunesse stage-dorée*; Clarence a man about town; Jasper a villain of the deepest dye; while there is one name which I can never hear mentioned without my whole soul being stirred by thoughts of beauty, chivalry, perfection, virtue, courage. I can but view, as the poet Campbell says,

“ with rapture-smitten frame,
The power of grace, the magic of this name.”

Modesty alone forbids me to reveal it to my readers.

XII.

RECIPES

NO. 1.—A BAZAAR.

TAKE 1 Charitable Institution in Need of Funds. Place it under Royal Patronage, and steep as deeply in debt as possible. Surround with a dozen and a half Willing Workers and 1 Active Secretary. Mix in 5 or 6 Ladies of Title, and allow to simmer for six months. Stand the result before a clear fire in a small room until a Committee begins to form. Flatter the Ladies of Title until they consent to become Patronesses, then put aside in a cool place until quite firm. Bring 3 Willing Workers together once a week for eight weeks, and let the Active Secretary read aloud letters from the Ladies of Title regretting unavoidable absence. Call this a Committee Meeting, and add Willing Workers until it develops into a Quorum.

Take a miscellaneous collection of articles—furniture, clothing, bric-à-brac, etc.—of little or no apparent value, use, or beauty. Sprinkle freely with labels bearing prices greatly in excess

of the original cost of the articles in question. Arrange on clean baize-covered tables round a large room or hall in some fashionable district. Season to taste with bunting and floral decorations, taking care that if Union Jacks are used they shall invariably be hung upside down. Garnish each table with 1 Lady of Title and 5 Willing Workers. Remove all chairs, and allow the Ladies of Title and Willing Workers to stand for four hours on end in a thorough draught.

Lay down one strip of red carpet. Place one Royal Personage on the strip of red carpet, and surround with Patronesses of the Charitable Institution in Need of Funds. Place a few apt phrases in the mouth of the Royal Personage, and throw open the large room or hall.

Add 1 Clairvoyante, 1 String Orchestra, and 1 Famous Music-Hall Comedian, and at the last moment throw in half a dozen telegrams from Professional Singers excusing their non-appearance on the grounds of temporary indisposition. The addition of a little Tango-tea will considerably enrich the mixture and render it more appetizing. If this is unavailable, a dash of spice may be given by inserting a Mock-auction, Lottery, or Lucky-tub.

Tightly squeeze several hundred Philanthropists into the room or hall; thoroughly pluck

these, and strain their credulity by pressing them with the articles of furniture, clothing, bric-à-brac, etc., already mentioned. Fill the Philanthropists with Tango-tea, and dip them repeatedly into the Lucky-tub until as much unearned increment as possible has been removed. When the supply of articles runs short, or the gullibility of the Philanthropists is exhausted, clear the room or hall, assemble the Willing Workers round the Active Secretary, and thoroughly search them for gold or silver coins.

Unless the greatest trouble and care have been taken in the preparation of this dish the result will often form what is known as a Deficit. In this case the accounts will have to be carefully cooked, or the whole Bazaar prepared afresh from similar ingredients in another room or hall.

No. 2.—A CINEMA.

Take an unfrequented and picturesque patch of open country somewhere on the Sussex coast. Introduce 1 Sheriff's Daughter, 1 Tenderfoot, 1 Desperado (or Gunman) on whose head a price has been set, and 1 Faithful Bloodhound. Add a dozen best American Cowboys and a posse of Sheriff's Officers, and sprinkle liberally with revolvers and stockwhips.

Place the Sheriff's Daughter and the Tenderfoot in the power of the Desperado. Throw the first into a dry disused quarry near Eastbourne, fasten the second to a barrel of dynamite timed to explode in ten minutes, and leave the third gloating over his victims.

Let the Faithful Bloodhound release the Tenderfoot by biting his bonds asunder just before the train of lighted gunpowder reaches the dynamite. Let him then lead his master to the disused quarry near Eastbourne, where the Sheriff's Daughter is slowly perishing of neglect. Lower the Tenderfoot into the disused quarry by means of his own laryat. Return the Faithful Bloodhound to camp to give the alarm. Mount the American Cowboys and the Sheriff's Officers on fiery mustangs, and gallop them along the Brighton Road at full speed, led by the Faithful Bloodhound. Keep them galloping along different portions of the Brighton Road at even fuller speed until they reach the disused quarry. Haul the Tenderfoot to the surface, with the Sheriff's Daughter (in a semi-moribund condition) clasped in his strong embrace. With the aid of the Faithful Bloodhound track the Desperado to his cave in the cliffs near Hastings, and hold him at Bay there until he can be secured by the Sheriff's Officers.

Gallop all the characters back along the same

sections of the Brighton Road, but in the opposite direction to that originally taken, until they reach a draughty wooden building. Call this a Court-House and introduce a gale sufficiently violent to ruffle the jury's hair and blow the papers off the judge's table. Sentence the Desperado to penal servitude for life on a charge of abducting the Sheriff's Daughter. Let the Sheriff give his consent to a marriage between his Daughter and the gallant Tenderfoot, and let the engaged couple propose to live happily ever after on the income derived from the sum paid as a reward for the conviction of the Desperado. Throw the Sheriff's Daughter into the arms of the Tenderfoot, and the Faithful Bloodhound into the arms of the Sheriff's Daughter, and let the Cowboys adjourn to the local saloon to toast the Sheriff's Officers, while the Desperado is led away to gaol.

Immediately afterwards take an ordinary suburban parlour, furnished in the style now generally known as Early German Lloyd. Add 1 Henpecked Husband, 1 Stout and Elderly Wife, and 1 Pretty Parlourmaid. Let the first be discovered by the second, kissing the third. Heat the Stout and Elderly Wife to boiling-point, and drop the Henpecked Husband down three flights of stairs. At the front-door make the Henpecked Husband knock over a Comic

Waiter carrying about 12 dozen plates. Pursue him with the Stout and Elderly Wife, the Pretty Parlourmaid, and the Comic Waiter, and let him collide in rapid succession with 1 Nurse and Perambulator, 1 Policeman, 1 Vendor of Italian Pottery, 1 Old Woman selling Air-balloons, 1 Postman, 1 Butcher's Boy, and 1 Elderly Gentleman riding a Tricycle. Collect all the individuals with whom the Henpecked Husband has collided, and rattle them through the crowded streets of a foreign town.

Overturn 6 Fruit-barrows, 2 Coffee-stalls, and a Painter on a Ladder. Completely gut 3 Shops, wreck an Open-air Café, and finally tumble the whole party into a Canal. Care should be taken that as much damage as possible is done to articles of crockery and hardware, and that all the characters should fall repeatedly upon the ground and be eventually soaked to the skin.

Mix all this with a *Rechauffé* composed of Railway Accidents, Birds Feeding their Young, Lion Hunts, Motor Races, and Royal Weddings. Throw the result as rapidly as possible on to a clean white screen, and serve in a long low building in a populous thoroughfare.

Add a number of narrow plush seats and a third-hand piano; carefully exclude all light and fresh air, thoroughly stock with germs of influenza and nasal catarrh, and flavour with

stale tobacco - smoke and essence of damp mackintosh. Station a man in a military uniform at the door, whose duty it is to shout "Step inside! No waiting! All seats guaranteed!" and to threaten passers-by with a cane. When

a sufficiently unhygienic atmosphere has been generated, extinguish all artificial light and (with the help of small boys armed with electric torches) insert as many members of the public as possible into the plush seats. Allow them to simmer there for a few minutes until the older

folks doze off and the younger couples begin to hold hands and giggle. Place a tired woman at the third-hand piano, and let her give perverted renderings of works by famous composers, interspersed with occasional ragtime airs. Stir the audience gently with the ingredients mentioned above, and keep stirring from 1 p.m. until 11 p.m.

No. 3.—A REVUE.

Take the skeleton of a thin and tawdry plot. Coat with presumably humorous dialogue, and cover thickly over with amorous negroid ditties, eccentric dances, and Music Hall "turns," until the plot is entirely concealed.

Collect a number of pretty girls; dress in the latest Paris models, and mould into the shape of a Beauty Chorus. Leaven with half a dozen English and American Low Comedians. Add one or two American Variety Actresses. Insert their photographs in all the illustrated papers for some months until they have become thoroughly acclimatized. Provide each Low Comedian with a separate performance that has nothing whatever to do with the plot, and is technically known as a "stunt." Remove any spice of humour from the original dialogue, and replace with conventional jokes on the

subject of Mr. Hall Caine, the German Emperor, Sir Thomas Lipton, Mr. Lloyd George, Suffragettes, Home Rule, and the Insurance Act, according to the taste of individual Comedians. Flavour with comic "business," and introduce as many "gags" as possible.

Disguise several of the American Low Comedians as prominent British Statesmen, taking care that their appearance in no way resembles that of the politicians they are supposed to represent. Make sure that they display only the most superficial knowledge of current political questions, and that all political satire is directed against the Liberal Party, otherwise it will not prove palatable. Sprinkle the whole generously with chestnuts, and when the mixture has set, remove the plot altogether, and put aside in the stock-pot for future use.

Prepare 1 Short Dramatic Sketch from the pen of a famous English author who prefers to remain anonymous, and insert in the very middle of the mixture. Keep one Spectacular Scenic Device up your sleeve until the last moment. Puff carefully in the Press until public curiosity is sufficiently aroused; then introduce with a flourish of trumpets. Mix the ingredients thoroughly, and serve the whole as quickly as possible in a brilliant setting on a large stage or staircase. Call the result a "Revue," and, if

any portion of it proves unappetizing or difficult to swallow, remove at once and substitute another Music Hall turn or Dramatic Sketch.

By the repeated addition of new "stunts," more American Actresses, and original Spectacular Scenic Devices, the mixture may be kept fresh for months.

NO. 4.—A POLITICAL MEETING.

Take the Albert Hall. Thoroughly chill, and fill with an atmosphere of intense gloom. Add sufficient fog to render the surroundings inexpressibly dreary. Pack as tightly as possible with Earnest Persons of both sexes, diluted with a sprinkling of Hecklers, Cranks, and Suffragettes. Garnish the gangways with Ushers and Commissionaires, and surround the building with Metropolitan Police. Allow the mixture to seethe with excitement for an hour, taking care that it does not boil over. The approach of boiling-point will be heralded by sounds as of the stamping of feet upon a hard wooden surface; these should at once be drowned with Patriotic Airs, such as "Rule Britannia," "The Marseillaise," "The Wearing of the Green," or "The Land for the People," played upon a Grand Organ.

Introduce 1 Distinguished Politician and a

dozen Nervous-looking Gentlemen who do not seem to know what to do with their feet. Arrange these carefully on a row of cane-bottomed chairs at one end of the hall. Surround with perfectly self-possessed wives gazing scornfully through lorgnettes at the Earnest Persons. Provide one of the Nervous-looking Gentlemen (called the Chairman) with a plain deal table, furnished with a bottle of tepid water and a glass tumbler. Fill the Chairman with a sense of his own importance and a pint of tepid water from the glass tumbler. Thump the floor well with the umbrellas of the Earnest Persons. Let the Chairman remark that he has no intention of making a long speech; and let him then speak for twenty minutes without a break. Let him protest that there is no need to expatiate upon the virtues and talents of the Distinguished Politician on his rights; let him then expatiate upon those particular virtues and talents for another twenty minutes.

Strain the patience of the Earnest Persons to breaking-point, and then allow the Distinguished Politician to rise. Thump the floor with more umbrellas, and clap the hands of the Earnest Persons together for a few minutes. Thoroughly clear the throat of the Distinguished Politician and sprinkle lightly with tepid water. Let him assert that never in the course of a lengthy

political career has he been so flattered, so touched, so moved by anything as he has been by the graceful remarks of the Chairman. Add the statement that he has never seen so representative a meeting as that which it is his privilege to address to-night, and that never in the annals of history has his particular party presented so united a front.

Stir the Hecklers until they bubble over with shouts of "Marconi!" "Mangel - wurzels!" "Rotten!" "What about Old Age Pensions?" and similar facetious party cries. Mix these with screams of "Votes for Women!" uttered in shrill tones by the Suffragettes. Let the Earnest Persons frown and say "Sh-sh!" to the Hecklers, and let the Ushers carry the Suffragettes shrieking from the building. Smack the Suffragettes soundly with the hands of all Earnest Persons within range as they are borne out. Add several Appeals for a Fair Hearing from the Chairman and a few more Patriotic Airs from the Grand Organ.

When order has been restored, let the Distinguished Politician continue his address. Let him say that he ventures to think, if his memory is not at fault, and unless he is greatly mistaken, that in this very hall, so many years ago, another great meeting was held at which an Eminent Statesman adumbrated some definite policy or

other. Let him add that it is curious to think how greatly (or how little) times have changed, how profoundly he agrees (or disagrees) with whatever was said on that notable occasion, and what a true (or false) prophet that eminent Statesman has been proved. Smother all references to the Eminent Statesman with Cheers, Boos, Catcalls, Shouts of "Rotten!" etc., and let one of the Cranks inquire "What did Mr. Gladstone say in 1874?" Add more cries of "Votes for Women!" from Suffragettes who are being forcibly expelled, more Appeals for a Fair Hearing and more Patriotic Airs from the Organ.

Let the Distinguished Politician then state that never in the annals of the world's history has England been so prosperous (or in such a parlous plight), never have her defences been in such an admirable (or deplorable) condition, never have our Imperial destinies been controlled with greater vigour (or fatuity), never has the future looked so bright (or so gloomy). Mix a few metaphors in which the Government of the day is compared to an ostrich ploughing the sand, a lighthouse galloping at full steam along the road to ruin, a sturdy oak flaming like a fiery cross from one end of the country to the other. Flavour with a few scathing personal references impugning the honour and integrity

of political opponents with whom the Distinguished Politician is engaged to play golf on the following day. Add a carefully prepared Peroration in which the Distinguished Politician's party is likened to a gallant sailing-ship marching with drums flying into the enemy's camp, putting its hand to the plough and not looking back, cementing the seeds of International amity, and bearing a banner beneath whose brilliant light government for the people, by the people, of the people, to the people, from the people, with the people, shall prevail so long as the incommensurate ocean laps the sounding shores of that mighty Empire on which the sun never sets.

Heat the Earnest Persons with intense fervour until they boil over with sounds of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow!" Let the organ play the same air three bars behind the Earnest Persons. Bring forward another Nervous-looking Gentleman to address the meeting, while the Earnest Persons look at their watches and remark that it is much later than they imagined. Let the Nervous-looking Gentleman repeat whatever the Distinguished Politician has already said, only in less felicitous phraseology, and while this is going on empty the building gradually of all but the Ushers and 1 Caretaker. Surround the Distinguished Politician with Policemen, place

in a motor, sprinkle generously with Suffragette literature, and throw a hammer and a few eggs at him. Print the result in the next morning's newspapers, and serve in an emasculated form at breakfast in every respectable household throughout the Kingdom.

NO. 5.—A BATTUE.

Take a number of small woods or coverts, well supplied with game. Extract all weasels, stoats, sparrow-hawks, and jays, and remove owls, magpies, squirrels, and other harmless animals traditionally regarded by gamekeepers as vermin. Insert several thousand tame pheasants, and preserve carefully for some months. Sprinkle daily with maize and Indian corn until a few hundred wild pheasants from neighbouring estates begin to appear.

Collect about five-and-twenty Farm Labourers, Reformed Poachers, and Unemployed Persons; furnish with stout sticks, dress in red-collared smocks until they resemble beaters, and flavour the whole mixture with 1 Village Idiot and 2 Oldest Inhabitants. Add two or three Gamekeepers in velveteens and bowler-hats, and attach 1 Retriever to each Gamekeeper. Place a few local Urchins at the corner of every Covert, with orders to

rattle their sticks whenever a pheasant approaches.

Carefully select a Party of Guns composed of the following ingredients: 1 Wealthy Host, 1 Retired Major-General, 2 Elderly Noblemen, 2 Neighbours, 1 Naval Lieutenant, and 1 Schoolboy Nephew. Stand the first six guns in a cool place (if possible in an East wind) at one end of a covert, taking care to place the Elderly Noblemen in the centre and the Neighbours on the extreme flanks. Keep standing for 40 minutes until thoroughly chilled.

Place the Naval Lieutenant and the Schoolboy Nephew at the other end of the covert with the Beaters. At a given signal insert the Beaters into the covert as noisily as possible, and stir well together until the pheasants begin to rise. Keep stirring until all the pheasants have risen and the covert is quite empty. If well beaten

the pheasants should fly over the heads of the Wealthy Host and the 2 Elderly Noblemen; on no account should they be allowed to fly in the direction of the Neighbours or back over the Beaters.

Repeat this process indefinitely until the Guns become thoroughly tired. Extract gold

coins from the Guns and place these in the palm of one of the Gamekeepers. Then remove the Guns in motors as quickly as possible, plunge them into hot baths, and allow to simmer in the smoking-room until dinner-time.

XIII.

MISUNDERSTOOD.

AFTER failing twice for the Army and wasting some of the best years of my life at an Agricultural College studying the rudiments of a profession for which I was temperamentally unfitted, I had turned my thoughts to literature as being the field most likely to provide a scope for my peculiar talents. As the proprietor of several popular newspapers, Lord Balcombe was a man whose patronage would be extremely valuable to a youth standing on the threshold of a journalistic career, and I was very anxious to enlist his sympathy. With this object in view my Uncle Theodore had kindly given me a letter of introduction to the great man, and I lost no time in presenting it.

I was naturally somewhat nervous as I entered Lord Balcombe's sanctum, but he put me at my ease at once with a few words of welcome, motioning me to a chair while he glanced rapidly through my uncle's communication.

"So you're Theodore's boy, are you?" he

remarked, handing me back the letter. "Well, well, how time flies, to be sure!"

I grinned rather sheepishly, for I was not sure whether it would be wise to disabuse Lord Balcombe at once of the idea that I was my uncle's son, or whether to commence the interview by contradicting him flatly might not be somewhat prejudicial to my interests.

"Your father and I are very old friends," he continued, still labouring under his original misapprehension. "It seems but the other day that he and I and Anthony Gorbals——" He broke off suddenly. "You know Lord Gorbals, of course?" he inquired.

I was loath to appear unacquainted with a man he so evidently expected me to know, and determined therefore to temporize.

"I—er—Who does not know Lord Gorbals?" I replied, without, as I hoped, committing myself.

"Yes, indeed," said Lord Balcombe; "and the more one knows him the better one likes him. Don't you find that?"

"I do," I answered heartily; for it was too late now to admit that I was unfamiliar with the subject of our conversation.

"Gorbals is a man in a thousand!"

"In ten thousand!" I exclaimed enthusiastically. The statement seemed a safe one, though perfectly meaningless.

"I can never think of him," continued my host, "without recalling those beautiful lines of—who is it?—Shakespeare, I think."

"It certainly sounds like Shakespeare," I agreed.

"'Better a man——'" Lord Balcombe rolled the fine phrases round his tongue with evident gusto:

"'Better a man himself should ever be
Than, like an estridge, in his luns ensky'd,
Plumbing th' abysmal, incommensurate deeps——'"

He paused. "Who can forget that passage?" he murmured, with some emotion.

"Who, indeed?" I said. "It is unforgettable."

"Let me see," he added. "How does it go on?"

"Dear me!" I replied, rather nervously. "I know it so well.

"'Plumbing the—er—incommensurate deeps—
The—er—something—incommensurate deeps——'"

"Never mind." He interrupted a fourth repetition of these haunting lines. "Memory plays strange tricks with us all, as Dickens says so truly in—is it 'Bleak House'?"

"Yes," I answered firmly, though I had unfortunately never read "Bleak House."

"What an admirable scene that is between

the two characters !” pursued Lord Balcombe. “ You remember ? Where they meet in the inn.”

“ Oh yes,” I assured him. “ How well I remember it ! In the inn.”

“ But wait a moment.” He paused. “ Now I come to think of it, is it in ‘ Bleak House,’ or am I thinking of something quite different ? I believe it’s in ‘ Romola ’—George Eliot, you know—that scene between the two——”

“ Of course,” I hastily rejoined. “ I thought somehow that it was ‘ Romola.’ ” I couldn’t help wishing that I had ever read any of the works of this Mr. George Eliot.

“ And yet,” he frowned, “ perhaps I’m wrong, after all.”

“ Perhaps,” I echoed timidly.

“ I certainly thought it was ‘ Bleak House.’ ”

“ So did I.”

“ And yet in ‘ Romola ’——”

“ Yes, isn’t it ? I mean, don’t they ?”

Lord Balcombe gazed at me rather suspiciously, and I suddenly became conscious that I was not creating quite so good an impression as I had intended.

Before my host could pursue the subject any further, the door was flung open, and a servant appeared upon the threshold.

“ Lord Gorbals !” announced the butler, as a

grey-haired elderly man of distinguished bearing entered the room.

When Lord Balcombe had finished greeting his colleague, he noticed that Lord Gorbals and I were regarding one another with that expression of aloof hostility customarily assumed by persons who have not been introduced.

"This is Theodore Biffin's son," he explained. "Don't you recognize him? He tells me that you and he are old friends."

Lord Gorbals continued to gaze at me somewhat coldly.

"I have never had the pleasure of making this young man's acquaintance," he said. "And, unless I'm greatly mistaken, Theodore Biffin has no son."

Lord Balcombe turned to me with surprise.

"You told me——" he began.

"There's been a little mistake," I stammered. "Let me explain——"

"A little mistake!" he interrupted angrily. "You come here pretending to be Theodore's boy, when he hasn't got a boy! You tell me you know Lord Gorbals intimately, when you've never even met him! You quote Shakespeare to me, and Dickens, and George Eliot——"

"Excuse me, Lord Balcombe," I protested, stirred by the injustice of this last accusation; "really, I——"

"If the truth were known," he went on, "I don't believe you've read a word of either of those two authors!"

"I—er—no—the fact is——"

"Get out of my house!" he roared, crossing the room to give the bell a vicious pull. "You're an impostor, sir! That's what you are!"

"Show this—this gentleman out," he said, a moment later, when the butler appeared. "And never let him darken my doors again!"

I slunk miserably away, vainly seeking consolation from the reflection that, as Emerson says, to be great is to be misunderstood.

I had meant so well; but, alas! we know whither the path of the well-intentioned leads. As I realized what my original mistake had cost me, I suffered all the pangs of purgatory.

On my way home, as I turned out of Oxford Street, my eye was arrested by a notice on the door of a Methodist Chapel:

SUBJECT OF NEXT SUNDAY'S SERMON:

"IS THERE A HELL?"

Mr. John Evans will sing, "Tell Mother I've been there."

"So have I!" I muttered bitterly to myself, as I strode swiftly past. "So have I!"

XIV.

THE FELLOW-PASSENGER

(A TRAGEDY OF THE TRAIN).

I HAD missed the 1.15 p.m. train to Hitchin by about two minutes, and was consequently forced to kick my heels for over an hour at King's Cross, a station which possesses most of the qualities essential to success in a railway terminus, but has few of the attributes calculated to render it a perfect lounge. A careful inspection of the glass cases filled with primeval specimens of the British pastry-cook's art which were on exhibition in the refreshment-room soon resigned me to the thought of relying for my frugal luncheon upon such condiments as I could extract from the various automatic slot-machines with which the station was liberally furnished. A brief experience of the waiting-rooms robbed me of any desire to extend my sojourn in those sinister apartments, while the consciousness of being regarded with suspicion by a minion of the Travelers' Aid Society for Friendless Girls imbued me with a distaste for loitering on the platforms

to watch incoming trains discharge their human freight. On the strength of having purchased a copy of *Family Snippets : A Journal for the Home*, I had deemed myself at liberty to glance through most of the sevenpenny novels displayed upon the bookstall, until the man in charge ventured to hint that he was not the curator of a free Public Library, and I was shamed into buying a copy (slightly soiled) of "Broken Arcs," under the erroneous impression that the work in question was a rudimentary manual of electrical engineering.

When, therefore, I was at last able to take my seat in a first-class smoking carriage on the 2.30 express, I was feeling tired and unsociable, and not at all inclined for human fellowship. The heat of the day, combined perhaps with a somewhat imprudent indulgence in milk chocolate, Everton toffee, and other products of the different automatic machines which I had sampled in a vain attempt to stave off the pangs of hunger, had rendered me more than usually somnolent, and I awoke with a start to find that the train had left the station, and that I was not, as I had hoped, the sole occupant of the carriage.

My fellow-traveller must have entered while I was dozing; but although I am as a rule a light sleeper, I certainly never heard the carriage-

door open. As he occupied the seat opposite to mine I was able to study him at my leisure, and the more I looked at him the more certain did I become that I had seen him somewhere before. I wracked my brains to try and remember where we could have met, until it suddenly occurred to me that I had noticed him—or, if not him, his twin brother—in the refreshment-room, half an hour earlier, eating one of those buns which it is the baker's custom to varnish with a light coating of glue, in order possibly to postpone the process of decomposition to the very last moment. I was led to this conclusion by my fellow-passenger's eccentric behaviour. He kept rubbing his hands together in a frenzied fashion, as though desirous of ridding them of some sticky substance; it was, indeed, this peculiar action that guided my memory back to the refreshment-room, and helped me to identify my companion. I was surprised, too, to observe that now and then he would so far forget himself as to wipe his fingers in his hair in a manner that suggested total ignorance of those niceties of conduct which are the outward and visible signs of innate good breeding. The fact that he was wearing neither hat nor gloves escaped my notice, or perhaps I should not have been so astonished at his lack of manners.

As the journey progressed, my companion

grew more and more restless, and his behaviour became more and more extraordinary. If he changed his seat twice during the first ten minutes he must have changed it twenty times, while every now and then he would cross to the window and press his face against the glass in an agonized fashion which I found singularly disturbing to my peace of mind. I could not help recalling all the stories I had ever heard of journeys made in the society of raving lunatics, and the recollection of the numerous tunnels through which the train must pass before reaching its destination filled me with very natural foreboding.

Meanwhile my companion paid no attention to me at all, and at one moment I was almost afraid that he was going to sit upon my knee, so oblivious did he seem of my presence. Moreover, my fears were not lessened in the first tunnel beyond Finsbury Park when I heard him moving about in the darkness, muttering to himself, and expected at any moment to feel his breath upon my cheek. I was slightly reassured by the thought that, in so far as size and strength were concerned, I was more than a match for my fellow-passenger. Indeed, he really looked so frail and insignificant a creature that I believe I could easily have flattened him out with one blow of my fist. Nevertheless, he

did not prove a very attractive travelling companion, for whenever he ceased rushing about from one end of the carriage to the other he would resume that peculiar process of manual ablution with invisible soap and water which might have led me to mistake him for a shop-walker had not such an idea seemed on the face of it absurd. Even in repose his attitudes were unusual, for he would sometimes throw his arms up into the air and draw his head down almost between his legs, and remain in this woebegone position, as though overcome with mental dejection, until it was time for him to resume his pilgrimage round the carriage.

I was anxious to see what my fellow-traveller would do when the tickets were collected at Hatfield, for I had begun to realize that his behaviour could only be attributable to feeble-mindedness, and this is a subject in which I have always been deeply interested. I watched him closely when the ticket-collector came along, but he did not even look up when the man opened the door, and if he acknowledged his presence at all it was only by an almost imperceptible inclination of the head. The railway official, too, took no notice of my companion. I concluded therefore that the latter must be a season-ticket holder; my fear of him diminished, and my dislike was tempered by

respect. Little did I dream that within the next quarter of an hour I was to become the unwilling witness of one of those grim and mysterious tragedies which, common enough as they are, alas ! in this tragic world of ours, but seldom fall within the orbit of a private citizen's personal experience.

After leaving Hatfield I had settled myself down to the perusal of a spirited and delightful article on "House Flies as Disseminators of Disease," contributed by an eminent zoologist to *Family Snippets* (a periodical which, as I think I have already mentioned, is essentially a Journal for the Home), when a fresh movement on the part of my fellow-passenger caused me to look up. The blood froze in my veins as I watched him swiftly but cautiously creeping towards the open carriage-window; my heart almost stopped beating as he suddenly sprang upon the window-sill and put one leg over it into the void beyond. With an exclamation of dismay I flung down my copy of *Family Snippets* and rushed towards the would-be suicide. Alas ! I was too late. As I reached him he jumped out, and I instinctively closed my eyes and rammed my fingers into my ears to prevent myself from seeing or hearing the poor fellow fall with a sickening thud upon the line.

For a moment I was dazed and stupefied by

the accident that had befallen my unfortunate fellow-traveller; in imagination I could see his mangled body rolling on the iron track, I could picture the lifeless corpse being cut to pieces by some passing train. My thoughts turned to the widow, the orphan children, that perchance he had left behind him in London, and I selfishly prayed that it would not fall to my lot to break the news to his family. Then, as I pulled myself together and, thrusting aside such sordid reflections, looked wildly round for the communication cord, I realized that the brakes were being applied, and in another moment the train drew up at Hitchin Station.

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Thinking the matter over afterwards in cold blood I have sometimes wondered whether perhaps I ought not to have taken some immediate steps to report the accident to the railway authorities. But I have always entertained a morbid aversion from being mixed up in affairs of this kind; the publicity of inquests is naturally repellent to me. I felt, too, that perhaps in some way or another I might have been held responsible for an occurrence which I certainly could never have prevented. At any rate—whether I was to blame or not I do not know—I held my tongue until it was too late to speak, and it is only to-day that I have at last summoned

up courage to rid my conscience of what, I confess, has gradually become an intolerable burden.

At times, in peculiarly optimistic moods, I have tried to believe that perhaps my fellow-passenger was not killed after all; that by some miraculous intervention of Providence he was privileged to escape the consequences of his rash act. I am confirmed in this belief by the fact that no account of the tragedy has yet been published in the press, nor, as far as I can discover, has the body ever been found. I need hardly say that I caused the most careful and exhaustive inquiries to be made with a view to ascertaining whether my fellow-traveller had ever been seen alive since the day of the accident, and the information I have hitherto elicited has been of a distinctly consolatory character. A being very like him was certainly observed by one of the waiters in a refreshment tent at Lord's Cricket Ground at the end of last summer; and, again, a coachman of my acquaintance assured me that he had noticed something very similar, gazing with a rapt expression into an ashpit in Portman Mews East, only a month ago. I myself on more than one occasion have fancied that I saw him: once at Olympia during the Horse Show, and afterwards in the garden of my own house in Surrey. I confess, however,

that I have become morbidly fanciful upon the subject, and I am sometimes tempted to agree with my solicitor when he declares quite frankly that I am wasting far too much sympathy on, and making too much fuss over, so comparatively unimportant an affair as the death by misadventure of an ordinary blue-bottle fly.

XV.

THE TURNCOAT

THREE years ago no British statesman held a place in the popular estimation higher than that occupied by my uncle, Sir Theodore Biffin. He was universally beloved and respected in his constituency, and political opponents sought in vain to oust him from a seat which his moral integrity and immense wealth had long combined to render immune from successful attack.

In private life Sir Theodore was one of the kindest of men; in the little parish of Ooseford, where he resided, the village children but rarely flung stones at his motor, and when he read the lessons in church on a Sunday morning the suction of peppermints by the choir would be temporarily suspended, while even the richer occupants of the front pews ceased to sniff.

Sir Theodore, as will be remembered, served his country faithfully and devotedly in one capacity after another for many years, and until the very close of his career no single word was ever breathed against his personal integrity.

In his youth every one of the six Army

crammers who in turn undertook to enable him to pass the qualifying examination for a cavalry commission bore testimony to his moral rectitude. As a soldier he displayed a most scrupulous sense of honour, paying his mess-bill with admirable regularity, and sending his cheque every Monday without fail during the racing season to the various Turf Accountants whom he patronized so loyally. And when, at the age of thirty, under the burden of advancing years, he resigned his commission on hearing that war had broken out in South Africa, his escutcheon was still untarnished, his conscience free from stain.

In the House of Commons my uncle was rightly regarded as one of those strong silent men who, while they take no active part in debate, are always ready to make their way into whichever of the two division lobbies is indicated by their party whips, and thus save the Empire from the machinations of unscrupulous political antagonists. When, therefore, on that memorable Monday evening at the close of a long Parliamentary Session the defeat of the Government was threatened by a well-organized "snap" division, it came as a shock to all earnest patriots that Sir Theodore should be the man to avert so desirable a catastrophe by voting against his own party, and thus enable

a tottering administration to escape disaster by the narrow margin of a single vote.

My uncle's subsequent acceptance of the Chiltern Hundreds, and his resignation from the Carlton Club, were but the natural consequences of conduct which at the time seemed unpardonable to all who had the welfare of the country at heart. And although, when he delivered up the insignia of his office as Knight Harbinger of the Primrose League to the President of that organization, Sir Theodore made a half-hearted attempt to explain his behaviour, his voice was so choked by emotion as to render any excuses unintelligible.

Barely two years have elapsed since that fatal act of folly. Yet in this short period Uncle Theodore has become a broken man, grey-haired and prematurely aged, and in the Home of Rest where he has wisely consented to spend the evening of his days it is unlikely that he will ever summon up courage to publish any lucid account of the series of unhappy accidents that led to his downfall and disgrace. I have, however, obtained his permission to undertake the grateful task of rehabilitating his character in the eyes of the world, and hope to have no difficulty in proving that Sir Theodore was after all no political renegade, but rather the unhappy victim of cruel circumstances which he was powerless to control.

Whenever Parliament was sitting it was my uncle's pleasant custom to spend every week-end at Ooseford Hall, his country seat in Surrey, returning to London every Monday afternoon by the 2.15 train to Waterloo. On the fatal day to which I have already alluded Sir Theodore was tempted by the unusual clemency of the weather to counter-order the motor that habitually conveyed him to the station, and made his way thither on foot. Shortly before two o'clock he arrived in sight of Ooseford Junction, and, feeling somewhat exhausted by his unaccustomed exertions, sat down for a few moments on a convenient hillock by the roadside, until the ringing of the station bell announced the approach of the train.

Half an hour later, as he was being whirled along in a first-class compartment, idly counting the advertisement boards that so greatly enhance the charm of our rural scenery, he became subtly conscious of a tickling sensation in the region of his spine. He shifted uneasily in his seat, but still the tickling continued, and, on looking down to ascertain the cause of this phenomenon, Sir Theodore was amazed to observe that his ankles were covered with black ants, several of which were already busy exploring other parts of his body.

He realized at once that the roadside mound

upon which he had recently sat must have been an ant-heap, and the knowledge that hundreds of industrious lepidoptera were gradually making their way up his legs was naturally disconcerting. Being, however, the sole occupant of the carriage, Uncle Theodore wisely decided to rid himself of this plague of insects in the most sensible fashion possible. He lost no time, therefore, in divesting himself of his coat and trousers, and proceeded to shake the latter garments vigorously out of the window with a view to removing the offending ants. At this moment, however, a sudden gust of wind happened to carry a red-hot spark from the engine into my uncle's right eye, and so severe was the agony caused by this accident that Sir Theodore instinctively clapped both hands to the injured optic, and in doing so let go of his trousers. These at once flew out of the window and fell in a field by the side of the line, considerably startling a group of pheasants which were engaged in busily devouring a fine crop of mangolds.

When the pain had somewhat abated and he had resumed his coat, Uncle Theodore was able to realize the full horror of his position. In his semi-nude condition he determined at all costs to prevent the intrusion of any possible fellow-travellers when the train stopped at Vauxhall,

and this he succeeded in doing by affixing to his hat a luggage-label inscribed with the words "Smallpox Patient," and gibbering at the window with his nose pressed against the glass whenever anybody approached the carriage.

Potential fellow-passengers were thus warned of the inadvisability of travelling with an infectious maniac, and made no effort to disturb his solitude.

When at last the train reached Waterloo my uncle was lucky enough to ^{LB} secure the services of a discreet and kindly porter, who, for a small consideration, consented to

lend him his own corduroy trousers. Attired in these unbecoming garments, the unhappy legislator hastened in a taxi to the House of Commons, arriving just in time to hear the division bells ringing. Negotiations with the porter had greatly delayed him, and he entered the House in a panting and excited condition. When, therefore, a

well-meaning Government Whip, deceived by my uncle's velveteen trousers into mistaking him for a Labour member, pushed him uncere- moniously through a swing-door, Sir Theodore did not at once perceive that he was in the wrong division lobby. It was only on recovering his breath, by which time a scoundrelly Govern- ment had been borne to victory on the wings of a single vote, that my uncle appreciated the havoc he had unwittingly wrought to his party's hopes. It was then too late to protest, and with bowed head and faltering steps he left the Lower Chamber that he had so long adorned, in which he was never again destined to set foot.

From this moment dates my poor uncle's complete downfall, and it is pathetic to follow step by step the gradual moral decline of his character.

It was only a week after the incidents narrated above, if I remember right, that Sir Theodore was informed in the strictest confidence by a friend (who had it from a man who had seen it in the evening papers) that the Government pro- posed to take over the business of the National Telephone Company. Heedless of the conse- quences of so rash an act, and with no ulterior motive save the natural desire to make a little money, my uncle at once proceeded to purchase

five hundred shares of Telephone Deferred Stock, which then stood at about 150.

Eight months passed by, at the end of which the stock had fallen to 96, and the purchaser (who had, unfortunately, failed to persuade his aged mother to take it off his hands) was faced with a loss of nearly £300. At the same moment a violent article, entitled "The Unjust Steward," appeared in the *Patriotic Review*, and the British public learnt with dismay that a Crown official, a Steward of the Chiltern Hundreds, had so far forgotten the traditions of his office as to be capable of putting his money into anything more speculative than a stocking.

The wave of indignation that swept over the City—where, as is well known, the standard of honour is almost indecently high—will long be remembered. It was in vain that Sir Theodore insisted upon appearing before the Telephone Commission, and, in an impassioned and moving speech, offered to place his wife's passbook, his mother's passbook, and the passbooks of all his aunts on public exhibition at the Albert Hall. His popularity with the proletariat was shaken; those friends who had borrowed money from him for years avoided him in a marked manner, and many of the leading London hostesses ceased to invite him to Tango Teas.

Who will ever forget that painful scene in court when, in a voice that was scarcely audible above the sobs of the spectators, the Senior Telephone Commissioner read aloud the first page of Sir Theodore's own passbook: "Self, £50; Self, £24; London Hospital, 5s.; Self, £245; Self £67; Lady Biffin (Housekeeping Account), £2 10s.; Self, £35; Self, £500." Who will ever forget the look on my uncle's face as he left the court a broken man, never more to hold his head up in public again?

Britain had lost confidence in her idol; when he attempted to stand for election at the Junior Bath Club he received twice as many black balls as there were members voting, some of the latter, in their frenzied eagerness to ensure his exclusion, having dropped in three or four. And later, when another Member of Parliament was appointed to the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds, though my uncle never uttered a word of protest, he thenceforth unostentatiously discontinued his performance of the arduous duties that attach to this lofty office. "If I had only known," he said to me afterwards, in mournful accents which brought tears to my eyes, "if I had only known—I would have bought those Telephone Shares in my dear mother's name!"

Yes. In the eyes of the world Sir Theodore

Biffin was a disgraced, a ruined man, and since he was too proud to seek to justify his inexplicable conduct, it is only to-day that the public will learn the true facts of the case, and be in a position to make restitution to the statesman they have so gravely misjudged.

NOTE

THE characters described in the foregoing pages are entirely imaginary. No reference is made or intended to any living person.

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