

The World That Fred Made

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Bernard Darwin



Darwin Online (<http://darwin-online.org.uk/>).

1955

CHATTO & WINDUS

LONDON

PUBLISHED BY
Chatto & Windus Ltd

LONDON

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Clarke, Irwin & Co. Ltd

TORONTO

58.979
Darwin Online (<http://darwin-online.org.uk/>).

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
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"I BET," said a young gentleman of five to me, "I bet you're killed before me." And then as an afterthought he added, "And my Mummy too."

This may have been to soften any apparent brutality, but I think it was only a triumphant assertion of statistics. That was six years ago, and now he would probably make his prophecy in rather less direct language, just as he would no longer beg his mother not to die till he was old enough to go to the cinema by himself. Anyhow, I do most sincerely hope he was a true prophet and I am obliged to him for starting a modest train of thought. I have been trying to think of the ways in which his life in a changing world is likely to be different from mine.

In the first place then, he will never be Master Philip as I was Master Bernard. That form of address is fast vanishing if it has not gone altogether. When he received a letter thus addressed to him he strongly resented it. Perhaps he suspected in the envelope a spirit of mockery. It was explained to him, by way of excuse for the writer, that as grown-up men are called "Mister", so little boys are sometimes called "Master", but he continued to protest that "they must not do it". The disappearance of any mere manner of address is of no moment, and indeed it is probably much better that children should be called simply by their Christian names by the entire household. But the disappearance of this particular one represents a very real loss. It means that this small boy and countless others like him will to a large extent miss the happiness and the interest and the companionship of much adored servants. All the capacity for adoring them is still there; but there are now so few on whom it can spend itself. The belief in their omnipotence



and omniscience is as ready as ever it was to be called forth. Philip, in talking of a beloved gardener, asked with complete solemnity, "Could Fred make the world?" That he had actually done so seemed improbable, but who could doubt that one so gifted could if he had a mind to it?

It was on that same day or perhaps a little later that a sound of hammering made me look out of my window. There stood Philip and a young companion gazing spell-bound. Fred was putting up the bird table and as I looked I felt myself once more in the stable-yard or the garden at my old home, Down House in Kent, watching a departed generation of the universally accomplished. Not only could they and can they do anything; they know everything. "Is this your car?" I was asked. I said that it was. The statement might be true, but it would be better to have it confirmed from a really trustworthy source. "Is it, Fred?"

Were those old friends a little spoiling? Sometimes perhaps they were. They were endlessly kind, they unwearyingly answered questions, they could find time to make things such as toy wooden swords or at a later stage high-jumping poles. But the affection they inspired was not in the least in the nature of cupboard love; it was utterly genuine. Then they did such intensely interesting things that could be watched for ever. One grows lamentably incurious in later life so that the spectacle of someone digging in the kitchen garden, jamming his foot down on the spade, heaving up the resulting spadeful and then pausing to wipe his brow, is no longer a wholly satisfying one. I was very lucky in being brought up during my earlier years at my grandfather's home, which was a comparatively large establishment, and, though certainly not conducted on any gorgeous scale, had yet the normal staff for a comfortable country house, which seems today in retrospect positively enormous. So I had a wide choice of friends and allies and most of them I can still see with astonishing clearness and hear their voices even though their words have for the most part grown dim past recall.

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Beyond doubt it was the men that were in a little boy's eyes the more fascinating, for they did more exciting things, and even their clothes possessed a certain thrill. Long before I took any interest in ties of my own, or indeed in ties of grown-ups in general, there was a charm about the white ones tied criss-cross (they were doubtless made-up, but youth knew no such invidious and artificial distinctions) to be met with in the stable-yard. And Fred, the groom, of a much earlier vintage of Freds, wore in his a metal horse-shoe pin which roused unstinted admiration. Indeed it is now almost all that I remember about him. The stable-yard was an alluring place, but the truly sacred shrine was the pantry and Jackson, the butler, the leading deity in my mythology. Men servants in literature may be essentially good like Jeeves or villains like Lattimer and Morgan, but they are almost invariably suave and polished. Jackson was certainly very unlike many of them, being neither impressive in bearing nor courtly in manner. I think he had once been a groom and became one again after leaving us. He was by no means an orthodox butler, not very tidy and not at all smart, nor, I imagine, very efficient. He could not always retain a due gravity at meals. I find in a letter of my grandmother's an account of a little scene in which I took part at the age of seven. The conversation was about the play of "Electra." I asked if it was nice. My grandmother said it was very nice. "What is it about?" I asked. "About a woman murdering her mother," said my grandmother. This was too much for Jackson. In a less quiet or more worldly household he might not have kept his place, but he was a beloved creature. He made me a beautiful sentry-box in the orchard and a long tail for a kite and many other things I have ungratefully forgotten. He was a little man with very red cheeks, little loose curly wisps of side whiskers, and in some indefinable manner he had the aspect of a comic character upon the stage. He had rather an argumentative way of talking in the sense that he stated all the pros and cons of a question with a laborious clarity, as if he would say "I put it to you, sir?"

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In his sweetness and guilelessness of disposition and his rather tortuous explanations there seems to me in looking back a little of Joe Gargery about him. At the same time he had an element of something which Joe Gargery did not possess. I could not go so far as to say he was a "card", but he might have been called in the language of the servants' hall a "cure". Jackson could sometimes be lured out to bowl me a few balls on the lawn or on a pitch in the field, and if he allowed himself to be bowled out he exhibited transports of disgust, which did not wholly deceive, but gave pleasure as an exhibition of the comedian's art at its highest.

To sit perched on the edge of an oil-cloth covered table in the pantry and see him clean the plate was at all times entrancing. I am not sure that he cleaned it very well and I am quite sure that he preferred turning to the passion of his life, the making of models with pieces of cork. No doubt he began with humble tasks, but he seems to me to have been engaged for years and years upon his masterpiece, which was a model, done to reasonably accurate scale, of Down House. Its consumption of cork and glue must have been immense and it really was a monument of industry. The treatment of the bow-windows and the glass in the roof of the veranda struck me as the high-water mark of human ingenuity. On leaving my grandmother he took the model with him, and when I used to go and see him as an old man in his retirement, it occupied an almost inconveniently large space in his best parlour. He became anxious as to its future, hoping that it might be preserved as a monument to my grandfather, "Master" as he always called him, and having I think vague hopes of the British Museum. There was a painful and inexplicable reluctance on the part of public institutions to give it space, but ultimately Sir Karl Pierson housed it. Where I am not now sure, but I know Jackson and Mrs Jackson were bidden to go and see it in its permanent home, and his contribution thus made to the family history, his spirit was at rest.

Mrs Jackson was strangely different from her husband,

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being the most perfectly tidy person I ever saw, with a row of shiny black buttons down the front of her black dress and an overwhelming sense of propriety. She must have often endured tortures of apprehension over her husband's comparatively jovial and carefree demeanour. However, she bore with him patiently and affectionately, thinking that men were by nature a little outrageous and to be endured as heaven in its inscrutable wisdom had made them. To go to tea with Mrs Jackson with everything in the room as shining and clean as a new pin was a high treat. Her conversation was most agreeable and yet in one respect a little agonising. She had been a nurse and would tell me all about the one little boy, a solitary little boy like me, whom she had looked after. This was most interesting, but what was hard to bear was the fact that he had had a beautiful suit of white flannel in which to play cricket, whereas I had to play in my ordinary clothes. I think, too, but this I may have invented, that he had been allowed to see the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussauds, which I had not. At any rate he was horribly enviable. He was to me like a jagged tooth round which the tongue cannot resist playing. I had to ask about him and yet I came near to hating him.

There was no society so enthralling as Jackson's, but there were others who provided much pleasant watching. John the coachman was soothing and tranquil rather than exciting company, as tranquil as the horses he drove. Our horses, as I remember them, had names to which they were singularly ill adapted. Flyer indeed may once have been worthy of hers, but she had long outgrown it when I knew her, an old white mare living in honourable retirement in the field. Tara, whom John with quite unconscious irony insisted on calling "Tearer", was only seen to be moving by reference to the hedges, but indeed the most fiery of steeds would soon have aged prematurely under the calm, compelling spell of John's driving. Neither Flyer nor Tara nor Druid were calculated to inspire any passion for horses, nor have I ever really acquired it, though later I liked going

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for rides round Cambridge; but there was the smell of the harness-room, the sound of John's conscientious hissing as he washed the carriage and, above all, the beauty and mystery of the whips. What can be lovelier than a carriage whip, with its gnarled and knobbly surface and its silver-mounted handle unless it be the carter's whip which is mounted in brass? Even the tax-cart whip of a plain red-brown colour as befitting its lowlier station, was full of romance. The mere sight of the whips made the coach-house a palace of enchantment. Near the coach-house moreover, set in a grove of laurels, was the well-house and the sound of "the well wheel's creaking tongue" could tear me even from the whips. It was a tremendous moment when the bucket at last reached the surface, breaking through its wooden gates, with an air so fresh and triumphant, as if it had never done such a thing before. It had something of the air of a popular comedian dashing on to the stage, sure of a great reception. It was Tommy Price, the under-gardener, who ruled in the well-house, and over him there hung a glamour of over the hills and far away. He had an upright carriage and a semi-military manner of saluting and he came from nobody knew where, except that he was once in an unguarded moment heard to throw out hints of a youth in Herefordshire. He was generally believed to be a deserter, and I had visions of a red-coated escort coming to take him away, but nothing so dramatic ever happened, and he may after all have been a sphinx without a secret. If he was a deserter, his country got its own back from him in the end, for he left no will and no relations and his considerable savings were swept into the national coffers.

Tommy Price lived permanently at Downe but John came to Cambridge with my grandmother in the winter. He had some good-natured sons, who played with me and found me, I am afraid, an exigent playmate. They ran races with me round the Sand Walk which they allowed me to win, as I am now shamefully convinced, by dropping into a walk whenever they were safely hidden by the trees.



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Amy Ruck, the author's mother

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To turn to youth's lady friends, Mrs Evans the cook must have precedence by reason of her office just as she had her courtesy title. She afterwards made an eminently suitable marriage in the village. I must have known her well as I called her "Evvy", but I connect her now almost entirely with a comet. This comet, over which the world was greatly agitated, was to be on view on a certain night and I was duly aroused to see it. It was all very dark and exciting, but the most exciting thing was that in order to get at a trap door on to a flat piece of roof I must be conducted through one of the maids' bedrooms. The comet sulked and refused to show itself, but I had seen Mrs Evans in bed and the vision abides.

Then there was Jane the head housemaid who, on going away to get married, gave me a beautiful picture of Cirencester Church with its tower of golden stone, like a child's snow-storm under a glass case. Her image has grown very dim. Not so that of Harriet, her subaltern, who succeeded her and remained a dear friend until she died a very old woman only a few years ago. Harriet was sonsy and pink and handsome, with a laugh not to be quelled that rang through the house, sometimes penetrating the dining-room at inappropriate moments when solemn people had come to luncheon. In my earlier memories she is connected with the long mysterious passage on the first floor, not merely because in it was a dark cupboard full of brooms and shadows, but for a more personal and disgraceful reason. The passage was my indoor cricket pitch with a little red fire-engine at one end for the wicket. Almost immediately above it was a skylight so that the batsman could see what he was about. Not so the bowler, who was in comparatively Stygian blackness and so could not see the projectile, in the form of a lawn-tennis ball which came at his or her head with great velocity at a range of seven or eight yards. The intrepid Harriet bowled very slow lobs which even my juvenile arm could hit straight at the bowler's head with some force, nor, I fear, was I notable for any chivalrous restraint. Harriet

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in her pink print gown and her apron, bowling gingerly and then retreating at speed to a little refuge by the staircase to avoid the cannonade is a familiar picture, filling me at once with shame and affection.

She remained long after all the rest of the household had vanished; remained when my grandmother's household lived half the year at Cambridge and half at Downe; remained, after my grandmother had died, with my Aunt Bessy at Cambridge, and only after my aunt's death retired to live with relations in the *Great Expectations* country near Rochester.

She was no great scholar; I am not sure that she was not originally taught to write in my grandmother's household; but she was a good and faithful correspondent, though she hampered herself by a somewhat antiquated and feudal style. She would never say "I hope you are quite well," but "I hope Mr and Mrs Bernard are quite well," and turned all her sentences after this pattern. With my aunt she went once or twice abroad, and showed a much wider toleration of foreigners and a greater interest in their countries than one would have expected of one so redolent of the Kentish soil. She had come to Down House quite young, having had I think just one previous place and stayed with the family for nearly all the rest of her life, the friend of three generations or indeed of four. No doubt she changed, but she changed wonderfully little in my eyes at any rate, being always comely and pink and capable of that fine rotund, healthy laugh that no baize doors could stifle.

I cannot help wondering how a Harriet recalled to life would accommodate herself to the modern conditions. Whom would she find to laugh with now? Save in exceptional households she would be very lonely. It is rash to make assertions about an existence seen from the outside, but surely in many houses that life of the servants' hall must often have been very cheerful. It certainly seemed so, and that in much later years than I have been recalling. My children had the same adorations for equally adorable people in my aunts' houses. They would barely say their how-do-

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you-dos to their hostess before flinging themselves into the kitchen to distribute and receive hugs of welcome.

It cannot be denied that maids were angelically spoiling. In one of my father's letters to my grandmother when I was about two years old, he describes how I was left for a few minutes in charge of William the footman, "and when I came back William was riding him on your horse to the rapturous admiration of six maids in the back regions". Whether they were quite so rapturous two years later I do not know, for it seems I was very exacting and insisted on them going down the wooden slide, "like kangaroos", which apparently meant in a hunched-up attitude. Even the staidest seem to have made at least a pretence of conforming.

And after all these were not exceptional experiences; they were once the common and blissful lot. There were always angels of the kitchen or stable-yard. Many people of a reasonable age after reading so far have only to throw the book on one side and lose themselves in dreams of the past. They can "roam in a crowded mist" of those who seemed to possess all the arts and aptitudes, who made the best jokes and played the best games and yet bore all these honours so lightly and were ready to display their gifts with such un-failing kindness. If, as Philip thinks, Fred could make the world, I wish he would make it again on that ancient and pleasant pattern, but I am afraid that is too difficult even for him.



DOWNE AND CHILDHOOD

THOSE old friends belonged to Downe in Kent which is my real home. My mother died when I was born and my father took me with him from his own smaller house to live with my grandfather and grandmother at Down House. We always spelt the village Down, but now Downe, which I believe is in fact the older spelling, is universal (except in the name of my grandfather's house) and I have long since given in to it. Downe has actually been my home for two long spells in my life and has always felt essentially so. Down House was home for my first twenty years; that is to say I always went back there in the summer though the family headquarters had moved to Cambridge. Then in 1926 my wife and I with our three children went to live in a house called Gorringes, once a dower-house of the Lubbocks, at the other end of the village, and I only left it after her death in 1954. We were very happy there: I am fond of Gorringes and was truly sad to leave it; but I think childhood feelings for places possess an acuter quality than can any grown-up's. It is about Down House that I still feel most romantic and devoted, and now that I have left Downe for ever, there has come freshly back to me something of the intense nostalgia that I felt for it when I was first transplanted as a small boy to Cambridge.

Downe is less than twenty miles from London but still peaceful and countrified, though very different from what it was when my grandfather settled there and had to drive nine miles or so to Croydon to get a train to London. It has changed much since my own early days. Orpington was then a village with a small station and a single platform. Now it is a large dormitory town. Bromley was a country town and now it is in effect London; but Downe is cut off from it by

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Hayes and Keston Commons with their gorse and their birch trees, two as pretty and rural Commons as anyone could wish to see, and Keston still has its windmill. Holwood, where Mr Pitt lived and was tackled by Wilberforce about the slave trade on a seat in the park "looking over the Vale of Keston", is mercifully in the green-belt. On a winter's day you can still go a long walk by field footpaths and meet never a soul. Only the road from Bromley is wide enough for a bus. When we thought of going to live at Gorringes, my Aunt Etty (Mrs Litchfield) warned my wife that the house was surrounded by "a congeries of muddy lanes", but it is the tortuous lanes that have helped to save Downe, just as they had once helped the smugglers bringing up their cargoes from the Weald, of whom some memories still lingered when my grandfather first came to the village. There is a certain tree in a certain wood with a cave at its foot which they are said to have used as a store-house, and I hope and believe they did.

I do not think that it is pure native patriotism that makes me say that the country round is charming and lovable. Aunt Etty in her book *Emma Darwin*, writing of her parents' search for a country home, said, "We have always been sorry that a prettier bit of the South of England was not found." I cannot find it in my heart wholly to forgive that. She had a hankering after Surrey, and indeed I have nothing to say against Surrey except that it is not Kent. I maintain the country is pretty. I love the big rolling, cultivated downs and the deep valleys with never a stream running along the bottom: I love the chalk and the little flowers that like the chalk, and the "shaws", those strips of wood, often no more than sprawling hedgerows, that grow on the terraces above the valleys. And if we had no more than a peep of view from the garden, there was a lovely, peaceful view from the Sand Walk, across the fields, where is now a golf course, to the Big Woods. A little further afield from the top of Westerham Hill there is as noble a stretch of view as heart could desire.

I think the Darwin family were altogether too modest about poor Downe. The year after my grandfather went there he wrote to a kinsman, Mr Fox, "It is a good, very ugly house." It may have been ugly then, before my grandfather had built the bow-window, extending through three storeys, and the new drawing-room with the big veranda near the lime trees. It is not in the least a beautiful or distinguished house, but a big, pleasant, unpretending one, and as I look at a drawing of it with the really noble row of lime trees, the bright flower-beds and the sundial, and the old mulberry tree under my nursery window, everything is full of sunlight. There never was a better garden to sit out in and the "live murmur of a summer's day" always reminds me of Downe.

I am thankful to say that though I have often seen the house since the family left it, and much in it has necessarily been changed, I have only to shut my eyes and other people's furniture and pictures vanish and I can see it all as freshly and clearly as it was sixty years ago when my grandmother died, down to the croquet mallets in the cloak-room and the swing between the two yew trees on the lawn. The garden is changed in all manner of small ways which I naturally cannot help resenting; one of the great limes has gone; so have most of the apple trees in the orchard and in particular the Beauty of Kent tree in which I used to perch, and under which was the grave of Polly, my grandfather's white fox terrier. Incidentally when Sir Buckston Browne bought Down House he insisted, with too anxious a verisimilitude, on putting a stuffed copy of Polly in a basket in my grandfather's study. We all hated it but, said the kind caretaker, "Never mind, sir, the moth will soon get into it," and sure enough it did.

I am glad to say the old oak survives on the way to the Sand Walk, and so does the ash tree that used to thrill me with the blackness of the hollow trunk, due to a tramp having slept there and set it on fire. More important still is the big beech with a monstrous head growing out of it,

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which some people call Bismarck and some a rhinoceros. The Sand Walk was entirely a creation of my grandfather's, originally a piece of open field on which he had planted a little wood. The walk, on which he took his constitutional for forty years, ran round the wood, open on one side with a view over the fields to the Big Woods, dark, leafy and formidable, with the densest of shade, on the other. In the heart of the wood were two small clay pits with one of which I associate from some remote occasion, perhaps my birthday, the delightful smoky smell of a bonfire and potatoes cooked over it.

After we had left Down House a famous Girls' School was housed there for a while, and I remember to have heard that they called the Sand Walk "Sandy". It was like their confounded impudence I thought. Yet I cannot help feeling that the Darwins themselves were not blameless in the matter of traditional names. As children they had never enquired what were the old established names of the fields and the woods and had given them their own. When I went back to live at Gorringes I found all manner of engaging names that I had never heard of and the family had never used. I must say that our name "The Big Woods" does shed over them "a gloom, a glamour", suggesting vast, mysterious depths of forest with the sunlight never breaking through, not wholly justified by the fact. I could not give it up now, but the proper names of Larkin's Wood and Snotsdale Wood, Lady's Wood and Sow Wood, are the real country thing. On the way to those woods is a meadow called Pooklands from time immemorial, fully as venerable, I am sure, as any Pook's Hill of Mr Kipling's in Sussex. I think the family called it Stony Field, a very poor exchange, and they knew nothing of Piggleden Bottom—what a gorgeous name!—the valley, sometimes very muddy valley, along which now runs the long hole on the golf course.

Crow Hill they called Chalk Hill, and indeed almost the only name they left untouched was the charming Hangrove, the little hanging wood, with the slippery, sloping path

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through it, which led to Orchiss Bank. As to Orchiss Bank I give in; I own I never could bear to think of it as Rough Pell, which is its right name. It is a dear little platform of turf, one of the few bits of genuine, close-cropped, chalky, down turf left, with a typical shaw at its back. It was the great place for picnics and had a view over the steep, flinty Cudham Hill to Cudham Church, amidst its yew trees at the top. The houses in Downe too had pleasant old names after the Kentish fashion, recalling some long vanished owners—Gorringes, Petleys, Tromers and Goddards, though the last had alas! become Downe Hall before my time, a sad change for the worse.

It was a dry country, as dry as a bone. There were ponds to be sure, green and weedy, the village pond and the pond in Farthing Street and another close to Mrs Smith's at Downe Court, where I have a dim but enchanting recollection of seeing sheep being dipped. Downe Court had its place, I believe, in Domesday Book and it had and still has a row of wonderful old oaks in the field at the foot of the garden. One of them in particular, though now little more than the ghostly shell of a tree, is yet of an inexpressibly noble and dignified mien. And I must tell an odd ghostly story about these oaks, dating from my time at Gorringes. A lady, who was supposed to have something vaguely "psychic" about her, was walking across the meadow towards these trees when she saw a crowd of people dressed in the costume of some centuries before and apparently about to hang someone to the branches of the big oak. She thought they were actors performing a scene in a film. Then as she drew nearer, they all melted and resolved themselves, and there was nothing there but the oak and the green meadow. I tell this story as I have heard it, I hope accurately. It is, I think, rather a good one of its kind, not unlike that famous one of the two ladies who saw wonderful things at Versailles.

That story is a complete anachronism, and I must get back to where I started with my own minute self at Downe

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in 1876; but I hope I have said enough to show that there could hardly have been a pleasanter place for a small boy, and further to justify my sticking up for it against any number of aunts and against the whole county of Surrey.

My father had intended to be a doctor and was in fact an M.D., but he had never practised and had become his father's assistant at Downe. He wrote regularly about me to my mother's mother, Mrs Ruck, whom I called Nain, which is the Welsh for grandmother. She kept all his letters and when she died they were given back to him and he made from them a little book, which was privately printed, called *The Story of a Childhood*. The story goes on till I was fifteen, but by far the greater part of it deals with the first years of my life, and with events which have left few if any traces on my memory. So I can look at my earlier self, as far as possible without egotism, almost as if I were reading about some other little boy, although in familiar surroundings. Different people's powers of remembering early events vary very greatly and such a story as this makes rather a good test in one's own individual case. As far as I can tell the first event of which I have even a faint recollection happened when I was a little over three, and I think four or even five years old is more honestly the limit of my early memories.

To read again this little book of my father's is to feel almost guiltily what a happy childhood I had and how I was spoilt. True there was what must be the irreparable gap left by a mother, though a child is unconscious of it, and likewise the absence of brothers and sisters and indeed of any small children to play with except occasional visitors. My moral character may well have felt the want of them but consciously I did not; indeed, I have a general rather than a particular recollection of hating visiting small boys who had to be given "fair shares" of my toys. If a child has plenty of willing grown-up playmates and further has any powers of imagination so that he can invent games for himself, I doubt if he misses young company and I had, I am almost ashamed to think, a houseful of slaves.

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Down House was a big, comfortable house, with one of the loveliest and most romantic passages in which any child could hide or seek, and an eminently playable garden. I do not think my grandmother was a spoiling one, except for a little weakness for bribery in minor matters. At different times I was bribed not to sit out any longer in the hot sun while making a sketch of the house, and to eat cheese and mustard. Whether she thought it a pity to miss those two pleasures or merely a mistake to be unorthodox I cannot now determine. If anything really mattered she could be firm enough, but my Aunt Bessy was a slave, Jackson and Harriet already described were slaves and so were all the minor luminaries such as my nurse, Nanna or Mary Anne, and John, who let me play endlessly with the whips in the coach-house, and Fred the groom who conducted me for rides on a donkey.

My father was undoubtedly a slave though he tried hard not to be, and now and again boasted in his letters of having resolutely had a battle royal with me and won it. There is something dreadfully pathetic in the picture given in these letters, at which I try to look quite objectively, of the young father (he was twenty-eight when my mother died) heart-broken by the blow, from which in a sense I doubt if he ever recovered, picking up the pieces of his life again and clinging desperately to the child that was left to him. When I was about two and he was away working in a laboratory at Wurtzburg, he writes to Nain: "My old German master is always giving me sentences to translate which makes my blood run cold, such as 'When I came to my house, I found my son very ill'." Another time he wrote, "I think I should be helpless with fear if he was ill." The shock of my mother's death had gone very deep and I think he always had a spasm of fear when he heard of a new baby in the family about to be born. He wanted to have his own child all to himself, as he admitted, and in fact I did adore him in an utterly different way from anyone else.

I do not think anyone could ever have had a more angelic



Darwin Online (<http://www.darwinonline.org.uk/>).
Down House, 1903



Pantlludw in the snow

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father, nor one more gifted with powers of entrancing children. For one thing he was always there, except when he went away to Strassburg or Wurtzburg, since he worked in the house and so was available for play at odd times, unlike unfortunate fathers who can only see their children when they get home from work at night. Then he had great powers of invention and imagination in the matter of soldiers' uniforms, and his pictures of German Uhlans in coloured chalks almost made up for his absence. He was a naturally amusing draughtsman as he was later a natural writer of amusing verse in any kind of poetry game. He could invent fascinating and terrific names for villains who lived in the passage. He was prepared to make sheaths for swords and to give endless rides on his shoulders up and down the passage, where the villains, especially one called Humpletog, were likely to spring out from round a shadowy corner. Here is a characteristic picture of him in a letter written when I was a little over three. "B. was very pathetic about the old man of Aosta in the Nonsense Book, 'He had a fine cow but he lost her' and she is discovered up a tree. I entered into the grief of the old man too vividly, and I saw the tears come into his eyes; but he made me tell it again, and when I tried it in a cheerfuller manner, he said, 'Say about when he cried'. I could see he was nearly crying, so I said, 'I don't think I had better tell you about it if it makes you cry' on which he burst into tears and said, 'Why did she go up a tree?' I consoled him by the cow finding a most beautiful bird's nest."

That was a stroke of characteristic genius about the bird's nest. Nobody else in the house could have thought of that and he remained unique and unrivalled in a house reasonably full of competitors for my favours. I was for the first few years of my life the only grandchild. Only my eldest Uncle William was married and he lived relatively far away at Southampton and had no children. The other uncles were in and out of the house and my Uncle George was an endlessly devoted playfellow. He like my father was good at

uniforms, and he spent a long time making me a magnificent wooden pistol. At one time incidentally I had three pistols hanging at the head of my bed. What prodigious nonsense is talked about a love of tin soldiers or toy weapons making a child "militaristic"! The feeling whether for a plume or a battle axe is a romantic one. Nobody ever wanted to be a soldier less than I did, nor were my sentiments in the least changed when I became one. I should have a much greater respect for myself if I had wanted to. My bloodthirstiness was purely literary, as when I demanded that a message should be sent to Messrs Swears & Wells, who made my clothes and apparently had not sent them in time, "Tell them I'm sharpening my gun."

"I can't imagine," my father wrote, "what his intense curiosity about uniforms will turn into. I should guess into a knowledge of some kind of detail." In some ways it was a good guess, for in a rather futile and useless manner I have been very accurate about certain kinds of detail. I am an ill man to bet with about facts. An old Cambridge friend of mine, the late Sir Walter Fletcher, a man of science and F.R.S., used to tell me I had the Darwin brain gone addled.

The earliest bell that is rung in memory by these letters of my father's, very dim and possibly quite fallacious, is in 1879, when I was three. I certainly do remember a gentleman coming all the way from Bromley to cut my hair, and that in a general way I resented him, but the deplorable scene that ensued is certainly dim. It appears that my poor father had to hold me in my chair while I screamed and kicked; "the snippings of hair made a plaster with the tears on his face and got on his tongue somehow; he was trembling all over and when he could get a word, it was to appeal to Nanna to save him."

Another ancient memory suddenly stirred is that of an affection for green gooseberries, the harder and sourer the better. I cite it only as showing what a wise old man my great-grandfather, Dr Robert Darwin of Shrewsbury, must have been, and indeed my grandfather always called him the

wisest man he had ever known. It seems that Uncle William as a small boy had been supposed to be delicate and had doubtless had too much fuss made about him as Darwins habitually had. "Let him run about and get his feet wet and eat green gooseberries," had been the grandfather's prescription. It is a pity he did not doctor all his descendants.

I am on firmer ground in recalling the arrival from Strassburg of some soldiers, not tin but of stout paper or cardboard. "I sent B. a lot of brown Austrian artillerymen," my father wrote, "which I hear gave him untold satisfaction." They certainly did: I remember their coats perfectly and their guns and limbers. Indeed I believe that somewhere at the bottom of a drawer one or two of them still survive. They have turned up before now, as on the moraine of a glacier, and will do so again. Of them at least I am sure, neither I nor anyone else can have invented them. Brown, of course they were brown, a rich deep chocolate, and I rather think they had blue trousers.

My grandfather, whom I called Baba, appears but seldom in my father's little book, although I have a very clear vision of him. I remember as a great event a little walk that he took me all by myself, across a ploughed field behind Orpington station to cut off the carriage at the bottom of the hill. It appears that when I came down to lunch I wanted to have whistling matches with him and formed a low estimate of his powers. Very likely I was not allowed to see much of him since he was so often tired. One agreeable little story I found of his being very tired and stretching himself with the words, "Oh ho, it's a bad world," to which I, aged three and a very small bit, replied: "I think so too." I remember well the day of his death, my father explaining to me that he had been so ill he would not be ill any more, and my being secretly a little affronted at being not supposed to know what deadness was. Through the drawing-room window I had a vision of my aunts sitting and crying. My father and I went a walk, very enjoyable but a little solemn, in the Sand Walk and picked lords and ladies.

Chapter Three

A MOVE TO CAMBRIDGE

THIS idyllic life could not go on for ever and my grandfather's death inevitably changed it. There was a family move to Cambridge, though Down House was kept as long as my grandmother was alive, and she lived for another fourteen or fifteen years. She spent all the summer there and I went for long visits, but still they were only visits; Cambridge had supplanted it, and I don't think I ever quite forgave Cambridge.

At Cambridge there grew up a Darwin colony on the Huntingdon Road. My grandmother's house, The Grove, was in the middle; at one end my Uncle Horace built himself a house, The Orchard, which will in a few years be the home of the new ladies' college, New Hall, and at the further end my father built Wychfield. The three together made quite an estate in a small way, and a fine playground on the very edge of the town.

Cambridge was naturally a great change, but a greater one was that my father was married again, to Ellen Crofts, a lecturer at Newnham. My poor father broke it to me, in the summer-house at the end of the Sand Walk, and I received the news with floods of tears which must, I am afraid, have given him a horrid stab. I don't think I was consciously unhappy about it for long; Ellen was always as kind as could be in reading to me and playing with me, but there was some feeling of reserve; perhaps she tried too hard to be a good stepmother and never to outstep those limits. My devotion to my father was as great as ever. "I left poor little B.," he wrote in 1885, "leaning against the wall, crying aloud at my going; he never alters one bit in fidelity, poor good little boy." I am afraid I made excessive use of my pocket handkerchief and must have hurt my father some-

times in his tenderest quarters. I was not conscious of being jealous, but in an obscure way I think I must have been.

Gradually there arose (I am now looking on to later years) a kind of perverse contrariness, which was entirely my own fault, a tendency to go in the opposite direction from those around me. That could not account for my disliking science, for science never liked me and nobody ever for one moment tried to bring us together, but I noticed it in other ways. When my father and Ellen and my small sister Frances were going abroad I set myself against it. It was not merely that golf and Wales called me; it was a deliberate determination against "abroad" in general and looking at picture galleries and beautiful places. I should have been interested enough if I would have let myself, but I was not going to be. I think in my perverse young brain I resolved to be as unlike the Darwins as possible. It was a frame of mind which, had I been born in a good, stodgy, Blimpish fox-hunting family, would have made me a desperate little prig. The Darwins were all Liberals, at least until Mr Gladstone's Home Rule Bill, which nearly gave my Aunt Ety an apoplectic fit. They were not very great politicians to be sure, but they were definitely Liberals, whereupon the absurd infant that was me determined to be a good true-blue Tory which he has been ever since and always will be. This all belongs of course to a later period, but now we have got it out of the way once and for all.

Those first years at Cambridge were naturally full of changes of all kinds and one of them was in having friends of my own age. The two chief ones were Edward and Willy Clark, the two sons of the famous and beloved J. W. of Scrope House, a great Cambridge character. Willy and I were of almost the same age and went together to the preparatory class at the Perse School. We were separated for a little while when he went to Aysgarth and I to Summerfield, but were united again in College at Eton. We went up to Trinity in the same year, we lived together for some time in the Temple and we married sisters. Our careers were far

apart, for he became a distinguished civil servant, a member of Council in India, High Commissioner in Canada and in South Africa, but we saw each other regularly all our lives; we even played golf together, though this was the one thing I could do much better than he could; he remained all my life my closest and oldest friend.

It so happened that College at Eton in my time had a considerable sprinkling of other Cambridge boys. There was John Shuckburgh, also in course of time a distinguished civil servant, Alfred Conybeare, a beloved monument for years among Eton masters and ultimately Vice-Provost, and Alfred Finch, who rowed bow in the Cambridge boat of 1894. I did not know them well till Eton times however, and my memories of the children's parties are of stern, fierce Creighton girls, daughters of the Bishop that was to be, and of Fanny Seeley, daughter of the historian, a kind girl who, with the best intentions, frightened me nearly out of my wits with a story of the ghost of a lady in blue velvet. The juvenile society of Cambridge must have been much smaller than it is today, since married Fellows of Colleges were still a comparatively new institution. I think I hated all the children more or less impartially.

It was doubtless the Clark family that introduced me to charades. J. W. was a devoted and learned patron of the drama and a great prop of the A.D.C., the undergraduate dramatic club. His own powers of acting were almost pathetically limited. I remember to have seen him play the part of the old Frenchman, in which Alfred Wigan had once been famous, in "The First Night", and also that of the village priest in "The Bells" who tells the story of the Jew's murder. Both efforts were ambitious rather than successful. Youthful parties at Scroope House generally took a theatrical form, for which the big double drawing-room was well suited, and Edward and Willy were both brought up to act, an early training which was of little avail.

My own theatre was the big barn at my grandmother's house, The Grove. It had its disadvantages, since the pig-

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sty was next door, while the audience had to sit on a bench in the cow-yard which was full of manure. However, it contained trusses of hay calculated to make good caverns and a dark and mysterious loft, also generally useful. Whether Willy and I acted there I am not sure. I chiefly connected it with a too ambitious performance of Ali Baba. My company consisted of the children of John the coachman. I am afraid on looking back that they were pressed into the service and had not wanted to act at all. At any rate they became perfectly paralysed and entirely declined to utter a word of their parts despite all my fervid prompting. It was in fact a dreadful failure except for the treasure in the forty thieves' cave. This consisted of vegetable marrows and old brass curtain rods, shining and beautiful. They looked as like gold as anyone had a right to expect, but properties alone, however opulent, cannot make a play.

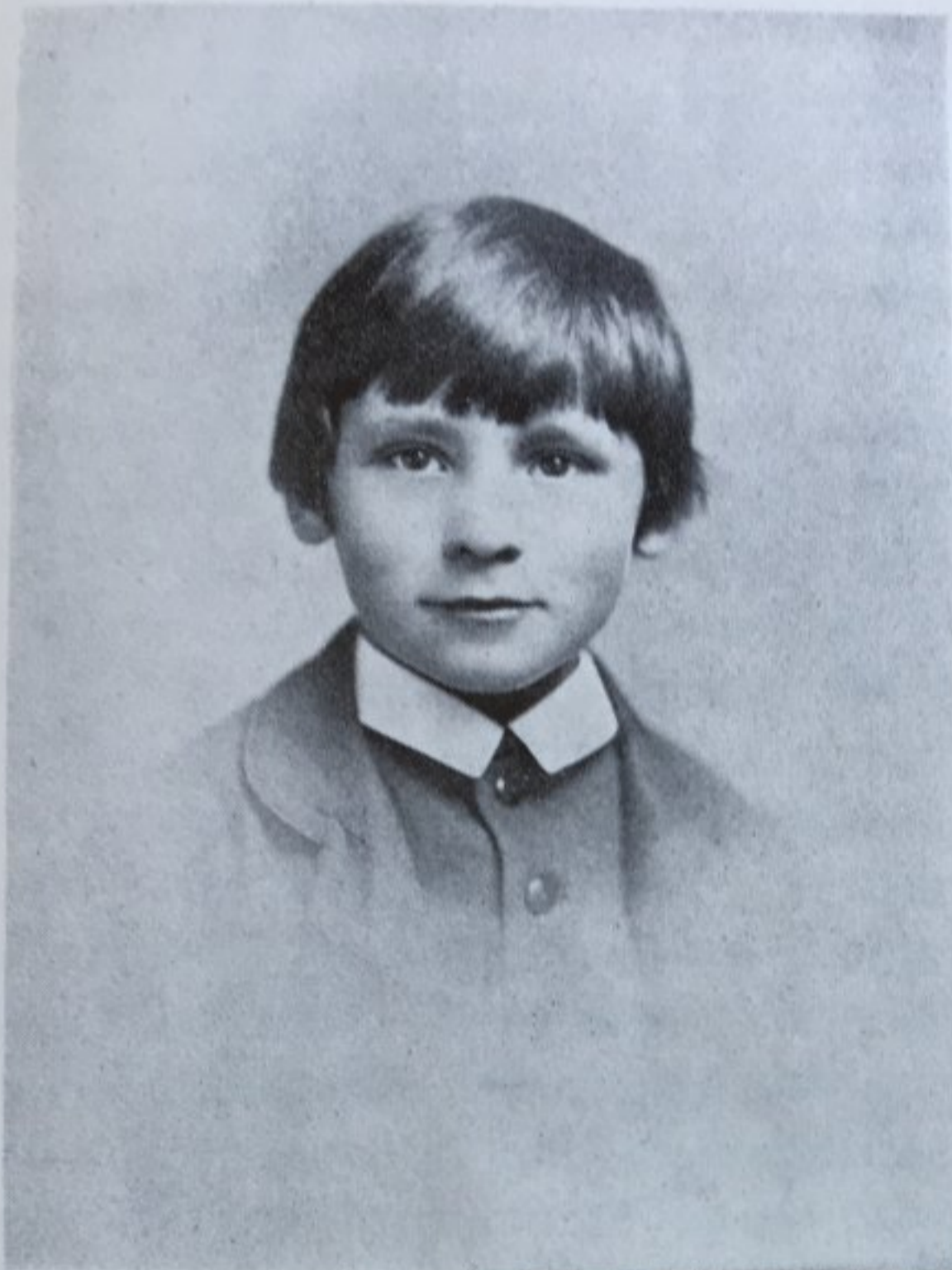
Before the preparatory class at the Perse there was a kind Scottish lady with a fiercely national accent, Miss Macleod Smith of Bateman Street, who taught me and the Ferrers boys from Caius. It appears that I began Euclid there and, which is truly singular, that I was deemed promising at it, since I invented propositions of my own in pious imitation. At the Perse I was reported as "very good" in mathematics and my father seems to have believed in this strange legend. I was undoubtedly industrious and liked my lessons. I seem even to have almost shocked my father by drawing unnecessary maps for the love of them; "if he was not such a lover of games I should think it an alarming symptom". I am afraid any alarm was in the end quite superfluous.

As far as my juvenile education was concerned Cambridge played no further part after I was eleven years old, for I then went to Summerfield, near Oxford, and after that to Eton, and have tried to say something of them in other chapters. Cambridge was still the main place for holidays, however, and to a hero-worshipping, game-playing little boy was full of interest, particularly in term-time. While I was still at a day school the May Term was full of larks. There was an occa-

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sional day of watching cricket at Fenner's with my father and there was the going down the river in a boat for the May races. Today I suppose everybody goes down to Ditton in a car and in about a quarter of an hour, but in my boyhood everybody or nearly everybody made up water-parties, often of more than one boat-load, and the spirit of picnic reigned. It was a long afternoon's entertainment with all three divisions racing one after the other, and when at last it was all over, the ensuing scrimmage was terrific. There was a sudden opening of flood-gates, and all the boats which had been packed tight under the bank simultaneously broke loose, with much shouting of "Look ahead" and the river a solid mass of boats. There was always a fear lest some facetious person on the towpath should do something wicked with the chain at the "Grind" and precipitate one into the water, though I never heard that anyone ever did. There was much queuing outside the lock on Midsummer Common and the slimy, green walls of a lock still have a sinister look to my landsman's eye. We always got home safely at last and it had been a capital spree as contrasted with the sometimes agonising excitement of Fenner's. Once the two were combined, for the Australians were playing at Cambridge at the time of the races, and from my boat I saw them with reverent eyes on the towpath. H. W. Bainbridge, the Cambridge captain, was escorting them and they looked quite commonplace in ordinary clothes, with walking sticks, not at all the young gods in white flannels of the day before at Fenners.

In the winter holidays there were always hopes of skating on flooded meadows and particularly on the noble stretch of Lingay Fen. It was a cheering thing to see that big expanse of ice, covered with people who had been largely brought up to skating and who swept along in rows with the genuine fenman's air. And the championships were so exciting that the names of the great men, in particular the Smarts and the Sees, still have a thrilling sound in my ears. James Smart, Fish Smart and Turkey Smart, James in



The
author

Darwin Online (<http://darwin-online.org.uk/>)

With
Uncle Horace



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a blue jersey as I visualise him and Fish in red and black stripes, Isaac See and George See. Today I know that the champions all skate with their hands behind their backs and they are doubtless right, as economy of movement is always right in any form of sport, but in those days no conquerors had come from Canada or Scandinavia, where men can skate all day long, and we still believed in the illustrious fenmen, who swung their arms as we all tried to do in pious imitation. With how majestic a rhythm they swept along the straight track up to the barrel! What a glorious white shower rose into the air as they turned round it with a grinding and spluttering of skates to race for home! I went to the pantomime at the Cambridge theatre on the night of the Championship and the funny man had a song with a refrain about this or that being "a novelty". He added a topical verse to the effect that Jim Smart had won the Championship but that was no novelty, and the house rose at him. I doubt if there will ever be any more topical verses about the skating Championship. **Those knights are dust and their good skates are rust.**

Into visions of games at Cambridge there comes a small figure in a blue smock and a red knitted cap, my sister Frances (now Mrs Cornford). I was nearly ten when she was born, so that I was quite a large boy, or even an undergraduate, when games became seriously worth the playing. We had as playfellows from The Orchard my cousin Ruth, a little older than Frances, and Nora, a contemporary, also in blue smocks. Their brother, Erasmus, must generally have been away at school. Our two chief games, both of an esoteric nature, were Chole and the Leaf Game. The ancient Belgian game of Chole will be familiar to those who have read Andrew Lang's historical chapter in the Badminton volume on Golf. As those are a rather select band I may roughly explain it. The game is a kind of cross-country golf in which one side undertakes to reach a mark or goal in a certain number of innings. An innings consists of, let us say, three shots, and after it comes the turn of the opponent, the

décholeur. He has one stroke, the *décholade*, in which he endeavours to put the ball into any abominably bad place, if possible a wholly unplayable one, he can reach. It has a great advantage over real golf in that it gives scope for direct hostility. In golf our malice may sparkle out of us in a crude and obvious manner when we see our enemy go into a bunker; in Chole we can ourselves put him there. A garden and a meadow, which constituted our battlefield, naturally contained some very awkward spots. In our case the *décholeur's* great ambition was either the woodshed or the pond. The woodshed was some distance off the direct line, and, apart from that, a very accurate stroke was wanted to steer the ball through the door. If accomplished it was almost necessarily a knock-out blow. The pond was more easily attainable and equally fatal. If neither of these winning galleries, if I may so term them in the language of another game, were within reach, the *décholeur* would sometimes attempt to drive the ball underground by hitting it hard on the top, but this was a difficult stroke and if it failed it left the goal wide open for the other party.

The club used by the three young ladies was a medium iron. Since the lies were bad they did not as a rule hit very far with it, which was just as well since the space was limited. I, being apart from my superior age a comparatively expert golfer, was handicapped by having to play with a left-handed club. Even so, years and strength told their tale, and I have a shameful recollection that my side was generally victorious. The supremely and delightfully malicious moment came when the *choleur* had just succeeded with the last stroke of his innings in getting out of some dreadful place into which the ball had been put. The *décholeur* waited grimly till he emerged, as a jailer might lie in wait for an escaping prisoner, and then popped him back again.

Chole was a fine game and we played it for hours together, till the dusk began to fall and indignant nurses screamed to their young charges to come in to tea. The Leaf Game was nearly always played in a failing light in autumn with tea

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imminent. Its season was necessarily a short one, in which the shrivelled red-brown leaves were just ripe to fall from the big beech tree, before the wind's attack. It was the simplest game in the world since the side which caught most leaves were the victors. Each side kept its own score, shouting it aloud, and this scoring required great honesty. Time and again one could have sworn one had felt the leaf crackle in one's hand and yet when the hand was opened it was not there. So there were constant cries of "Seventeen—no sorry—only sixteen." The leaves would come in a wild rush, so that one could make a big break of five or six at a time, to be followed by utter sterility. The most maddening of all perhaps was the slow twisty leaf. One watched its every movement, it was coming straight to hand and then, with some tiniest puff of wind, or perhaps out of pure devilry, it sailed leisurely over head just out of reach. The wind too behaved most perversely. For whole minutes together, as it seemed, it would die away altogether; we waited on tiptoe and not a leaf stirred. Then we would hear it growling away in the distance and back it would come, sweeping a whole harvest of leaves before it, so that the two scores rose by leaps and bounds. At such moments the most urgent cries from the nursery were disregarded.

*"The teapot waits, then let it wait
All on the hob a-heating!
One moment brief, one extra leaf
Is worth a world of eating."*

So wrote one of our poets of the Leaf Game. A noble game it was and the treacle tasted very good after it.

The Leaf Game was always played at Wychfield, since the beech tree was there, as essential a property as is the elm tree in Bad Calx to the Wall Game at Eton. Similarly the third of our private and particular games, Tennicroque, was played at The Orchard, since there was the only original and proper court, on the top floor landing. There was no carpet on this landing and that is important as making a

sufficiently fast floor. The game as regards rules is of the simplest. The two opponents sit in chairs at opposite ends of the court, each armed with a certain number of lawn tennis balls. A croquet ball is placed in the exact centre of the court. Each party tries to hit the croquet ball with a tennis ball so that it shall roll across the other's goal-line. The player may get out of his chair to retrieve balls, when he has run out of ammunition, but he can only throw a ball while seated on his chair. One or two sensations come back to me vividly. One is that of seeing the croquet ball advancing steadily on one's goal and holding one's fire to the very last moment, so as to hit it with certainty at close range and thus drive it triumphantly away, far back into enemy territory. Sometimes, if the enemy had been too prodigal of his store and one had coolly bided one's time, one might have under control the whole permissible stock of ammunition and could manœuvre accordingly. That was a triumphant feeling, full of wild hopes. It was a truly dreadful one, on the other hand, to see the croquet ball wobbling inexorably nearer and nearer with never a shot left in the locker with which to stop it. I have also a recollection of coming near to cheating on the point of being legally seated on one's chair. There was a measure of sharp practice in the way of reaching forward and tipping up the chair's back legs. Even as in Musical Chairs, there was honourable and dishonourable sitting.

Those two were communal games. When my sister and I were alone we played golf or cricket or occasionally lawn tennis, the latter a debased form of the game in which we tried to keep up a series of little pats backward and forward across the net as long as possible. The golf was perfectly serious, played on a pitching and putting course round the garden, my sister receiving, I think, the odds of a half which made a stern match of it. The cricket, on the other hand, played with a racket and a lawn tennis ball, was less solemn and I blush to say that I was regarded as exquisitely funny in my impersonations of various bowlers. Frances's eleven

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consisted merely of herself batting eleven times: my eleven, on the other hand, were definite personalities, and the most popular team was drawn, heaven knows why, from the ranks of the Chess Masters: Steinitz, Zukertort, Tarrasch, Tschigorin, and so on. I may not now be able to spell their names correctly, but I could still at some personal inconvenience give a rendering of Dr Tarrasch's head-over-heels action as a bowler. It was deemed a triumph of humour.

We played a good many paper games, Consequences of course and Heads, Bodies and Legs, and in particular the poetry game. Our form of it generally involved the bringing in of certain more or less incongruous words laid down beforehand. Sometimes, I think there was a set theme as well, such as an answer to a question, and sometimes we were free. My sister, who has since become a professional poet and an admirable one, has written that these games were very good discipline and I daresay they were. In reading some modern poetry I could wish that the authors had been made to play poetry games with more rigid rules when they were young. All our poems were written out in the poetry book, including one or two by my father, who was an altogether outstanding player when he chose to exert himself. I doubt if any other Darwin of his generation could have written poetry, good, bad or indifferent to save his life. It seems shameful that I cannot quote any of my sister's early verse, but I cannot, save only a little poem of thanks, a metrical "Collins", to my Uncle Leonard after a visit to London, beginning:

*"Great London with its twinkling lights
And hansom-cabulous delights."*

She was very small at the time and it was an enchanting little poem. I used to write her a Valentine regularly for several years, and I was called on for the prologue when all three families of cousins, Wychfield, The Orchard and Newnham Grange combined to produce a Christmas play. "The Magic Snowboot" was a great work, and the verse, which I have re-read more than once since, astonishingly

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neat and good. The acting, except for my cousin Margaret, then deemed to have the world of the stage at her feet, was less distinguished.

These amusements that I have been trying to describe took place mostly in my winter and Easter holidays from school. In the summer we went away to the sea, for golf for my father and me and presumably sand castles for Frances. First to Felixstowe, then Cromer and then Eastbourne; after that the rest of the family took to going abroad and I declined and went firmly to Wales. Nothing very exciting happened at any of those three seaside places, but I must not forget one Christmas holiday that was exciting. When I was fifteen, I went after Christmas to join my family who were spending the winter at St Moritz for my stepmother's health. I contrived to catch pneumonia on the way, was very ill and was not allowed to go back to Eton for the Easter half, but had to stay in the Engadine sunshine to get well. That was in 1892, and I sometimes think I must be in point of date almost the father of St Moritz. One or two Hollands or Saundersons may no doubt challenge or surpass me, but it was at any rate a long time ago, witness the fact that skiing was still unknown there. When I learn that my relatively venerable friend, Lord Brabazon of Tara, has only been hurling himself down the Cresta since 1907, whereas I was watching the Grand National on that famous run fifteen years before, I feel old indeed.

I have never been to St Moritz since. It is in the highest degree unlikely that I ever shall and I don't think I want to. I am sure it is still lovely but it does sound, as depicted in the newspapers, just the least bit in the world vulgar, too full of jewellers' shops and smart ladies in smart frocks and big hotels. It was by comparison in those days such a snug little kingdom, cut off and surrounded by the snows. The train stopped at Chur and it was a very long day's journey from there by sledge. Once there you settled down in the Kulm, for that was then, except I think for another tiny one, the only hotel, and one was a member of a single if rather hetero-

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geneous community. Doubtless there were various squabbles beneath the surface, which would escape a boy's notice, though I heard murmurs as I sat still as a mouse in the billiard-room. People always squabble when they have not enough to do and Dr Holland, for all his fine qualities, was rather an "arbitrary gent". Doubtless also there were tragedies, for people who had "lungs" were not kept quiet in a sanatorium—at least so I gathered—but more or less danced to their death, trusting to the air to keep them alive as long as possible. One heard dimly that so-and-so had been able to skate the winter before and now he could not, and I daresay the next winter he would not have been there at all.

The skating was all in the English style of the most orthodox, magnificent circles described from a central orange and covering, as it seemed, the whole extent of the rink. It was all wonderfully different from the skating on Lingay Fen. For myself the pneumonia had rendered my legs so feeble that for some while I could only totter. In the end I learned to do a sort of untidy and ineffective three and there my education stopped for ever. Our leading skater then was Topham and he also won the Grand National, beating Freeman the Champion of the rival establishment over the way, Davos. I should doubt if so great an all-rounder could now exist in these days of specialisation.

My time at St Moritz must have been a terribly expensive one for my poor father, for I had two nurses and was kept going for what seemed days and days with a tumbler of the best Champagne every other hour. The illness is all very dim, but I remember perfectly my father's face when I told him one morning that my temperature was normal. After that it was "all worry capital" and I enjoyed the hotel life which today I might find odious. The sunshine and the blue sky, the lake and the fir woods were lovely but, as I said, I think I shall take them on trust.

Chapter Four

THE DARWIN UNCLES

THERE is one delightful commodity in which the modern boy must be poorer than those of an earlier generation. Families have grown so much smaller that he will almost inevitably have fewer uncles and aunts. Philip, who opened the first chapter, has but one of each, whereas I have to make a calculation as to mine.

On the Darwin side my father had four brothers and two sisters: the aunts were outnumbered, and if a family legend be true, my Aunt Bessy when young had looked into the drawing-room at Down and flounced out again with the words "Nothing but nasty, beastly boys." On my mother's side I had four uncles, one of whom I hardly knew, and one aunt. In addition, when my father married again I acquired at least two step-uncles and one step-aunt, all three definitely of the right quality.

Given that quality there can be no pleasanter relationship than that between nephews and nieces, uncles and aunts. Uncles and aunts are, to use a modern adjective, so glamorous. Many legends, by no means all necessarily true, grow up around them. Their visits being comparatively rare and short are the more exciting. Each has as a rule some peculiar and possibly unlawful aptitude. Since they come on something in the nature of a holiday, they are more or less at their nephews' mercy and can be conscripted for games. It is on this last account that, when we are very young, the thrill of an uncle is greater than that of an aunt. Nor can the sordid consideration be wholly excluded that an uncle who has no children of his own is the noblest tipper of them all. My grandfather's bachelor brother, Uncle Ras, who had taken Mrs Carlyle about in his cab, had been a magnificent

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tipper of his nephews; my father remembered the difficulty of pretending not to see when the great moment was coming. The only time I went to his house I was too young for a tip, but I was sent down to the dining-room in charge of the butler to eat scrumptious white grapes. My two childless uncles, Uncle William and Uncle Leonard, certainly carried on this glorious tradition. There are two occasions in particular on which I always think gratefully of Uncle Lenny's tips. One is when I stay at the Dormy House at Rye, which I love. Just after I had first been there more than fifty years ago he came down with a present so splendid that I paid my entrance fee and my first year's subscription to both the golf club and the Dormy House, an extravagance that would otherwise have been quite beyond me. The other occasion is when I get a book from the London Library of which he made me a life member.

There were four uncles in all: William, George, Leonard and Horace, the fifth brother Frank, my father, coming third. Uncle William was a banker. The other four brothers may be roughly classed as scientific. It is true that Uncle Lenny was in fact a soldier, but the trend of his mind was far more scientific than military.

To take them in their order, Uncle William being already married and living at Southampton did not at first loom very large in my life. He seemed a little different from the others, apart from the fact of being the only one not to have a beard, though to be sure Uncle Lenny only grew his in old age. He had been at Rugby, whereas the other brothers had been at Clapham Grammar School, and had gone to his father's College, Christ's, as opposed to Trinity. I suppose he was the most ordinary and least intellectual of the brothers and yet when he had to make the big speech after dinner at my grandfather's centenary he did it, I think, better than any of the others would have done. His speech was a masterpiece of complete simplicity and genuine feeling, and I thought he played everyone else, including Mr Balfour, who proposed the toast, off the stage. I remember the late Mr

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Marlborough Pryor exclaiming in a perfect ecstasy, "He's as good as any of them."

He and my Uncle George, the two elder brothers, went naturally together, and so I think the rest of us, at Wychfield and The Orchard, conceded him, perhaps a little grudgingly, to Newnham Grange. He was angelic to us all but he belonged first of all to the Georges and spent many holidays with them. That was chiefly after his wife, Aunt Sara, had died and he had come to live in London. Aunt Sara was an American from Cambridge; she was the kindest of the kind but a little formidable. The American Cambridge is formidably cultivated. I once went to a dinner-party there when I was watching golf at Brookline; I enjoyed myself very much but could not resist the feeling that the party consisted wholly of Aunt Saras. She was a Sedgwick, and Sedgwicks, Eliots and Nortons are not to be lightly encountered. Yet this is a most ungrateful remark, for I have an endlessly kind friend in America, Ellery Sedgwick, formerly the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*. There was something engaging and memorable about Aunt Sara, for her slow rather musical Bostonian voice is in my ears as I write.

After her death Uncle William came to live in London in a rather tall gaunt house, with a butler almost too perfect to live; he might have been Jeeves, Morgan and Lattimer all rolled into one, though I am sure he was entirely virtuous. It was then that his nephews and nieces saw most of Uncle William and came to appreciate his many beloved qualities. He was very healthy and very brave. In fact he was inclined to be foolhardy, and I think he lost his leg through trying to get through a swinging gate when hunting.

If he was rash, that was a good and rare quality in a Darwin, and in fact he was the only one of the family who was without a single touch of morbid anxiety about health. I have told how his grandfather, Dr Robert Darwin, had said that he ought to eat green gooseberries. Uncle William grew much stronger on that diet and went on metaphorically eating green gooseberries for the rest of his life. He was com-

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posed and sweet-tempered with far the best nerve of the family, but he had a delightful power of very occasionally flaring up. I remember a bicycle ride with him near Downe when some stupid pedestrian, or he thought him stupid, got in the way. "I wish I'd cut the fellow in two," exclaimed Uncle William.

He had the sweetest smile, the tidiest clothes, the most exquisite little suggestion of whiskers. His uncle Ras had said he looked so clean that you could eat a mutton chop off him anywhere. Like Uncle George he was always interested in sights and he read with concentrated passion. In a sense he was the most literary of all the brothers. My father had, I think, the finer taste and appreciation of literature, but Uncle William was far the more industrious reader, and it was good reading too. I always had the feeling, being a lazy reader myself, that he read to improve his mind and was always trying to catch up with those who knew books better, but I think this was quite unjustified. There was a sort of humility about him which prevented his talking about his books or quoting them, but I am sure they gave him the most genuine pleasure. He was fond of pictures too, and music; in fact he liked all the best things in this very simple and humble-minded way of his. He was perfectly unself-conscious, and one of the last visions of him that I possess is of his walking to the house from the garden across the public road with a double sofa cushion nicely balanced on the top of his head. He wanted to carry it in and that was the obvious way. He had felt the top of his head cold at his father's funeral in Westminster Abbey and balanced his black gloves there.

When I was quite small, I think that Uncle George was the best uncle. Before he had children of his own he was the most indefatigable of players with me and made me, amongst other things, a wooden pistol, one of the brightest ornaments of my armoury. Uncle George having been Second Wrangler, began by reading for the bar, but his health was not strong enough and he had come back to

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Cambridge as a fellow of Trinity and became a most distinguished mathematician and Plumian Professor of Astronomy. I think of him in looking back as first and foremost an incurable romantic. He loved essentially exciting things such as heraldry and uniforms and bows and arrows. It was something of this same feeling that made him take a pleasantly childish delight in all the honours and honorary degrees conferred on him. He had a romantic feeling for places and for Downe more than any other. It always gave him an intense pleasure to come back there, and to go the old walks along the old footpaths which he remembered better than anyone else. Any kind of expedition appealed to him. He took me a heavenly one in the form of a walk to Westerham, a good long trudge, from which we must have returned by the wagonette, though after lunch memory has forsaken me. He did it mainly out of the kindness of his heart, but I think that what was full of colour and romance to me was not entirely without those qualities for him. After all it is romantic to go a good long walk in the country, ending up with lunch—and cherry tart—at an inn. Perhaps it reminded him of riding across country all alone on his pony the whole way to Hartfield when he was ten, and putting up the pony and lunching at an inn on the way. That was either at Westerham or Edenbridge; I forget which it was, but the waiter had always suggested eggs and bacon for lunch and he had never summoned up courage to refuse them.

Much later, when we all lived at Cambridge, he would lead expeditions on bicycles to interesting places, to the Fleem Dyke for instance, or to Sawston. Sawston Hall, unless I am mistaken, possesses a hiding-place wherein in times of persecution Catholic priests would take shelter, and that gave Uncle George a delicious thrill. There was also a mysterious house with a painted ceiling, as I recall it, where Cornet Joyce had besieged somebody, but where it is I now do not know. Perhaps it is like those nameless places that one passes on a night journey in a sleeping car. They

seem to be marked by the clinking of milk cans and the hurrying of feet on the platform, but they do not really exist; they are only part of the train's dream.

Uncle George had also, I am sure, a great feeling for the romance of games. He was the best game-player of the family—not indeed very high praise—working hard at billiards when there was a table at Down House, and playing in later life at the Athenaeum. Tennis, however, and I do not mean lawn tennis, was his real love and I am sure that its illustrious ancestry among games and its possession of a language of its own, as it were a language of chivalry, appealed to him. It is also essentially a game of style and he loved to do everything in the right and stylish way. He very nearly played for Cambridge against Oxford as an undergraduate. Lord Kinnaird was, I think, first string and the second place lay between Uncle George and Mr A. J. Balfour. Alas! it was Mr Balfour that won. I remember, when I came to know this, wishing almost bitterly that I could have had an uncle who had been a blue. He continued to play tennis for a good many years till, by an unlucky accident a ball glancing off the edge of his racket practically destroyed the sight of one eye.

It was then that he took to archery, which he practised assiduously, keeping, I believe, a careful record of all his scores. I do not know whether he saw himself as Locksley in Lincoln green, splitting the willow wand, but it would not surprise me. I wish he had ever taken to golf, which would have been a bond between us when I was grown up, but he never did. He may have thought that it would take up too much time, for he was a constant worker. I always think of him in his study, as in his daughter's charming picture, in his arm chair, with a paper covered with figures on his knee, for he had the family custom of not writing at a table.

If he had essayed golf it would have been in no frivolous spirit: he would have been an earnest student of the textbooks. And that brings me to Uncle Lenny, who did play golf and with intense painstaking. I see him now practising

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his swing, a long and elaborate one clearly founded on the pictures in the Badminton Library, and by no means always ineffective. He played in later years almost entirely at Ash-down Forest, but earlier he had actually made visits to sea-side courses, such as Brancaster, for the sole purpose of playing. On the whole he enjoyed it and, though occasionally a little depressed, never fell into my father's mood of utter gloom and despondency. The end of his golf was sad. He was suddenly attacked by a disease which his neighbour, Horace Hutchinson, called atupsia, a name derived, I need scarcely say, from our old friend *τύπτω*, I strike. He could get his club to the top of the swing but all the King's horses and all the King's men could not get it down again. He was like the fabled magician of the Indian rope trick, who tugs at the rope suspended in mid air. Poor Uncle Lenny tugged away at his club and there it impudently hung, or if it came down it was in a series of jerks. He had the sweetest temper, and after wrestling in vain for a while with this demon of inhibition, very placidly gave up the game for ever.

That tragic story is altogether out of due order, for my first memories of Uncle Lenny belong to days before golf when, according to a letter of my father's, I followed him about like an adoring little dog. I connect him then with another game, lawn tennis, on the asphalt court at Down, when he wore a flannel coat of narrow red and blue stripes which I greatly admired. He was then rather plump with a suspicion of whiskers, and his coats, at any rate in photographs, were very tightly buttoned up. That gorgeous blazer was of the Sapper colours, for Uncle Lenny was, heaven knows why, a soldier. Nearly all the brothers seem to have started in a profession they did not follow. Uncle George had meant to be a barrister and my father a doctor and Uncle Lenny got second into Woolwich and became a Sapper. He stuck to it until he retired as a Major, but what induced his original choice it is hard to say. Anyone less like a typical regular soldier it would be impossible to imagine. True, he spent most of his military life in doing

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rather unmilitary jobs, such as photographing the transit of Venus and other scientific antics, but naturally he was often at Chatham in the course of more commonplace duties. He was there indeed in 1881, when there was committed a quite admirable and mysterious murder, that of a young R.E. subaltern called Roper, shot in his own quarters. It is almost wholly forgotten now and the mystery remained unsolved, but it is one of such excellent quality that I cannot for the life of me refrain from telling the story. Roper came in to dine at the mess and was given a note from a brother subaltern asking him to come with him to a show in the town. He answered that he wanted to finish a letter but would go a little later. The word "finish" is material, because there was found on his writing-table a note with the first sentence incomplete, so that it is quite possible that he never got so far as his room, but encountered the murderer on his way there.

All that is known is that he was later found lying on the staircase, that he had been shot in the side at close quarters, and that on the stairs was found a revolver belonging to another young officer who lived in the same house. That officer had a cast-iron alibi; the revolver habitually hung on the wall of his room and he had no ammunition for it, so that the murderer, having apparently had his eye on the weapon, had somewhere obtained the appropriate ammunition. Also on the staircase were found the poker from Roper's room, his watch and a bundle of his plain clothes. The candles in his room were alight, but whether they had been lighted by Roper himself or the murderer no one can tell. The lid of a box in his room had been wrenched off. I think the general belief was that the watch and the clothes were a blind, that robbery was not the object, and that the murder was the result of some sort of feud with a brother officer. I have read another quite different explanation by Mr Fletcher Moulton, which seems to me at any rate worthy of attention, namely that there was a soldier in the barracks who wanted to desert, and was in the act of stealing some plain clothes for the purpose when he was caught in the act.

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Uncle Lenny remembered a detective coming down, wandering about in a rather futile manner and finally going away as wise as he had come. My uncle himself had no suspicions of any kind. There is something very grim in the picture of those young men, believing that the unknown murderer was among them and gazing at one another with a wild doubt. Uncle Lenny remembered thinking that one officer looked anxious and miserable. And that is really all.

My other sapper uncle, later Sir Richard Ruck, a contemporary of Uncle Lenny, was quartered at Chatham at the same time but was away on the day of the murder. When I asked him about it he gave me the impression that he had had his suspicions. He said one curious thing, namely that it had been generally thought to be "a fair stand-up fight." If so the scales were rather unfairly balanced in the matter of the revolver. There seemed to be objections to any and every solution of the mystery, and I cannot help feeling doubtful as to a feud between two young officers so deadly as to lead to deliberate murder. At any rate it is a good story. I wished Uncle Lenny's memories of it had been a little more vivid, but he had no real taste for murder.

A murder has as usual made me run on, in Sam Weller's words, like a barrow with the wheels greased. I fancy the ordinary routine of a young officer's life must have been rather depressing to Uncle Lenny, not that he disliked his fellowmen or thought himself superior to their amusements, but he was so essentially humble that he never realised how fond people were of him, if he would give them the chance. When he was a subaltern at Malta or Gibraltar, he was induced to take part in some theatricals. The local paper's criticism was as follows: "Mr Darwin bears an honoured name, but he will pardon us for saying that he is not a delineator of character." He kept the cutting for years as a protective measure, but I doubt if he was ever asked again.

He had an admirable brain and a wonderfully cool, sound judgment. Everybody asked his advice when in any uncomfortable predicament, from an eloping wife upward or

downward. He had a delicious sense of humour. There is, it seems to me, a characteristic flavour about a story of him as a small boy at Down being caught violently jumping on the sofa. "Oh Lenny, Lenny," said his father. "That's against the rules." "Then," he replied, "I think you had better go out of the room."

His little jokes were always pleasant and his improper stories, as he deemed them, the mildest ever known. What I may call the flashier virtues he did not possess. As he had clearly not been a great actor, and indeed that is not in the Darwin line, neither was he a great speaker, and this was a pity because he was for a while a Member of Parliament, where his first-class wits must have made an impression if they had been better exhibited. He had another quotation about himself and his speaking, from, I think, the pen of T. P. O'Connor, which he would smilingly recite, but I will not set it down: it was too unkind. I am sure he always talked the soundest sense with the most complete honesty, but there was a vital spark lacking. Exactly how much he wanted to go into the House, and how much he was egged on by his first wife, my Aunt Bee, I am not sure. Certainly it was she who got him in, winning a battle in which there was apparently no hope. She was elegant, fastidious, rustling in silk, but she loved the fight and the canvassing and she did it with immense spirit. Yet she was apparently rather timid and was certainly the most cautious bicyclist I ever saw, persistently ringing her bell on an empty country road long before the days of cars.

"I'm afraid of a cow, I confess, but I'm not afraid of a miner" was one of her *mots* at a meeting, which was believed to have won the hearts, though perhaps not many of the votes of the Lichfield miners. My uncle stood as a Liberal Unionist in what was thought an impregnable Liberal fastness against a local magnate long enthroned there. The local magnate was perhaps too sure of success and he reckoned without Bee—I did not call her aunt. I can still see the precise spot in Weston's Yard at Eton where I read the news

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in an evening paper; Uncle Lenny had got in by, I think, three votes. Had it originally been a dead heat or a majority of a single vote and then three after a recount? At any rate it was a great and blood-curdling finish to the match.

It was pleasant to win where his great-grandfather, Erasmus Darwin (of the "Loves of the Plants") had lived, but the triumph did not last long. At the next election there was another magnate with more money or a greater willingness to spend it, who won in another desperate battle. He was unseated on petition, but the man who wins a petition is, I fancy, always regarded as no sportsman for having grudged the free and independent electors their reasonable amount of beer. At any rate poor Uncle Lenny was quite easily beaten next time and retired with a perceptibly emptier pocket.

I suppose he missed the House of Commons for a while, though why anybody should—however that is a point on which I have a completely blind eye. At any rate he found plenty of other things to do, the Geographical Society and Eugenics and Bedford College and the Silvertown Company (making golf balls amongst other things), of which he was Chairman. I think Eugenics, in which our charming old cousin, Francis Galton, had been so distinguished a figure, was nearest his heart. His views on it were regarded by some of the nephews and nieces as being altogether too fierce; he declined to believe that anybody in the artistic line was, as Sir Bellingham Graham said of Jack Mytton, "not a bad one to breed from". In certain matters he was very literal and almost prosaic in mind. I remember, for instance, a gentle little argument that could not possibly have any end. How it arose goodness knows. I said that to admit reading *Frank Fairleigh* oftener than *Hamlet*, as I certainly did and still do, was not inconsistent with holding *Hamlet* to be the greater work. He could not, or at any rate professed not, to see how this could be, and the question remained unsolved. Likewise he could never be persuaded to take the Borrovian view of gypsies to which I inclined

on account of *Lavengro*. There were too many of them on the Forest and they or the other people of the roads were suspected of forest fires.

This was after Bee had died and he had married Mildred Massingberd, who was his and my cousin. She had a lovely seriousness at which one was bound to laugh, if very gently, and I think she liked it. "What you are, Bernard," she would say, breaking into a reluctant smile at some very mildly outrageous remark. She was charming to look at, with a great air of breeding and, I imagine, took more pains over her clothes than she would have confessed. No one was more angelic to children; I hear her saying, "My darling, my darling" in a particular deep voice reserved for them. She declared that she had no sense of humour which was certainly not true. In some ways she reminded me of Dolly Winthrop in *Silas Marner*. Even as did Dolly's, her mind turned naturally to the sadder and more serious things in life and her views on men were not dissimilar; they "would be so". Why were women so ready to marry them? It was a perplexing problem. "The men are awkward and contrary mostly, God help 'em," said Dolly, "but when the drink's out of 'em they aren't unsensible." She had strong views on temperance, though she was too good a hostess to enforce them on her guests. She allowed Uncle Lenny a small medicinal dose of whisky with his meals, and I have a vision of his gulping it hastily down as if in fear that it might be spirited away. Though opposed to marriage in general she made an exception in the case of her own, which she admitted was a very happy one.

Cripps's Corner, their home near Forest Row in Sussex, was a delightful house in which to stay, though there was always some fear of meeting those who were known as "Mildred's poories". These were as a rule elderly ladies whose lives had not been very happy or fortunate. Mildred was endlessly kind to them, but to describe them as good company would be unmeaning flattery.

Gunby in Lincolnshire, which was Mildred's family

home, had been I believe the original of Tennyson's "haunt of ancient peace", and Cripps's Corner merited, if in a humbler way, the same description. You turned off the main road, plunged down a rough drive winding between gorse and heather, and there suddenly was the house, utterly solitary, flanked by woodland, looking away to a lovely south country blue distance. Mildred so much the younger died first, and Uncle Lenny lived on at Cripps's Corner alone, patient and interested, not too lonely or unhappy. He lived till he was ninety-two, much the oldest Darwin on record, as he would tell us, without having lost any one of his tastes, with a mind really and truly as good as new. There could have been no more serene sundown.

If Uncle William was the most unselfconscious of the brothers Uncle Horace was the most conscientious. They were all almost painfully honest, but none quite so honest as he. If he had inadvertently travelled in a first-class carriage with a second-class ticket to the extent of a single station, I am sure he would have walked ten miles to find the ticket collector and pay the difference. He had the sweetest and gentlest smile, but could be ferocious at the thought of dishonesty or cruelty. It must have been pure goodness that made him become Mayor of Cambridge, for I do not think he can possibly have liked it, but this may be my lack of sympathy with municipal ambition. I think of him chiefly at tea at The Orchard, where my sister Frances and I went constantly and he would occasionally perform his famous treacle trick. He stood on a chair holding a spoon "high in the stainless eminence of air" and dropped a stream of treacle with perfect accuracy into a saucer on the floor. I always called him Boo because when I was very young I had called engines "Boo-Boos" and knew him to be learned in them; but in a general way he was not very fond of anything that I liked, and I was wholly without comprehension of his beloved machines. "The Shop" which bloomed into the Cambridge Scientific Instrument Company, from which the whole family have gratefully profited, was simply a name.

Yet one thing was made there which did interest me. Uncle Horace had never played golf in his life but he was convinced that on scientific principles the shaft should run into the centre of the head, as it does in the now legalised centre—shafted putter. So he had made an aluminium cleek on this principle and I, with a lack of self-consciousness I can honestly admire, played with it *non sine gloria* in the University match in my Captain's year. As I write, I see the ball, struck with that curious club, soaring against the blue sky, over the black-sleepered crest of the Maiden at Sandwich. That was in 1897, and it must have been the first, or nearly the first, centre-shafted club made.

There was something very touching about him, an engaging simplicity and gravity, though he was not without a great sense of fun. I have lately been looking at him in his youth through someone else's eyes, in reading a diary kept by my mother some years before she was married. The Darwin and Ruck brothers had made friends at Clapham Grammar School, and had paid each other visits at their respective homes. I am not sure whether Uncle Horace was the first to stay at my mother's home at Pantlludw in Merioneth, but he was the first to figure in her diary. My father appears only once or twice, and then with quite cursory mentions. He had unashamedly fallen asleep on the way home from rather a long expedition, which strikes me as eminently characteristic. Less so is the fact that he introduced her to "an amusing card game called Muggins."

Uncle Horace, on the other hand, constantly recurs. I suspected at first that she must have been a little in love with him, but I think now that she was only very sympathetic with one some years younger than herself. She was twenty and he about seventeen and that is a big gap between a girl and a boy. She loved talking to him about all sorts of rather tremendous subjects, such as religion and immortality and the appalling difficulties of life. Sometimes she was made a little unhappy by thinking that perhaps Horace did not know her thoughts as she would like him to know them and

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had not felt "the beauty of things" as keenly as she had done.

It is rather a heart-breaking little book but yet full of happiness and enjoyment in the midst of what she called her "ponderings", and it seems to me that her judgment of Uncle Horace was as true as it was affectionate. She liked him, she wrote, very much and hoped he liked her; he was so simple and innocent, with "the simplicity of cleverness". A little later he is, with something of elder patronage "little Horace, simple, kindly and clever". She was never in doubt as to his wits. They all liked Leonard, who was merry and good-natured and bright, but Horace was "entirely interesting". And then again, "I am watching him. His nature seems a richer one than the others—with more passionate feeling, he is more of a poet in nature".

The long talks were very grave and solemn but cheerfulness would come breaking in. They climbed sandhills and rushed down hand-in-hand screaming with laughter, and they even changed hats on a drive but had to resume their own in a great hurry since they met a neighbour and "I was afraid Mr T. would think I had put it on to copy him". Also they "tried experiments with wine and water and made Horace drink up all his failures". I can't help being glad that immortality was exorcised for a little while.

One shrewd piece of judgment was that Horace was "so enthusiastic in his friendships that you never can quite believe all he says". I think in one instance at least I can confirm that from my own memory. My mother apparently suffered a little from talks about a certain Mr P., who was at the moment the object of Uncle Horace's adoration. Nobody else seemed to like Mr P. very much. When he had been at Down House "Mr Darwin tried in vain to talk to him" and Horace had hurried him away from meals into the privacy of the billiard-room. Exactly who Mr P. was I cannot discover, but I think he had something to do with a coaching establishment at Southwold where Uncle Horace was a pupil. One alarming fact appears quite suddenly out

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of the blue, "Henrietta told me Horace knows twenty clergymen in and about Southwold". Was Mr P. perhaps one of them? I think that towards the end of the diary Uncle Horace, to my mother's relief, was getting a little tired of him.

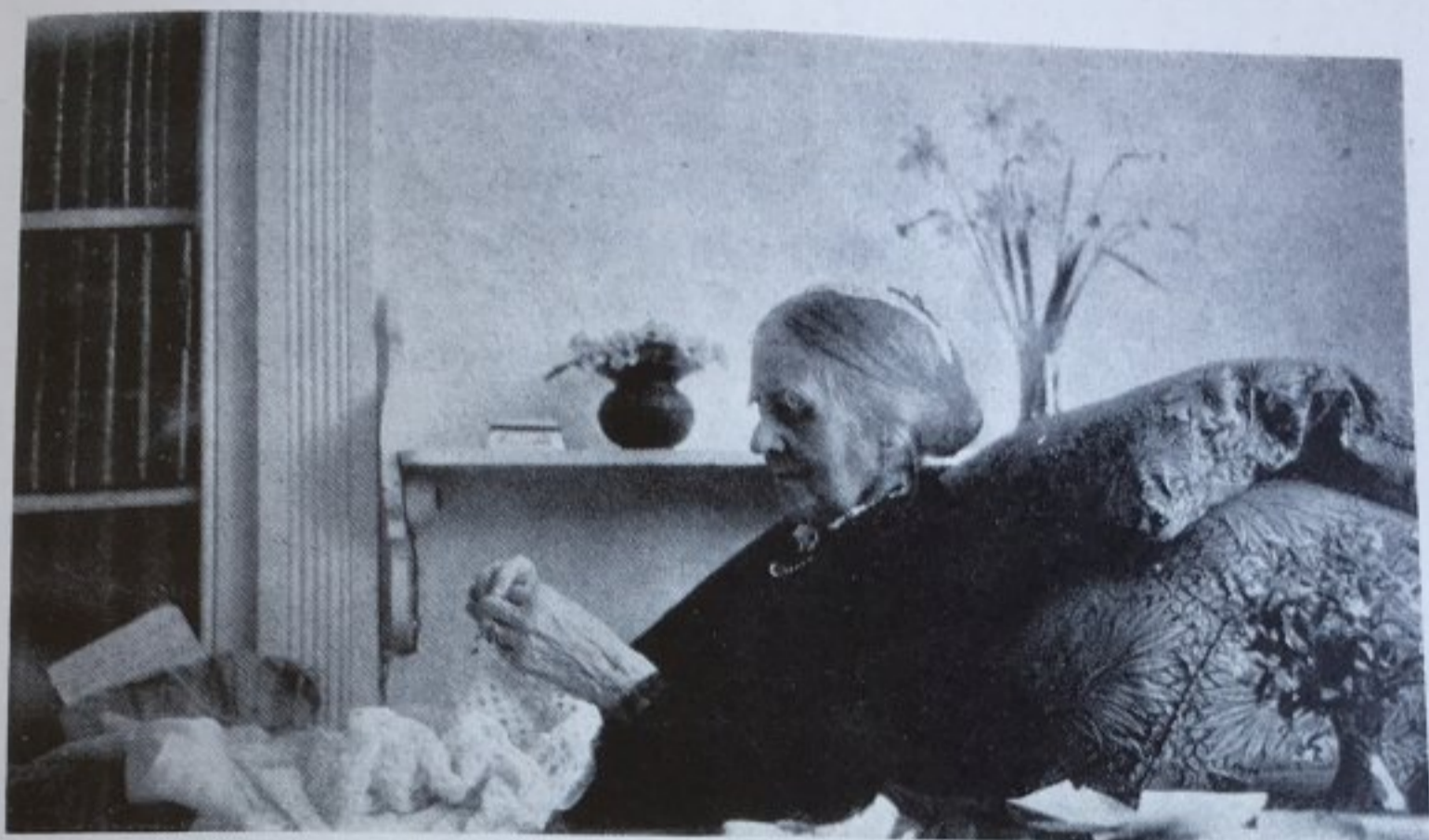
They had a delightful time together when she went to stay at Down House, and was so frightened of my grandfather and found him so kind, actually calling her Amy and making little jokes and letting her clean some manuscript for him. She listened to a nice conversation about mathematics between George and Horace, and Horace had given her advice on that subject. He would not let her say she was stupid, because if she was she could not care for calculations. They spent quite a long time in the well-house, and Horace brought a looking-glass and they looked at the bottom of the well and threw stones into it and timed them to the sound of the splash. Then she went home and soon Horace was going up to Cambridge. She pictured his life there and fancied she could see him "pacing the quadrangle and the avenue". So ends this engaging little story of a youthful friendship. Four years later they were brother and sister-in-law.

My cousin, Gwen Raverat, has made me a little frightened of writing of our common uncles, so delightfully has she done it in her book. She has put the aunts very nearly out of the question. Aunt Etty has almost become what is known as a national figure. She and my funny little Uncle Richard, his beard, his shawls and his dust sheet to save him from draughts, are they not all written to perfection in *Period Piece*? Yet perhaps I may add one word or two about him. Whether or not he was in the least ill until Aunt Etty took his health in hand, I do not profess to know, but he lent himself very well to her purpose, for he must be the only person in the world who ever made himself seriously unwell by poking himself in the eye with *The Times* newspaper. He was pathetically fond of games and pathetically bad at them, except for sudden flashes of inspiration in "Word Making and

Word Taking". In the mere crude shouting for short words he had no skill at all, but at a long "steal" he was unique. He would lapse for a while into a muse, unconscious of the turmoil around him, and then suddenly produce, let us say, "Circumference" from the depths of his inner consciousness. He would have been a great hand at anagrams if the fashion for them had then come in. Not indeed that he was a very valuable member of a team. It is the player who is permanently a-tiptoe and can grab the little impregnable words who wins the game, but his side always felt a certain reflected glory from Uncle Richard's superlative steals.

Every night he played some game, cribbage, bezique, even piquet with my aunt, and he never by any chance won. He always hoped that somewhere there was a game exactly suited to his genius, so that he would be able to beat Aunt Etty, but he never found it. As a lawn tennis player, he had one brief summer of triumph. He and my aunt went to Carlsbad, where the game was quite new, and we heard that the German youth were founding themselves on Uncle Richard. Darwin Online (<http://darwin-online.org.uk/>) Apart from its extreme mildness his game had one feature; he was equally ineffective with either hand and always changed to his left for backhanders. He was what is now called accident-prone; sprained his ankle on the least provocation and would then lie as good as gold on a sofa looking at other people.

Whether he and Aunt Etty saw anything at all comic in themselves or in each other it is hard to say. He was full of what we speak of today as Victorian virtues and did rather solemn, laborious things at which we are inclined to smile. As a small example, I was the happy inheritor of Aunt Etty's bound volumes of *Punch*, which are a constant joy. Under many of the political cartoons are explanatory notes in Uncle Richard's handwriting, to the effect that this refers to the Abyssinian or Bulgarian crisis or to John Bright's speech about this, that or the other. There is really nothing to be said against this practice; it may even be invaluable to historians of the future, but it is probably very uncommon



Aunt Etty at Burrows Hill

Darwin Online (<http://darwin-online.org.uk/>).



Uncle Richard well wrapped up for a walk

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today. Uncle Richard had taught at the Working Men's College, where he had known Tom Hughes of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, and I feel as if he had imbibed a little Arnoldian moral earnestness from that great but sometimes highly exasperating man. Not indeed that Uncle Richard was ever exasperating, only now and then pleasantly absurd.

Some of my most vivid memories of Aunt Etty are now those not of a nephew but rather a great nephew; I see her to some extent through the eyes of my children. My own early visions of her cluster round No. 31 in Kensington Square, the charming old Square which that trusty friend, the whirligig of time, has now brought back to me, since I am writing in a flat within almost a stone's throw of it. My children only knew her after Uncle Richard was dead, when she had moved to Burrow's Hill, near Gomshall in Surrey. By nature it is a rather unattractive, suburban villa with a small garden in a triangle between two roads, but when she had added a sandpit and bought the wood over the way, she made it for children at least a paradise. The very name of the wood was infinitely romantic. On the Ordnance Survey Map it was called Engines Wood, but this was merely the map-maker's stupidity in misinterpreting a rustic pronunciation. The real name was Indians Wood and we knew that Indians meant Gypsies.

By this time Aunt Etty had given me up, I think, in the matter of fierce conversations about the Pope or politics or the moral shortcomings of Mr H. G. Wells. She had once been accustomed to ask me what people in the Temple or at my Club said about some political crisis, but it always seemed that they had said nothing worthy of record. In fact I find they very seldom do, but I was regarded as a hopeless "escapist" in such matters, and the children were too young for them. She was perfectly adorable to them. "Ursula came in after breakfast and we had Dame Wiggins of Lee." That was the main part of a letter of hers which has been preserved and it gives the whole picture of the little figure in the red shawl, reading in a serious voice to an entranced

young person. She would take them out gardening and hunting for stinkhorns, and once they upset her in her bath-chair, a frightful vision that can never be blotted out. There were also drives in the car when Aunt Etty, so careful in many things, suddenly exhibited a reckless desire for speed and urged on Mr Smith, an eminently cautious ex-coachman, to deeds of derring-do. She certainly had a genius for making a house into a perfect holiday home for the young.

Among her other accomplishments was that of reading aloud with a quite unique eye for country. To be a good reader aloud it is essential to be a bold and determined skipper, but it is one thing to know when to skip and quite another to do it without being found out. To say, "Hm, ha well, then he says he loves her very much and it really is not very interesting" will leave the young listener with a sense of grievance. Aunt Etty could skip whole pages at a time; I don't know how she managed the turning over but she did, and nobody could have guessed from as much as the movement of an eyelid that she was not behaving in the most strictly honourable manner. She was better at reading prose than poetry, for she never could resist interrupting the rhythm to try to discover precisely what the poet meant. "I am not exactly aware what gowans may be," said Mr Micawber, but that did not interfere with his intense appreciation of Auld Lang Syne. Aunt Etty would have had to stop and look them up in the dictionary. Poets must not expect to be taken on trust. She was flat on the ground in her dealings with them and was not to be swept off her feet.

By contrast Aunt Bessy, my unmarried aunt, had not the nerve to be a great skipper and I rather think that in familiar books she kept the skipping places marked in pencil. She was always rather sadly conscious that her house in a suburban road at Cambridge could not offer quite such attractions as the genuine country of Burrows Hill. But there were great inducements for the children there too, in the shape of rides and perhaps a row in the Newnham Grange boat, the *Griffin*. The intrepid Aunt Maud of the Grange was always

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prepared to take out any number of children in the *Griffin*, whether or not they could either row or swim, and she never came within measurable distance of drowning one of them.

Aunt Bessy was also a great taker of nieces and nephews to the theatre, though this was perhaps rather in London than Cambridge. She looked constantly at them to see if they were enjoying it and was much cast down if they were not. It was through them that she enjoyed herself.

In some ways she was, though so much her inferior in intellect, more sensitive than Aunt Etty, and I think I would rather have had her judgment of character, which was instinctive but wonderfully sound. She was a little helpless in managing certain things and never could be sure what five per cent. meant, but she made herself undertake all sorts of tasks that one would have deemed a little beyond her, such as visiting old women in workhouses and reading to them. Moreover, as she got older, she became more and more enterprising and used to go abroad with the faithful Harriet in attendance. She always liked a lark and a good play and a good novel. If she had not the wits of the rest of the family and had been a little "hadden down" by her elder sister, she had by way of compensation better health, and was certainly free from their tendency to cosset themselves. She had a considerable capacity for going walks, despite her tiny short steps, and I went many with her to Hangrove or the Big Woods.

I was, I suppose, in some ways her special nephew, because I had been brought to Down House when a few days old on my mother's death and she had had much to do with my early upbringing. However, she was impartially kind to all the nephews and nieces. She had one or two nice, old, dull friends who came to stay with her, but it was on her family that she depended and we all felt for her the most genuine and grateful affection.

A SECRET KINGDOM

THIS chapter is going to be full of romance for me, but whether anyone else will be able to endure it is more than I can tell. Certainly no one will who has no romantic feeling for both games and names.

All children have, I suppose, a secret kingdom of pretending, peopled by creatures of their own imagination, whose names and even existences are never revealed to the grown-up world. The Brontës, as we know, filled up many little books with endless stories of the princes and politicians in a country of their own. My creatures can make no claim to such intellectual stature, but I do sometimes wonder whether any other small boy ruled so large an empire of game players and athletes, all possessed of names devised for them on their creator's private principle. Their names were founded entirely on those of dogs, cats or horses belonging to the family, its sisters, cousins, aunts or friends. What may be called the two main root names were those of Otter, a beloved and tangled mongrel whose ancestry defied analysis, and the Brom Cat, who deserves a word of explanation. A half-German cousin came to stay; she possessed little English conversation, but when she had nothing else to say she declared that our cat purred, "Sie brummt". For some reason I seem to have spelt her with an O instead of a U. To these root names, as to a number of others which will appear in due course, were added terminations—brook, ford, and so forth, also prefixes such as Mac and Fitz. Otter, for instance, gave first of all the name of the chief country, Otterhive, and that is a termination for which I cannot now account. The capital was Otterville, in Otterfordshire, and so on. The Brom cat produced Bromsland—a Scotland as opposed to an England—Brombridge, Bromcombe and—

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here as Sherlock Holmes would remark in something a little more recherché—Brommanoir. This was clearly founded on Beaumanoir, the formidable old person in *Ivanhoe* who was the ruler of Templestowe.

Does the reader think I am going mad or am merely a bore? It is hard for me to tell because these doubtless absurd names seem so entirely natural and commonplace to me that I cannot judge of their effect on others. I think that I began to create them when I was eight or nine and I certainly went on till I was fourteen and at Eton. I have lately unearthed an account of a match between Otterhive and Tikeland written in the best sporting journalese in 1890.

If I write nostalgically about them I do not wish to be thought a pathetic and lonely little boy who had to people his solitude with these strange companions. My family, if they had not my passion for the public and heroic figures in games, were quite fond of games themselves in a reasonable way. They were perhaps a little surprised at the violence of my feelings, even as they were at my taste, evinced for a very brief season, for going to church; but they were certainly not unsympathetic. Nor did I wholly conceal my passion. In 1885 my father wrote of me, "He is always talking football: this sort of thing: 'Scott of Corpus is a splendid player, he kicked two goals against the Harlequins; he plays half-back,' etc., etc." I must have been very tiresome, but even now I must reprehend my father's inaccuracy. Scott was beyond doubt an eminent half-back but he was not at Corpus; he was at Jesus. I think my conversation was confined to real football. If I did not tell the family about my hidden empire, it was not for fear of being a bore but because I had no desire to share it with anybody. Quite the reverse indeed; it was something to hug to oneself; its name was not to be spoken.

How large a space it filled in my thoughts it is now hard to tell, but for years it was always there to summon up when I wanted something to think about. I sometimes stand amazed at how much I can recall and how accurately.

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If I poured it all out with no more pity than for the brute beasts, the reader would be most painfully amazed too. Of course I have forgotten a good deal but I have remembered much. Just as a test I have tried to recite the Donlandshire cricket eleven (Don was somebody's dog and had a popular root name) and I have written down nine of them. There is no crib extant, but I *know* I am right. Even though they were the Champion County and came from the North, at once so sinister and so romantic, that is not bad after sixty something years, I could not do as much for any real county eleven of today. The wicket-keeper has escaped me but there were two Donlands, one of them Sir Richard, two Druidthorpes (J. A. and P. F.), Ottercliffe (J. W.), Brancliffe, a really tremendous all-rounder, Otterpool, fast right, Tossbrook, slow left-hand, and Brommanoir aforesaid.

I set out their names as they illustrate the principle. Don, as I said was a dog; Druid a very ancient carriage horse of my grandmother's. Bran, another dog, a greyhound so early in family history that only his name remained; Toss, an ill-tempered collie belonging to cousins. Dogs certainly predominated, though there were at least two cats, Tina and Jerry. Dick was very popular, being my grandmother's shrill fox terrier. Dickingham Parish Church, for example, was a Rugby football team (in red and white stripes), the name of which still sounds stirring; Ottercliffe and the two Druidthorpes both played for it during the winter season. Somebody had a small odious pet called Flirt, and even she was pressed into the service. Does C. H. Flirtingdale sound a likely or even a respectable name for a football player? I suppose not but, as I said, I am quite incapable of judging. In a few cases animals who had no real claim were allowed to creep in. There were Toutou and Trotineau, small animals made I think of cotton-wool, resident on the chimney-piece and called after some creatures in a French story-book. Le Toutou was a highly distinguished all-rounder (cricket and rugby), and Chateautrotineau (P. C.) was not to be despised. I have lately discovered from a copy-

book, which had not been seen for fifty years at least, that he was also a weight putter.

Of course any self-respecting boy revels in his heroes' initials and a good many of the amateurs had three apiece. The professionals, as was the doubtless undemocratic fashion of those days, had none, though I knew some of their Christian names just as I cherished the knowledge that Wade's name was Saul and Sherwin's Mordecai. As for the amateurs I am as certain of L. C. P. Le Toutou as I am of L. C. H. Palairret or H. D. G. Leveson-Gower. Druidcliffe—yes, he was F. H. E. of course, and Monthector was F. E. P. I confess that I did not remember the names for which those initials stood. Indeed I had rather imagined that they had been christened only by initials, even as the famous American negro preacher was christened Booker T. Washington. Here, however, I did my industrious invention injustice. In the course of moving house I found a precious scrap of paper (I felt like a Baconian making the consummating discovery of his career) which told me that Le Toutou's names were Leopold Conrad Philip and those of Brommanoir (S. V.) were Silas Valentine. These last were rather gorgeous for a professional and I fancy he had come down in the world before taking up the game professionally. In mercy to the reader I pass over a number of other names which to me have an unspeakable thrill. Yet stay, I have just remembered one whose name I must set down for mere sensual pleasure. Is there no magic in M. E. W. von Bromstein?

It cannot be denied that Otterhive was a country of all-rounders. Names had to be provided for cricketers, football players of both codes, runners, jumpers and golfers. This was a great tax on the invention and besides it was more exciting to have personages who excelled in anything they attempted. It was before the days of C. B. Fry, but there were others such as Stoddart, and I had dimly heard of Alfred Lyttelton as a universal genius. So I distinctly remember that P. F. Druidthorpe, before mentioned, batted

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for Otterhive, left-handed beyond doubt, was a fine Rugby forward, his brother being the three-quarter, and jumped 6 ft. 2½ ins. It would have been at least 6 ft. 6 ins. nowadays, but that was in the days when M. J. Brooks's jump had still been barely surpassed. I could, again like Holmes, adduce "parallel instances", but once more I will take pity. Enough that most of the truly great ones were so in more than one sphere and I have lately discovered that even the august Marquis of Otterville (the Lord Harris or Lord Hawke of his time) was a hammer thrower in his spare moments.

It must not be thought that these men played purely on paper or in their creator's imagination. They did their best to play in real life but it was difficult, for there could be but one impersonator, myself. To take anyone else into my confidence, I am sure, never occurred to me. Only I knew who I was; to the cold world I appeared to be merely a small boy playing by himself on the lawn. Cricket consisted in bowling practice, generally indoors, in particular down the long passage at Down House with the vermilion fire-engine as a wicket. Association football was likewise played as a rule indoors with a lawn tennis ball in the hall of my grandmother's house at Cambridge. I recall the crash of a goal shot against the front door. It must have made life hard to bear for everybody else in the house. Rugby, on the other hand, was played out of doors. I possessed a Rugby ball which I passed from hand to hand in brilliant combined runs down the lawn till at last it was triumphantly grounded by the corner-flag under the branches of the big plane tree. That to be sure did put a certain strain on the powers of make-believe, but it was otherwise with the attempt at goal which followed the try. A kind gardener had made me two sets of miniature Rugby posts, complete with cross-bar, and it was no easy matter to kick a goal from the touch-line. That was emphatically the real agonising thing. Even the easy one straight in front of the posts, after one had rounded the enemy full-back and buried one's shoulder in the muddy grass was not without its anxieties.

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Athletics had the greater spice of reality, for there were five flights of hurdles on what had once been a lawn tennis court and also some high-jumping poles tucked away in a secret place behind the box trees. I practised jumping most assiduously in various characters. I am not sure whether I had any kind of sliding scale that should turn three feet into six. When my father and my Uncle George had played at soldiers as small boys at Downe, my uncle, who was at once an eminent mathematician and a great romantic, made a machine for measuring the height of the troops in a relative way. He being the elder and the sergeant was, I think, six feet tall; my father, the private, something shorter. I doubt if I had the requisite precision of mind for any such arithmetical larks.

Golf would obviously seem to have leant itself best of all to my solitary ritual, but though there were some famous players such as Mactina and Toutouburn, both clearly from Bromsland, which was Scotland, I think they played but little; at any rate they could not compare in point of splendour with the cricketers. I fancy that was because golf was too real, and too earnest. If I did a heavenly two at the hole where one lofted over the box trees and I once pitched the ball on my sister Frances's nose as she stood at the flag, that two was too precious to be allotted to any imaginary personage. Of course it would have been a one if my sister had not put her nose in the way. Golf was too serious for pretending.

Whatever the game, the number of players to be remembered increased year by year, for the county elevens had colts and the University sides, of which there were certainly two, had freshmen. For a long time there were only three countries, but a fourth had to be invented when I first fell in love with Welsh Rugby, an affection that has never diminished. Clearly these particular heroes, though great favourites at the time, belonged to a slightly decadent period, when the Empire was at its zenith and so near its decline. At any rate the sad part is that I can only remember two of them

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and even as to one of those I am a little shaky about his initials.

It is to this same hardly classical epoch that belongs the only extant report of a match, lately found with one or two other scraps in leaving Downe. It is of an Association international between Otterhive and Tikeland. Association was a poor thing compared to Rugby, even though I had seen the incomparable W. N. Cobbold play on Parker's Piece, and the cold truth is that some of the players are now quite unknown to me. It is headed "Sunday April 13th 1890 a.d." and must therefore have been written in the Easter holidays of my first year at Eton. I will set down a few, very few, lines of it and it will be admitted that for one destined to be in some sort a sporting journalist I had early caught the tone and manner. None of the right preliminaries were omitted, on the best penny-a-lining principle, and the language is perfect. "This great match", it begins, "took place on the Ottersleigh Park Ground yesterday before a huge audience. The match was advertised to begin at 2 o'clock, but at about 12.30 large numbers of people were seen wending their way towards the ground and by 2 o'clock it was computed that about 35,000 people were present. Punctually Dondale led the Otterhive team into the enclosure and received a hearty welcome. He was closely followed by Kenneth Macdon with the Tikelanders who were loudly applauded by the audience." It seems to me that "wending their way" and "computed" are in the very best manner. I cannot write down any more of the rubbish, though I see, glancing down the paper, that somebody was "especially conspicuous", that somebody else by "superb defence" succeeded in "bringing relief" and "frustrating efforts". Ultimately, after a brave goalkeeper had kept "his charge intact, time was called leaving Tikeland the victors" and I think that that description ought to have got me a job as a football reporter if I had wanted one. I knew my stuff.

Of course that report was based on some popular model, save only that there is no question of planting the leather

between the uprights. Perhaps that had then become something of a cliché. Otherwise the phrases seem admirably copied and indeed I am afraid my whole empire was an elaborate imitation. One team was a Villa and another a North End and nobody need be told where they came from. Likewise an old boys' Rugby Club owed its splendid name of Glenotterian-Bromthusians to the Fettesian-Lorettonians. Then there were Nomads and Pilgrims, Rovers and Uniteds, all founded on obvious models.

Yet in some respects the plagiarism was not too palpably gross. I am afraid it must be admitted that the Otterhive fifteen, when they took the field, looked extremely like that of England except that they had red lions instead of roses on the breast of their white jerseys. On the other hand, Bransland, a separate island founded on Ireland, eschewed green and had broad stripes of orange and black. I think they were called the Hornets. I cannot deny that the two rival Universities wore light and dark blue respectively and, as was only natural, the light blues won.

Generally speaking, whatever the game, the most exciting teams came from the north of Otterhive. There is a murky romance about the north which strikes awe and terror into the southern breast. In real life Nottinghamshire were immensely great, but it was the Yorkshire names, Ulyett and Lee, Grimshaw and Peate that had the most formidable ring. And in winter no one could stand against the Bradford champions, Lockwood, Toothill and Jowett, Briggs and Emmott, and Bradshaw of Bramley, who was as broad as he was long. I do not for a moment think that any northern little boy would conversely have taken his heroes from the south, from Kent or Surrey or even Gloucestershire. There is a fine arrogance about the north which knows it is better, if it is only in the matter of a new hideous town-hall, whereas the lackadaisical south is hardly conscious of its town-halls and is willing to surrender the palm without a struggle. It is not conscious of competition, which is so irritating for the other competitor. I have all my life wanted Yorkshire

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to win if Kent cannot; so Donlandshire, in their green caps, always won my County Championship and I doubt if I ever allowed Dickingham Parish Church to lose a Rugby match. Their genesis by the way was quite clear; Leeds St Johns and Leeds Parish Church used to come and play against Cambridge, and it was against Leeds St Johns that I had once seen M. M. Duncan in his red stockings score the most wonderful try, twisting and turning between the bewildered Yorkshiremen like an inspired eel—but I grow maudlin.

I have kept to the end my last discovery; it is an old copy-book, used, from internal evidence, at different dates, for it contains some French lessons, a list of inn signs round Cambridge, an essay on the best way of arranging stamps, the "History of the World (with notes), by B. R. M. Darwin" which seems never to have gone any further. There is also a good deal of "B. R. M. D." (scribbled here, and there, for even heroic initials are not quite so fascinating as one's own. And then at the end there is a series of letters beginning "Dear Sir", written to the various people who have been selected to play for Otterhive, telling them of this agreeable honour and asking for an immediate reply. There is a grandeur of pretending about this that compels my own admiration. The thing was carried through with such thoroughness.

And with that I must say a reluctant goodbye to all those good companions, or rather *au revoir*, for I can always call them up to haunt me pleasantly whenever I like. I feel like the Reverend John Mitford as he said farewell to the great Hambledon eleven. "Unwillingly", he said, "do we drop the pen. Very pleasant has our task been, delightful our recollections. Farewell ye thymey pastures of our beloved Hampshire and farewell, ye spirits of the brave who still hover over the fields of your inheritance." It is oftenest over my grandmother's garden at Cambridge that the spirits of my brave will hover. I can see it all with extraordinary clearness, the goal-posts between the big beech and the

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plane at one end and against the box trees at the other. The flower-beds and the gravel walk on either side, representing touch, and on the path Mr Bourne who kindly made my posts, the most unresting of all gardeners, in a hat like Sir Winston Churchill's, comes walking as if the devil were after him. Dicky's piercing bark is heard heralding my grandmother in her bath-chair and for a moment I must restrain that deft punt to touch—into the veranda. No matter, the Parish Church three-quarters must score in the end. There they go, they have scored under the sweeping branches of the plane tree, I knew they would, nothing can stop them. They come from Donlandshire.

Darwin Online (<http://darwin-online.org.uk/>).

A BOY GOLFER

GOLF must come breaking in sooner or later since it has played so large a part in a possibly mis-spent life, and I now know the date with which to begin. On 16th December 1884 my father gave me my first club and on the 17th I broke it. This was not I trust in an infantile tantrum, for clubs in those days were very fragile. At any rate it was mended and, according to my father, I "hit very well" with it. Before then, though I do not know how long before, I had played with an old putter, and the professional had declared that thus I should learn a bad swing and must have a proper club. At any rate it is clear that I have now played golf for over seventy years. That is a long time to look back: it may be said to cover all the time of the great golf boom in this century. So I may have something a little more to say than myself to talk about.

It was apparently at Cambridge on the unspeakably muddy and unseavoursy course on Coldham Common, now long extinct, that I played with that first club of my very own. Whether I struck my first ball there or at Aberdovey, or in my grandmother's meadow in Cambridge, I do not know. My father had first played at Aberdovey on my Uncle Arthur's flower-pot course and had fallen in love with the game. He had gone adventuring as far as North Berwick and Westward Ho! A golfing holiday in summer became the regular thing; for several years it was spent at Felixstowe, and it is on the old nine-hole course there, much superior (with all possible respect) to its eighteen-hole successor, that I feel that my golf was born.

I was a solitary player, not from any love of solitude but because at Felixstowe there were no other small boys to play with. There were two somewhat older, one of whom said,

for I overheard him, that there was about me "too much swagger swing". That was a little wounding but it was also a compliment, because I was proud of my fierce waggle and long swing. At any rate they did not offer to play with me, so that I became a young outlaw leading a lawless, reckless life, squeezing my way in and out between the grown-up couples and playing one particular hole, the second, over and over again, I daresay fifty times a day. It was a short hole and with a wild rush I could play it while the grown-ups were holing out on the first green; then wriggle back to the tee, keeping under the lee of the Martello tower and so hope to dodge my way in again.

Not only were there no other boys but, unless my memory fails me, there were no young golfers at all. Of course a boy deems any grown-up preposterously old, but even so I think I am right. Golf in the early and mid eighties was in England largely a game of middle-aged beginners. The one famous amateur who came occasionally to Felixstowe was Mure Fergusson: he must have been in his early thirties and he was a good deal younger than the players of the rank and file. They were mostly from London, and I fancy a good many of them came, as did the great Mure, from the Stock Exchange. They were always kind, did not apparently resent my presence, and occasionally said encouraging things. Some of them wore red coats, supposed to signify a modest measure of achievement, but my father unashamedly played in shirt-sleeves and flannel trousers. Lightning did not come down and strike him and I am inclined to believe that the habit was not uncommon in England and less severely regarded than modern criminologists have alleged. As to the ladies the question of what they wore did not arise; for there weren't any.

The god of my idolatry was Willie Fernie, the professional. He had won the championship in 1883 after a tie with Bob Ferguson, and was in the fullness of his powers. His shop was opposite the Martello tower and close to the second tee, the starting-point of my daily adventures, so I had plenty of chances of adoring him in his yachting cap

with a shiny peak and his white apron, as he came outside to waggle a half-finished club. He had in my eyes rather a fierce, buccaneering air, and fear mingled with my worship. I did not dare go into the shop, unless my father was with me. It was a paradise of glue and pitch, of files and a vice, and heads in the rough, with a smell that still comes gratefully back to me. "God bless me," as Mr Borthrop Trumbull (in *Middlemarch*) remarked of the ham, "what an aroma!"

And for sheer beauty of style it is not only a boyish hero-worship that makes me class Willie Fernie with the very highest. There *in excelsis* was the "young, insolent fearlessness" which Horace Hutchinson attributed to the St Andrews players. A great and almost hideously accurate golfer, who played with Fernie, has told me that he had a dangerous loop in his swing which produced now and again a destructive hook. I would not venture to contradict him, and indeed Fernie once came within inches of destroying me with a hook, a venomous low, half-topped ball that rattled against the black sleepers of the bunker in which I cowered. But loop or no loop his swing was a thing of lovely ease and grace, and I feel—this is of course a youthful illusion—that nobody else ever hit quite so clean. It was as if the head of his club was a bird on the wing which stooped to the ball for an instant in its swift passage and flew away with it.

I think that in those days it was more usual than it is nowadays to take the professional out in a foursome. It was the thing to do, like ordering a bottle of wine "for the good of the house", and so distinguished a player was naturally in demand. Certainly there were more foursomes played by the rank and file of golfers. There are plenty today in competitions at certain seasons of the year, but there were then far more of those casual, friendly foursomes, made up perhaps at lunch-time after the morning round. As to the four-ball match it did not exist, or at any rate I never saw one. I think that perhaps golfers were more fraternal; the good player was more disposed to take a weaker brother as his partner to help him round. Today golfers stick to their own class and that is

natural enough; for a man to play in a four-ball with far superior players is a dull and hopeless game; in a foursome there is no question of his "coming in" once in a round; he has his fair share both of destruction and glory.

It was natural too for golfers to feel more brotherly towards one another, because we were conscious of being an elect and almost persecuted body, assembling in secret places to practise obscure nonconformist rites. An old friend of mine, now dead, Guy Ellis, a very fine golfer of an eccentric humour, was once setting out in the train from London to Sandwich with his clubs on the rack over his head when a fellow passenger entered the carriage and observed, "Ah! I see you are a golfer." Guy took one look at him, realised that he threatened unceasing conversation for a journey of three hours or so, and replied, "Oh no, I've never played the game in my life, I'm only taking these things down for a friend." Few people would have shown such resource in an emergency, and indeed I think few then would have desired to arrest so hastily that prodigy of speech; golf created a bond. For that matter it still does, but there are many exceptions to prove the rule. We no longer want to hear from a perfect stranger about the fifth hole on a course that we have never seen, which is a bogey 4 but—and so on. In short we do not talk golf purely for golf's sake. We are no longer brothers.

Sometimes we used to stay in lodgings at Felixstowe when I would waste some time upon the beach. At others we stayed in the Clubhouse. There was a delightful steward, an old sailor called Stoneham. His great story was of the murder of Lord Mayo, which I think he had seen. Its climax, a fine example of meiosis was, "Her ladyship and all the ladies and gents aboard were very much put out." To stay at the Club gave me all sorts of little odds and ends of time, especially in the evening, when the grown-up golfers had gone home. It was then too that my angelic father would play a whole round with me. We played one ball, a foursome against nobody, for Bogey had not then been invented, and kept our score with commendable honesty.

Some of the glory departed from Felixstowe when Fernie left, I suppose to go to Troon, where he was so long a monument, and soon afterwards we departed too and went to Cromer for one or two summers. This was also in those days a nine-hole course and no doubt inferior to Felixstowe, as a course on downland on a cliff top must always be inferior to the real seaside thing. However, it was a jolly place, and one was not too priggish about golf courses in those days and liked big swooping carries over valleys. Cromer had some fine dramatic shots such as that from the top of the hill to the home green nestling in the hollow beneath, hard against the club-house rails. And when the darkness began to fall it was exciting to see the lighthouse cast its beams over the second green. I used to play with the lighthouse keeper's son, a little older than I was, Willie Aveston, who later became the professional at Cromer and a very good golfer indeed, lacking only health and strength. I once beat him but I knew very well that he was my master.

From Cromer the family holiday moved for several summers to Eastbourne. There was yet another nine-hole course, and this one also had the kind of fun to be found on downland courses. There was a noble chalk pit and a tremendous shot over Paradise Wood if one had the impudence to try it, but I was over young for such feats. I first saw the illustrious Horace Hutchinson play there and I could today walk to the exact spot blindfold. I remember my horror when Peter Paxton, the professional, questioned whether Mr A. M. Ross, who came there for a day or two, was not an even better player. It seemed horrible blasphemy dictated by excessive patriotism and it was not true, though Sandy Ross was a very good golfer and won medals all round the Lothians. Meanwhile during those Eastbourne summers my own golf was growing up, I was getting reasonably good and could beat several of the kind grown-ups who played with me. I beat one in a red coat with a light blue collar and the University arms in gold and ermine blazing on the pocket. He played for Cambridge and I was only sixteen. My goodness, gracious me!

But I am getting too far ahead and must go back to those earlier eighties when golfers and golf courses were still so rare. It is hard to realise how rare, when nowadays a man carrying a club is of no more interest than one carrying an umbrella. Yet in 1889 there were according to the *Golfing Annual* only fifty-seven golf clubs in England; many of those were of the most primitive description and by no manner of means all of them had professionals. These were all, or nearly all, Scotsmen. They had begun to come adventuring over the border, but many of them were men who had other trades. Rolland was a stonemason, David Brown was a slater, Jack Burns was a plasterer, and the profession was still regarded as a chancy and not very reputable one. It was a few years later that Braid wanted to emulate earlier Elie heroes such as Rolland and the Simpsons, who had taken the plunge, and his parents would not hear of it but set him in the way of a steady, respectable living by binding him apprentice to a joiner.

The professionals were all Scotsmen and the amateurs seem to me now to have been all Colonels. That is an absurd exaggeration, but I am sure that especially at Eastbourne there were a great many of them. "The fact is, Sir," said Peter Paxton, doubtless in a moment of exasperation with the Committee, "the place fair stinks with half-pay officers." It seemed, in such places as we visited at least, largely a game for the leisurely and the retired. To be sure there were also schoolmasters, who during their holidays swooped down on the links in hordes, sometimes to the alarm of the less learned. There used to be a story of a golfer in the club-house at Bembridge making preparations for departure. "What, going away," asked a friend. "Why?" "Eton masters coming down next week," was the gloomy reply. That is a most ungrateful story for me to repeat. I stayed more times than I can count with Mr C. H. Allcock at Aberdovey who had been a master at Eton, and filled his hospitable house with his colleagues. Yet it is undeniable that, however, unjustly, the pedagogue does in some breasts engender fear.

That first club of mine has wholly vanished from my memory, but I have been racking my brain to recall a slightly later vintage. For playing and replaying that second hole at Felixstowe I think I had three, a brasse, a driving iron and a lofting iron. I certainly had no putter, and that was probably a mistake in my education, as I thus acquired the habit of scraping the ball towards the hole with the iron held near the bottom of the shaft and a most inelegantly crouching stance. It will be observed that I had no mashie and that for the simplest reason that in my earlier years it had not yet been evolved. Yes, I was metaphorically before the stone age and the iron age and the bronze age: I am the Neanderthal man or the Presapiens; I come before the mashie. I still possess, or a member of my family does, a lofting iron, not my very earliest but of a definitely Piltdown character. It has a shallow face and a bulging back (the latter a heterodoxy and probably a "patent") and was one of the easiest clubs to play with that I ever possessed. Alas, it grew with the years too light and tinny. That was an inevitable penalty for cleaning clubs before the days of stainless steel.

Grown-ups had naturally more clubs, but I question whether they had more than seven or eight, and incidentally Willie Auchterlonie, now our senior Open Champion, never carried more than seven in his life. The race of long, mid and short spoons had largely disappeared; irons had begun to outnumber woods and not vice versa as in old pictures. I don't think anybody's clubs were very good ones, certainly not comparable to the beautiful, shiny, regimented clubs of today. Later there came, I know, club-makers who were real artists: Gibson of Westward Ho!, Lorimer at St Andrews, and so on, but at any rate as far as England was concerned I think most of the clubs with which elementary players, such as my father, were fobbed off, were but clumsy, lumpy things, with shafts having spring anywhere or spring nowhere. I have no doubt that Hugh Philp at St Andrews had been a club-making genius and his clubs were things of beauty, but surely almost too fragile and delicate for

human nature's daily thumps. Wooden putters were relatively rare in England and most of the iron ones were clod-hoppers, thick in the head and overhanging in the face; some of the worst of them were not made of iron but of gun-metal, such as can still be seen on public putting courses.

It was far better to putt with a cleek than with most of these atrocities, and here I must shed a tear over that fine old club. In the multitude of a numbered set there must be wisdom, and yet I doubt whether any single one of them has quite the quality, and certainly none of them has the romance of the cleek. There were reverential stories of great cleek players, how Jack Simpson hit so hard with a cleek as to batter its head into the shape of a hoop. Bob Martin's cleek approaches were spoken of with awe. Young Tom Morris and Bob Ferguson had played a match armed with cleeks alone. In these more sophisticated and commercial days of endless, wearisome scoring tournaments it will be a long time before two champions play a match with No. 2 irons. The cleek was an aristocrat among clubs and yet it did not disdain all manner of tasks; there was scarcely anything it could not do in skilful hands, and with how clean a sound did the gutty ring from its shallow face!

The grossest defect of all the clubs of those days, as seen by modern eyes, was undoubtedly in the grips. They were, as we should now think, far too thick and padded, making it harder to feel the head. That was due to the almost universal "palm grip" with which golfers held the club, but apart from that a brand new grip of shiny yellow leather was an odious thing with an eel-like propensity for slipping out of the hand. Its only virtue was that it gave an excuse for a visit to the professional's shop to beg for a bit of pitch. Even a leather which had been broken in by use could get horribly slippery in cold weather. For many years one pocket of my golfing coat was always a marshland of pitch in which such objects as stumps of pencils were firmly embedded like flies in amber. There seems to me nothing in which the modern club has more greatly improved than this

matter of the grip. When today I waggle my friends' clubs the grips feel so "tacky", so comfortably clinging without being sticky, that I feel capable of wonderful deeds—a pleasing illusion which I carefully do nothing to dispel.

I have nothing original or entertaining to say about the balls we played with and I am mortally afraid of involving myself in an argument, even an argument with nobody, as to whether golf were a better game with a gutty ball. I am pretty sure that it was, but it is of no use to say so, as indeed it has often been said, at this time of day. Silvertown or Eclipse—that was the question in my early days and it was sometimes a difficult one as between foursome partners. I know that some of the great men, Horace Hutchinson for instance, thought the Eclipse very good in a wind and that it held its line better on the green, but to me it appeared an ugly yellow ball, that made an ugly dead sound and would not rise into the air when I hit it. I myself could not rise to a new shilling Silvertown, except on some specially opulent occasion, but a ninepenny remade was generally speaking a very good ball. What one is apt to forget about the gutty, save by projecting oneself back into the past by resolute effort, is the really appalling gash that could be made in it by a single maladroit stroke. As to a niblick shot—well, only a fool or a millionaire would take a new ball at such a hole as Cader at Aberdovey, where a topped drive meant unlimited liability in the bunker below the black-crested sandhill.

The name of Cader brings me to another contrast between old and new, then and now. I think golfers spoke of holes more by their names and less by their numbers than they do today. It may have been due to a respect for tradition or it may have been because there were such relatively few courses, that we were on terms of greater intimacy with our own particular one. Whatever the cause it seems to me a pity. Numbers can acquire a splendour second to none, witness the old numbers of the regiments in the British Army; no name can add anything to the 60th or the 42nd. In the last war certain submarines with superficially the

dullest of numbers made them immortal. Yet these are exceptions to prove the rule that names are at once more familiar and more romantic.

I do not know now how much the grown-ups at Felixstowe used the names of the holes, but I know the names were on the card and that I used them reverently. When I went back there after nearly twenty years' absence I found myself murmuring, half unconsciously, "Benthills, Eastwood Ho!, The Ridge, Bunker's Hill, The Point", names some of which at least, I did not know that I knew, till memory came alive with the sight of the Martello tower. I looked eagerly for Morley's Grave, a little black-boarded bunker on the way to Eastwood Ho!, but nobody could tell me where it was. I was like poor Silas Marner when he returned to his old home to find that Lantern Yard had been swept away. Mr Morley, whom I can see now in his red coat, had long since gone to his real grave; his name was clean gone and so was his bunker. Bunker's Hill had always stuck in my head; I had suffered there too often to forget it and I pause a moment to reflect that it is always the reverses of British Armies that are thus celebrated. There have been battles in which our enemies have been very badly bunkered, but as to these we are modestly silent; it is Majuba and Spion Kop that we insist on remembering.

Hoylake has always been the glorious exception to the rule that it is the Scottish links that have the great names. Yet I doubt if the modern Hoylake golfer uses names as habitually as did his predecessor. The Cop and the Dowie and the Punch-bowl yes, but I do not now hear as I used to do of the Course and the Stand, perhaps because the last post of the race-course has vanished. Certain names always stick, such as those of mountains, the Alps and the Himalayas at Prestwick, the younger Alps at Hoylake, and so on. Cader at Aberdovey is a humble example. Generally speaking it is not the fanciful names that are permanent but the plain, superficially dull ones that tell of geographical facts. St Andrews is full of instances such as 'The Corner of the

Dyke, The Hole o' Cross, The High Hole and The Road. The Gingerbeer Hole is now purely fanciful, although it once had a practical reason, and has ceased to be used. When my Uncle Dicky Ruck laid out the revised edition of Aberdovey he conscientiously christened all the holes, and all his names except Cader and The Crater were either never used or at once forgotten. He tried to call the hole after Cader by the Welsh name for Snowdon, but the golfers would have none of it. It had a high tee and was instantly called The Pulpit. When I laid out my course on the Vardar Marshes, we could have no flags since the Macedonians stole them. We had to mark the holes as best we could: at one we had a blue French tin hat with a hole in it and at another a sheep's skull. Those holes naturally became The Helmet and The Skull: the others we knew by numbers and that is the way of the world. For myself I have always been a stickler for using names if I possibly can and I shall always call the Sixteenth at Prestwick The Cardinal's Back, even though I feel a little priggish and self-conscious when I do it. More people did these things naturally years ago and I wish they would do it again, but they must do it naturally or not at all.

There was one marked feature of golf when I began, namely a freedom, some would call it a blessed freedom, from writing about golf. There was, it is true, Mr Clark's admirable book, *Golf, a Royal and Ancient Game*, but that was for the historian rather than the aspiring player. There was *The Golfer's Manual* by "a keen hand", originally published in 1857 and now quite recently republished, but I fancy eating time had made a meal on nearly all existing copies in 1884. A little later came *Golfing*, published by Messrs Chambers, with some odds and ends of pleasant literature on the game, but, as far as instruction was concerned, nothing but a few drawings of an absurd gentleman in a bowler hat with his right elbow higher than any elbow has ever been held before or since. In fact though people had been writing verse about golf for more than a hundred

years, practically nobody had set down in plain prose the rudiments of hitting the ball. Then just at the end of the eighties came two books which will, I hope, never be forgotten—*The Art of Golf*, by Sir Walter Simpson, by no means a great teacher but a great and humorous philosopher, and the Badminton volume edited and largely written by Horace Hutchinson. He had already produced his *Hints on Golf*, an amusing little book, made famous by one phrase, "golf is not agriculture". Now in 1890 he attained his full stature as a golfing prophet with the Badminton. I suppose his teaching is now largely outmoded, but if other teachers wrote half as well, they would not be nearly such bores as they often are.

Also towards the end of the eighties there began to appear *The Golfing Annual*. Most of the literature in it must now be seen to be believed. There were poems rollicking and poems facetious, the one about draining the social glass with the refrain "A Golfing we will Go", the other full of exuberating puns about tees and caddies. In a volume for 1890 which I have just taken at random from the shelf, there is an account of John Ball's historic victory, the first Englishman and the first amateur to win the Open Championship. In it is one sentence that I adore, and doubtless adored, though possibly for other reasons, when I was fourteen years old: "When he reached the fourteenth disc it transpired that he had only to negotiate the four remaining holes in twenty to win."

Alas that writing such as that is now almost dead, and yet those words were unwritten and John Ball's feat was still in the dim future when I set out. I should have loved some golfing literature in 1884, since I had already begun to cut the cricket out of *The Times* day by day and store it in a box; but as far as golf was concerned I was starved. The pleasant little *Golf*, a forerunner of *Golf Illustrated*, in its bright red cover did not exist. The gentleman who later used to fill three columns of *The Sporting and Dramatic* every week by expanding the reports of Saturday's monthly

medals in Monday's *Sportsman*, had not discovered that subtle art of flattering the eighteen handicap golfer. The patent-never-leaving-off-golf-article-writing-steam-engine had not yet begun to work. I and the rest of the golfing world with me were famished for want of mental pabulum.

Now let me leap to the time when I went up to Cambridge. The status that University golf then occupied may give some clue to that of the game in general. Today various matches played by the two sides are all duly reported, sometimes at considerable length, and the University match is definitely an event. Though it is generally played on a rather remote seaside course there is a considerable crowd of spectators and of parents bravely suffering tortures. It was not so with us. We were far from having created any sensation as yet. Our position was a very dubious one; I think we called ourselves "half blues", but that status was not generally conceded, and I question whether Cambridge as a whole knew of our existence. Some years before, the golf club had demanded a blue and been contumeliously and, I think, not unreasonably refused it. It had thereupon followed the historic example of the football players and taken it. At least some of the players wore light blue caps with silver crossed clubs, which might at a distance have been mistaken for crossed oars. I have seen John Low and Eric Hambro, who were a year or two before my time, actually playing in them. When I went up the golfers had become more coy. I had such a cap, I have it now; I went so far as to hang it on the corner of the photograph of the team, but none of us were ever seen wearing it in public. We took it out in red jackets with the light blue collars and the loveliest coat of arms blazing on the pocket. Oxford was still more modest or more sophisticated than we were: some of them did not even wear red coats.

Except for the University match itself the newspapers paid us little if any attention. To that match came *The Times* representative, who wrote with equal confidence about every game and was called Sporting Ward to distinguish him

from Humphry Ward. There was also an old friend of mine, now dead, R. E. Howard, afterwards Golf Correspondent of *The Daily Mail*, who then represented an agency. I doubt if they explored beyond the first tee, nor—and this was really a little wounding—did any of the members of the Royal St George's Golf Club, when we played the match at Sandwich. A few of them, headed by dear old Mr Tommy Mills, saw us drive off and then played their own games. Mr Mills lived at The Bell and played every day of his life, but he could not spare a morning to watch such inconsiderable persons.

Today, as I said, parents lie very thick upon the links; indeed if one is something of a partisan one must take care to be encircled by a group of Cambridge parents at crucial moments, since it would never do to affront a prayerful Oxford mother. In my time there was no danger: I never remember to have seen the ghost of a female relation and I can only recall one father, Mr Walter de Zoete, and one uncle. The uncle was Sir George Newnes (he was a parent in the following year) who was watching his nephew, Brame Hillyard. When Hillyard, who had done nobly for us, missed the putt that would have meant victory instead of a halved match, smash went Sir George's umbrella on the stony turf of Wimbledon Common. Even in that moment of agony I recalled Mr R. H. Lyttelton's classical account of Cobden's over and Mr Charles Marsham's umbrella that met a similar fate against the pavilion brickwork. We were very unimportant people and yet there were some good golfers on both sides in that halved match of 1896, and the Oxford side of 1900 was one of the best that ever played. Four of the eight, Humphrey Ellis, Bramston, Mitchell and Beveridge became internationals and no later team has surpassed that record. I fancy, however, that it was not until Hugh Alison played a shot off the club-house roof at Woking in 1904 that the match burst into the popular press. That stroke constituted a "story" and golf is of no account by comparison.

NAIN AND PANTLLUDW

"DEAR little Pantlludw. I believe it is as much of a paradise as is possible. I don't know how it could be lovelier." So wrote my mother in her diary when she was nineteen or twenty. Pantlludw and my grandmother, who lived there, have meant a great deal in my life and I cannot do better than begin with my poor young mother's outpouring. And to Pantlludw I must add its perfect complement, Aberdovey.

From earliest youth there was always a Welsh quarter of me as distinct from the English three-quarters. My mother had been half Welsh by blood and wholly Welsh in feeling. My grandfather, Laurence Ruck, and my grandmother, born Mary Anne Mathews, had early left London and, his own home in Kent, Cranbrook Manor, being permanently let, had come to live in one of her two houses in Merioneth, Pantlludw and Esgair. So to Wales I was early taken to a new world with a new grandmother, in Welsh Nain, and new Welsh uncles, very kind and interesting but also rather strange and different. Three of the uncles were soldiers and had nothing to do with Cambridge. That seemed odd, as I had a general belief that everybody had to do with Cambridge, even as one of my aunts, when a little girl, had believed that everyone must be a man of science. "Where does he do his barnacles?" she had asked of a neighbour's house. And Rucks are in fact, as I came to know later, decidedly different from Darwins, being more exciting and adventurous with a greater capacity for sudden plunges. Darwins, or the combination of Darwin and Wedgwood, do on the whole more predictable things.

I shall return to the Rucks presently and in a way I have not far to go, for sooner or later they all come back to roost

in the Dovey valley. I don't think I shall ever do it myself but I understand the call of the blood. There is something about the valley that draws and draws you. Meanwhile my first Welsh recollections are not of Pantlludw but of Aberdovey, where my grandparents were temporarily living. Later there came fast trains with through carriages making a simple business of it, not more than six hours or so, just long enough to be thrilling without being tiresome, and never a change between London and Machynlleth. It was a very different affair from Cambridge in the eighties, starting in the dark between seven and eight on a winter's morning, with a long preliminary dawdle to Bletchley, stopping at every single station, with a succession of farmers and old women with marketing baskets getting in and out. There was another change at Rugby or Stafford, sometimes both, with renewed hot-water bottles for numbed feet, an inevitable one at Shrewsbury, another at Welshpool and a final one at Glandovey (now Dovey) Junction. The journey ended moreover as it had begun, with a stop at every station between Shrewsbury and Aberdovey. Hanwood and Westbury and Yockleton—I think I could still for a bet recite the whole two and twenty of them. Long before the train reached Aberdovey night had come on and I was almost overwhelmed with sleep, but I could still enjoy the feeling of the train crossing the river at the Junction with a hollow, rumbling sound, and could rouse myself to catch a glimpse between the tunnels of the darkening waters of the estuary.

A gentleman with a very red nose and a very dilapidated station bus drove us the short distance to a house called Otago, in a terrace. The lights of Borth were twinkling across the water and we had high tea with an egg and Mary Morris's particular brand of bread and butter. I cannot recall its precise flavour, and yet it is, like a lost word, on the tip of my tongue, and I know it was different from anyone else's. I ate it sitting on a black horse-hair sofa wedged against the wall and I believe there was a lovely picture of a

sailing ship on fire, with red and yellow flames against a night sky. If it was not there then it was in another lodging-house, and in my judgment no seaside lodgings can be considered complete without one.

It is hard to believe that there was then no golf at Aberdovey, but such was the surprising fact. There was a lovely flat stretch of sand for small boys to play on and there was a pier to which there came periodically a steamer from Ireland. There were fine sandhills on what was afterwards the golf course, and there were still taller and more ravishing ones at Borth. One day I was rowed over there by John Bell in his ferry boat. Incidentally he or his son figure under the pseudonym of Knocker in Miss Eiluned Lewis's delicious picture of Aberdovey. I hasten to add that her Aberdovey was of a later period since she is much younger than I am, but I fancy the place changed little, at any rate out of season, for a good long while, and if anyone wants to read of it as a children's elysium, he will find it beautifully and sensitively described in *Dew on the Grass*. Darwin Online (<http://darwinonline.org.uk/>)

Of daily interest were the little black Jesuits going out for their dutiful little walks. These were not fully blown Jesuits, I imagine, but, as Sam Weller said of medical students "only in training". They inhabited the old Corbett, a swollen inn which had outgrown its strength and so failed. Some of the mothers of these young Frenchmen came temporarily to Aberdovey to be near their sons, and two of them were known to the village as Madame Treacle and Madame Trousers. There was a lady who painted and sold, if anyone would buy them, pictures in sea shells which appeared to me as beautiful as they were ingenious. She had a kind daughter called Flora several years older than I was, who played with me on the shore. Then, most important of all, there was Mrs Evans at the railway crossing, afterwards the patron saint of the Golf Club and dispenser of lunch which we irreverently termed biltong. At her little red house by the side of the line she provided scrumptious teas with cream and jam. These, as far as I can remember,

were the chief attractions of Aberdovey and very great they were. I had once been to Brighton and ridden in a goat carriage, a vision of velvet and tarnished gilding, but Aberdovey stood alone for the seaside proper.

My memories of Nain at this time are very dim and overshadowed by those of more clear-cut and practical joys. And even when I was almost twelve, Aberdovey had begun to stand for golf rather than for any personal relationship. The Golf Club was founded in 1892, when I was fifteen, but some years before that my uncles had made a nine-hole course with Mrs Timber Jones's flower-pots for holes, on which they and my father and I and two or three others played. For those who know the place I may say that the course began with a tee not far from the present fifteenth green, so that we had quite a walk to get there. I can hear the sound of our steps marching along the road and feel the rather agitating splendour of being able to keep time with the grown-ups by the help of an occasional skip. All the ground by the sandhills, on which most of the homecoming holes are now laid out, was then unplayable marsh.

My eldest Uncle Arthur had been the first of the family to play, and I have always been thankful that he was in the King's Regiment and so stationed at Liverpool when the links at Formby first came into being. Otherwise I might never have played golf at all, which seems now an inconceivable state of things. My Uncle Dicky, a Sapper, fond of all games and good at them, soon became the more enthusiastic of the two, and it was he who laid out the first full eighteen holes at Aberdovey and was largely responsible for forming the Club.

One or two neighbours and friends played on the original nine-hole course. I was told by one of them, an old friend named David Howell, lately dead at over ninety, that he remembered my saying fiercely to my father in a foursome, "Come on, Dada. We mustn't let these beasts beat us." I am afraid I have at times said much the same to my partner, when at a much more advanced age. There was one neigh-

THE WORLD THAT FRED MADE

hour among those early players whose memory has passed into a legend. He would strike the empty air, count "One" in a loud, rasping voice and address himself to the ball again. He did not persevere with the game for long.

This is not primarily a golfing chapter at all; so I will only mention one event in the Club's early history. My enthusiastic uncle had sent for a photographer from far away to portray the glories of the links and make them known to the world. Unluckily at that moment came what is rare in Merioneth, a hard frost and a fall of snow. The photographer could not be put off and my uncle made the best of a bad job. We congregated in Cader bunker with our skates thrown on the ground (the photograph is there to witness if I lie); my uncle was pictured playing a full shot with a driver out of the snow-clad bunker in exactly the wrong direction; while the Aberdovey worthies assembled on the crest of Cader holding their hats on against the wind.

And now I must leave Aberdovey for a while and go to Pantludw. I shall likewise skip over a certain number of years till I am living in the Temple, professing the law, looking forward to the long vacation and panting for Wales. Pantludw is a tiny grey house set on a little plateau carved out of a hillside. The ground runs steeply down in front of it and rises steeply behind it in a high, thickly wooded hill. I do not know what it was like before my grandfather began to make paths everywhere, and lily gardens and croquet lawns. I think he must have been driven, on a very small scale, by the same demoniac passion for beautifying and altering and improving their properties which had filled the time and emptied the pockets of country gentlemen in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Sir George Sitwell, so delightfully portrayed by his son, was clearly an example on a grand scale. There were two drives, a back drive rough and slaty, which I think was old, and the newer one flanked by masses of rhododendrons. As to the paths, many of them had by my time become impassable and one



Uncle Dicky driving out of Cader bunker in the snow



A Ruck family group at Aberdovey

could often, as I remember them, light on a new one which the jungle tide of bushes had overwhelmed.

A brook made a little waterfall that tumbled steeply down the hill and its music was part of Pantlludw. So were the two great trees that stood like two heraldic supporters on either side of the house. One was a most noble beech, whose branches overhung the roof and made a constant drip, drip in wet weather. I am told that something has befallen the beech but I refuse to admit it; it will always be there in my picture of Pantlludw. At any rate the yew tree is there on the other side, as it has been for untold centuries. This is surely the monarch of all yews. I at least have never seen one to compare with it. It is not one tree but two, for a great branch has set up in business on its own account as a second tree. The thick mist of leaves made a glorious covered playground on a rainy day; many a studious swing have I practised under those branches.

Some impious ancestor, so runs the legend, had once meant to cut down the yew, but fortunately there arrived a stranger wandering across the hills and seeking a night's hospitality. He said that he would buy the tree, paid down his earnest money and departed. He never came back, but a bargain was a bargain; the ancestor died still waiting and the yew was for ever reprieved.

Nain had her own private belief about the yew tree, that it was the last of a long race that sprang from the great house of Mathafarn, of which Pantlludw was in some sort an offshoot, burnt in the Civil War by the wicked Myddeltons of Chirk. At Mathafarn there was a Yew Tree Field with no yews left in it, and perhaps Nain's yew derived thence its illustrious descent.

The yew was naturally the best loved of all her trees, but she could not bear the thought of even lopping a single one. There had been a pretty view from the front of the house of the Dovey winding its way down the valley, but it had been gradually reduced to vanishing point. If you wanted to see the view, Nain said, you had only to climb

up to the croquet ground. So no axe fell and Pantlludw was becoming more and more a little fairy-story house in the middle of a wood.

Now I am very nearly ready to start at last on my journey to paradise. It is a baking hot day in August, nearing the twelfth of the month, and term-time is loitering and sauntering away its last few days of existence. The Long Vacation is almost here. The lawyers' clerks, fanning themselves on the shady side of Middle Temple Lane, have their waist-coats unbuttoned more informally than they would have done earlier in the term. The members of the bar who would have hardly thought it decent to play on the lawn tennis courts in the Temple Gardens before evening, now unashamedly play in the middle of the day. There is a general feeling of clearing up. Not quite for everybody, since there are virtuous persons who will still be coming to Chambers hoping to pick up crumbs which do not tempt the rich. I am not one of them, though doubtless I ought to be. No, I am formally and bravely staying it out till the last day, and not a moment longer. Much good may it do me! Once that day has dawned I am away to Wales. My father and stepmother and sister have gone abroad to Switzerland, or perhaps to Italy to look at pictures. They would take me if I wanted to go, but I know it would never do, for we should want to look at different things and at very different places, and that unfortunate perversity of mine would instantly set me against what they admire and what I ought to admire. Besides, Aberdovey and Pantlludw have been calling and calling in my ears these many weary weeks, and nothing on earth can now hold me back.

So behold me betimes on the morning of release dashing up the lane into the Strand to find a hansom and bringing it back with me in triumph. My luggage is on the top, I and my bulging bag of clubs are inside, my bicycle is perched precariously in front and away we go, away for nearly two blessed months with lots of golf and no law. It is to Euston I am bound. In later years the railways, by some arrange-

ment which I always suspected of being a sinister conspiracy made me go to Wales from Paddington. I have long since become reconciled and have indeed transferred to it much of the old sentiment, but I still have a preference for Rugby and Stafford as compared with Birmingham and Wolverhampton, and I sadly miss Rugeley, where I always looked out of the window and thought with reverence of the greatest of poisoners, Mr William Palmer who had lived there and made it famous.

At any rate it was then Euston that was the dearest and most romantic of stations. What fun it was in giving the porter his labelling orders to say quite unnecessarily "On the Cambrian railway you know," and to give a pitying smile if he pronounced Machynlleth in brutally English fashion. It is in fact a difficult name for English tongues. Only the other day the Lord Chief Justice kindly expounded it for the benefit of counsel, who was making sad work of it, and said, "Don't be afraid of it, Mr So-and-So." There were second-class carriages in those days, upholstered in red; they cost very little more than the thirds and were surprisingly empty. I remember that Nain disapproved of them as being in her view given over to lady's maids and footmen. I ought to go third in less finical company, but I stuck to my red cushions. In any case I had reached Euston so absurdly early that I always got a corner seat.

If I had a book I scarcely turned a page of it; I just thought and thought of the joys ahead of me and looked up at the rack to see that my clubs were safely there. There was not a single golf course to be seen out of the window, but ever and anon one might spy in the angle of a field guarded by hedges, the makings of a great short hole. Whether the train after Shrewsbury raced almost profanely fast or, as in elder days, missed never a station, there were certain sign-posts on the way to paradise to be eagerly looked for, such as those two noble hills called the Gates of Montgomeryshire or the natural arch in the rock after Talerddig, where the train, its long climb done, begins its final rush down into

the valley. There were all sorts of minor private landmarks too, very familiar though one did not know quite when to expect them; a pretty old black and white house, a little red-brick Bethel (in itself hideous but in this context lovable), a brook falling down a hillside among the bracken. Years later I came to make the journey by road and cannot deny that the English part of it was far more attractive than in a train; but once the Welsh border is crossed I have a possibly sentimental weakness for those four and twenty stations on the dilatory pilgrims' way.

With Llanbryn-mair it is time to take the clubs down from the rack; with Cemmes Road one can sit still no longer. Then comes Machynlleth, and if the weather has been wet I look anxiously at the road from the station, that shall take me to the bridge over the Dovey. That strip of road is so often flooded that I think the newspapers must keep a statement to that effect permanently set up in type. I am looking also for the dark, handsome face of Evan Rees, and here he is with a pony trap of venerable and paintless aspect waiting outside the station. Evan was the gardener and general factotum at Pantlludw. Though the house is tiny there is a vast, wild extent of garden with which no single man could possibly cope and it was wonderful that Evan kept any part of it as tidy as he did. Conversation with him was not easy, for he spoke English as a foreigner. He had had no language but Welsh till, as a grown man, he had learnt a little English from my grandfather, and Nain, as far as I remember, always talked to him in Welsh. His was the charm chiefly of silent loyalty and he belonged to an age that is now almost gone.

Evan now stows my luggage in the pony cart: my clubs are left at the station against tomorrow's train to Aberdovey and I dash ahead on a bicycle. Soon I am over the bridge and past Penrhyn, the home of Mr Meredith, whose name I pronounce properly with the accent on the penultimate syllable and not, as do the ignorant English. Mr Meredith has peacocks who may sometimes be heard storming and

crying. They are crying, so Nain tells me, for rain, and on the rare occasions that it is dry at Pantlludw she feels like one of them. I am nearly there now and soon come to the gate of the back drive. I must dismount here and push my bicycle. I turn through some derelict farm buildings and come to a small wicket gate. Here it is a point of honour that I hail my grandmother who will, I know, be sitting in the veranda waiting for me. So I shout "Nain" at the top of my voice, make a gallant spurt of it, bicycle and all, up the last steep bit of path and emerge under the branches of the great yew tree.

It was on a seat at one end of the veranda that Nain would be waiting for me. She had taken her place there before she heard my shout, since she had seen the smoke of my train rising up from the valley on its way to the Junction. She is looking down the front drive at the tree with three interlacing trunks, which she has called from the time when she was a little girl "me and my two brothers". This was the most glorious of all verandas, stretching half-way round the little house so that the long windows of three rooms opened on to it. It was not only long but deep, so that she could sit there in comfort watching the rain as she loved to do. The floor was made of slates on which were carvings of the notable fish caught by the family in the Dovey or the Dylas, with their weights, and one bore my father's initials, F. D.

The veranda's only disadvantage was that it was hopelessly vulnerable to callers. They appeared suddenly round the corner of the drive and escape was impossible. Each party had inevitably seen the other. Not that Nain was deterred by that, for no one ever suffered visitors with more angelic gladness though some of them "tired the sun with talking" and everybody else too. If she was not in the veranda, then she was in her arm-chair just inside the long open window of the drawing-room in which a fire crackled pleasantly almost all the year round. Those were her two stations, from which she scarcely moved except into the little dining-room or her bedroom on the ground floor. I

am thinking of her selfishly after my grandfather's death, when I could get her all to myself. She was old then, a tall heavy woman, who found walking something of an effort. She would sometimes take my arm to the lily garden, sadly overgrown and run to seed but having something wonderfully secret and peaceful about it.

It was inside the drawing-room window that she sat writing letters sometimes for long hours at a time, for she was a faithful and prolific correspondent with all the children and grandchildren, and so made herself a great clearing-house of family intelligence. Her letters were long, amusing and gossipy and the very birds of the air must have brought her the neighbourhood's news, for she seemed to gather it all, while static at her window. She generally had something of golfing interest for my special benefit, and that I think she must have learned by heart without any clear apprehension of its meaning. She had always taken an eager interest in the club at Aberdovey, but how the game was played she had little notion; almost the only shoe she had ever seen was my attempt to putt into a hole in the veranda floor.

Now and again she had business letters to write and her mood grew sterner and her style briefer. They were to agents or tenants as far as I remember, about one or other of the hill farms which her ancestors had owned for a very long time. They were now, I am afraid, mortgaged up to the last shilling and at least as much trouble as they were worth, but she had a deep hereditary affection for them. Anything to do with them seemed to rouse the latent feudal instinct that was in her. She once asked me if I should like to see how to write a letter. I said I should and can quote it to this day: "Sir, Your terms don't suit me.—Yours faithfully." What the wretched man wanted I have wholly forgotten, but I fancy he did not write to Nain again.

The thought of those farms makes me feel that I ought to have been more sorry for Nain than I was. I was too young no doubt, and the young are apt to be unsympathetic, but

apart from that it was very hard to be sorry for anyone who so proudly and utterly refused to be sorry for herself. I did not know, and do not now, exactly how pinched her circumstances had become. Nor do I know what they had originally been, but clearly she had been much better off once. Of her two brothers, one Oliver had been drowned as a boy, bathing in the Dovey. News had come to the house that one of the boys had been drowned and Nain remembered her mother walking up and down in an agony, saying, "Not Oliver, not Oliver," and it was Oliver. Of the other, Richard, I possess a small picture with his dog; I have seen a gigantic shako which I believe to have been his as a militia officer; I have a vague notion he went on a gold rush (how unlike a Darwin!) and died there. At least he vanished young, so that Nain must have been an heiress, though in a small way. My grandfather had been his own master at one-and-twenty, a fellow commoner of Magdalen at Oxford, a dashing blade with a good estate in Kent. But I suppose land went down and down and my grandfather was too fond of making paths, and there was a luckless quarry on a remote hillside of Nain's that absorbed money and did not produce corresponding slate. The poor quarry had been supposed to be dead and buried before my time and then came a revival of hope. A mysterious gentleman came down, in patent leather boots I was told, to look at it, but was unable to recommend his friends in the city, etc. Gloom descended.

Nain did not make paths or dig quarries, but she was of too big and generous a nature to be a good economist. It had been her mother's maxim, as she often told me, that where there was room in the heart there was room in the house, and as far as was humanly possible she lived up to it, not only in little Pantlludw but in the general affairs of life. She could not bear to disappoint anyone. At one time she spent some part of the year at my Uncle Arthur's house near Carnarvon, and this involved a journey twice a year with a change at a junction. Here there was an aged porter, and he must be given a golden half-sovereign both going and coming. I

don't in the least know why, but she could not bear to omit the rite. She had room in her heart for the porter and there was no more to be said.

If she could not do such things, she was dreadfully sorry for the people who did not get the presents, but she was never sorry for herself. She was wonderfully tender-hearted and entirely unselfish. In my mother's diary I found a touching little entry in which she reproaches herself for being "quite dull and stupid". She had found an old diary of Nain's and contrasts it with her own: "A patient narrative of sights seen and deeds done, no gushing out of sentiment but a reticence that speaks of power". Certainly Nain was incapable of any kind of gush. There was about her, and here again the phrase is my mother's, a wonderful freedom from pretentiousness.

With her, to understand everything was to forgive almost anything. Only that which she would have called mean would she regard as unpardonable. Nobody could be too disreputable or too drunken or, I may add, too dull. Aberdovey had in my earlier memories of it a knack of attracting vaguely shady characters. They might have left their regiment in bad odour, they might have married their cook or not married her; they might merely have outrun the constable, but that part of Merioneth seemed to hold a certain magnetic power over them. And as for dullness, there were gigantic bores in those days, and how they did sit and how sweet Nain was to them! It was impossible to say how much she minded them, for it was another of her mother's maxims, dreadfully hard to live up to, that you must never say unkind things about friends.

Nain had a great feeling for family. She was proud of being descended from Owen Glyndwr whom the English call Glendower, and various other people as to whom I am not precisely certain. At the same time she valued people entirely for what they were and not at all for their pedigrees, and she seemed to know the descent of everyone in Merioneth; she loved what were then called the poor people and they

loved her. The only people who did produce in her a rather terrifying accession of dignity were those who had jumped up in the world more quickly than they would admit. There was Mr X., who had turned into a baronet and his father had been a little attorney. Mr Y. was a Lord Lieutenant and his grandmother had kept a little food shop during the French wars and had dealt hardly with the widows and orphans. Other people had forgotten, but Nain remembered.

She was as a rule wonderfully patient. In fact I only once remember seeing her angry, and then it was a rather contemptuous anger. The dreadful thing which happens in stories had really happened. She was a clearing-house of letters as well as of news, and one aunt had passed on to her by mistake a letter written by another aunt implying that some day perhaps Nain would need someone to look after her. "I could buy and sell the pair of them," she exclaimed, and so she could.

It was in the same corner where she wrote her letters that Nain played patience, also for hours at a time. I am afraid I had no knowledge of the game and no great interest in it, and so could not answer her questions as to the various brands that my other grandmother and one of my Darwin aunts played. All I could say was that both of them allowed themselves a certain number of cheats if circumstances demanded them, and Nain was too much of a Mrs Battle to dream of condescending to such weakness. It was far better that the Demon should triumph again and again. At least when he was beaten there was nothing poisonous in the cup of victory. And Nain did like to beat him as she liked better still to beat her human adversary at solo whist, which was our game in the window after dinner. When she went misère successfully her chuckle was hard to endure. If I have had all my life an undue love of winning at games, perhaps I inherited a little of it from Nain. She was, in a reasonably friendly way, a malignant and fiendish enemy.

In some respects Nain was undoubtedly a good hater. Dr Johnson loved his friend for hating a fool and a rogue

and a Whig. Nain could hate a rogue, though she could make many allowances, and I do not think she liked a Whig, but she certainly did not hate a fool, for she was angelically kind to many such. But indeed, I do not think "hate" is the right word for her at all, because in so many of our hatreds, or in mine at any rate, there is something mean and petty and Nain could not conceivably have been petty. She was of far too lofty a stature for that; those whom smaller people would have hated she simply dismissed, passing from the subject with a quiet and unapproachable dignity.

If a single adjective has to be chosen to describe her, then there is only one that is possible—noble. She was the noblest creature that I have ever known. Living a quiet life in a quiet country, meeting few people, she was yet known to all the neighbourhood as an unique personage. Had her lot taken her into some other and wider society she would by no effort of her own, but by the pure force of her character, have been unique there too.

I find I have not yet by any means done justice to Pantlludw itself. It was astonishing what quarts of people could be got into that pint-pot of a house. True it had some reinforcements. There was close to the house and under the shadow of the yew the gun-room, which contained a wonderful and ancient weapon, the duck gun. I have sometimes slept in its company. Whether or not there was a second storey I am not sure, but I think there was. Then there was Foty, a little white cottage far away at the foot of the garden, involving a precarious journey with a lantern in pitch darkness down a steep hill and often in sheets of rain. Finally, but that had gone out of commission, there was a more or less derelict cottage at the top of the hill. My cousin Dick Atkin, afterwards a Lord of Appeal, and his two brothers had lived there with their mother as small boys, and a more romantic abode, though hardly perhaps a comfortable one, it would be hard to imagine.

There were, I think, three paths up the hill behind Pantlludw, traversing a wood of stunted little oaks with just

a glimpse of a view breaking through now and then. But on the top there was the most gorgeous view imaginable; seaward the Dovey winding away down the valley to its mouth; inland bare, grey-green solitary hills tossing their heads into the distance. Nor was that all, for there was a lake, very black and cold and shining, and in the middle of it an island of rhododendrons. I remember that it was an invariable custom to turn one's back on the view of Aberdovey and look at it between one's legs. It was supposed to give it some new and enchanted quality which has now, alas, gone from me for ever. Sunday afternoon seems to me the appointed time to go up the hill, but perhaps that was because I was apt to be playing golf on the other six days.

It would have been a wonderful adventure to climb there by moonlight. My mother says in her diary that once from the top of the hill she saw simultaneously sunset, moonlight and a rainbow, and it was a place where, if anywhere, magical things could happen. She gives a description of what she calls her "mad escapade", of climbing the hill in pitch blackness in the middle of the night, with no soul any the wiser. She threw her cloak, hat and goloshes out of the window, dressed quietly as a mouse lest she should wake another girl in her room, and then by a complicated plan of knotted towels and a step-ladder dropped to the ground. She hid the step-ladder, and up the hill she went. Nothing happened, and she came safe home again with her diary as her only confidante. "I can scarcely believe," she wrote, "that I have really at last spent a night in the darkness alone. It has always been my wish—now it is accomplished, everybody believes I have been in bed all night. I am sitting in a pink-and-white dress, quite fresh and untired, waiting for breakfast."

Beside my mother, Amy, Nain had five children: my Aunt Mary or Tilly (Mrs Atkin and later Mrs Steuart) and my four uncles, Arthur, Dicky, Edwal and Ithel. Uncle Ithel, who was rather ill and neurotic and solitary, unable to face the difficulties of life, I only saw once, when he was

living at Esgair, Nain's house in the Corris valley, which was generally let. The other three I knew well, if I did not see them so often as the Darwin uncles. Of them Uncle Arthur was the chief and best beloved. He had been my father's great friend at school at Clapham, and I suppose it was largely owing to him that the two families made friends, and so I came into the world. As he brought golf from Formby to Aberdovey I am twice his debtor. I think he was nearer to my father's heart than any friend he ever had. There was a particular tone in my father's voice, a tone of pensive, half pitying affection in which he would talk of "Atty" or "Old Atty," which was reserved for him alone. Uncle Arthur was so strong, with a strength to be so utterly trusted and a back so broad and sheltering. It was that, I used to fancy, that must have originally attracted my father to him. He had not the quickness of wits of Uncle Dicky, but there was a wonderfully rocklike quality about him, and though naturally reserved, he had both tenderness and humour. He was, I am sure, a very good regimental officer, whom his men must have liked because nobody could help perceiving that transparent fairness and honesty. Then as a Colonel he was for many years Chief Constable of Carnarvonshire, which must have become a nearly odious task from the circumstances of the long strike at Lord Penrhyn's slate quarries, and of a local authority whose political sympathies were wholly with the strikers. He had a large family and I imagine he could not afford to retire as he would have liked. At last he did, however, and came to the haven of all good Rucks, the Dovey Valley. He lived there till he was a very old man, well over ninety, and it is there I like best to think of him, at peace in his own country, at Esgair, a delightful house with much the same charm as Pantlludw on a larger scale.

He was a fine looking man, dark and brown and of something of a gipsy type. Nain always said we had some remote ancestor among the mysterious gipsies who had come to Llanbryn-mair carrying—this was surely an imaginary touch—bags of gold on their donkeys. Roberts, the gipsy harper

at Machynlleth, was rather like my uncle; and his mother, when she was an old woman, talked to Uncle Arthur as her own son. To the end of his life he looked splendidly big and strong, and as he sat in the corner of the veranda in a high woolly cap there seemed something to me of a Thibetan added to the Welsh gipsy.

There he sat and read and smoked the oddest blackest little pipes that he made himself, for he was very skilful with his hands and loved little jobs of that kind. He liked delving in old family boxes of which there seemed to be a vast supply at Esgair. It was thence he produced my great-uncle's shako and other curious treasures. Away from his work, he was essentially the happy, country potterer, rejoicing in the different seasons of the year and making himself endless little tasks in the garden. If I had to choose a favourite character in a book to whom to liken him it would be dear Mr Holbrook in *Cranford*, though that comparison only touches one side of his adorable character.

It was, as I said, Uncle Arthur who brought golf to Aberdovey, but Uncle Dicky who developed it there, so that I owe much to him also. I think I owe part of my all too intense keenness on games to him, for Uncle Dicky did not like being beaten and I hate it. He had, and this I hope I do not share, a firm and unshaken belief that he was the unluckiest game-player that ever lived. He was a very good billiard player and could make a hundred break now and then, but, when he had a table in his house in London, he gradually refused to play with various stepsons, because they were so given to fluking. He was an intelligent and even-tempered man and yet he would solemnly argue this belief in his peculiar ill fortune.

Some of these stepsons were nearly as old as he was, because when he was a young subaltern he had married a pretty widow, Mrs Pedley, with a large family, the widow of Mr Pedley who had won the Derby with Cossack, and a daughter of the famous John Gully. I never fully realised till it was too late how much interested I ought to have been in her.

Had I known that I should some day venture to write a little book about John Gully, I should have beset her with questions. As it was, she talked a little about his racing days but never about his prize-fighting. I did hear one romantic story of the Squire, George Osbaldeston, a little man in a green coat, and how she saw him and her father laughing together at Ascot over a duel they were supposed to have fought. I heard too with no great interest something of a family friend, "Mr Hill", and discovered afterwards that he was Harry Hill, a famous betting man and a member of the Danebury Confederacy. But what her father said about the Game Chicken and Gregson I never knew. Thus one lets slip one's opportunities.

Poor Uncle Dicky! The Aberdovey Golf Course owed him so much and repaid him so ungratefully. Just before the time of the South African War the sea broke into the course through a gap by the tall sandhill called Cader and did much harm. My uncle worked like a hero in icy water to abate the damage and caught rheumatic fever. He was incapacitated for a long time and unfit for service in South Africa. It was a critical moment of his career and this was a heartbreaking mishap, for he was a very able soldier. He did rise to be a Major-General and was duly knighted, though he had had no active service, but he lost his great chance. After he had retired he came back in the 1914-1918 war and held for a while an important administrative job in the Southern Command. He even made a "Cook's Tour" to France and so ironically enough got his medal after all.

The third uncle, Edwal, was likewise a Sapper and he was a true Ruck, for he came back to live at Aberdovey. There he was for a while the Secretary of the Golf Club. He made a periscope whereby people on the tee at the Cader hole could see what was passing on the other side of the hill, but a less scientific successor did better in practice by installing a bell to be rung by those who had holed out. He likewise used to advertise Aberdovey's mild winter climate in Indian newspapers, as likely to appeal to soldiers

coming home from a hot country, but I never heard that he attracted any shivering colonels by this ingenious device. He was kind and friendly and went about whistling gently to himself all day long. What he was thinking about I do not know, but I am sure it was something interesting and odd. There is a steep path behind the church at Aberdovey leading up to the house called Bryntegwel, where I so often stayed. If I were to climb it now I feel as if I might at any moment hear that odd tuneless whistle and come on Uncle Edwal round the corner.

I must say a little more later about Aberdovey and Bryntegwel, where I spent so many pleasant visits surrounded by schoolmasters, but Pantlludw ended for me with Nain's death. Like my Darwin grandmother she was far advanced in her eighties, as keen in her interests, as warm in her affections, as she had ever been. I had gone out to Switzerland with my father, when we heard of her death and I reached home in time for her funeral. One remembers some queer little incongruous things much more vividly perhaps than the solemnity or sadness of an occasion. I met at Euston my Uncle Dicky, who was then at the War Office, and he told me that they had just heard there that the Wrights had flown at Pau. That is almost all I remember about Nain's funeral except that Mrs Flora Annie Steel, the novelist, a neighbour at Pennal who was devoted to her, had come over early in the morning and dressed the grave most beautifully with moss and flowers. It was in the little churchyard at Corris, where my mother was buried and Nain had always wanted to rest.

Chapter Eight

SUMMERFIELD

I AM afraid I am not clinging very closely to chronological order, for I must now go back to my private school. I feel as if some institutions had changed much less than others, and among those which appear more or less immutable are private schools. At least my hypothetical small boy, if I may so term him, is at one at the present moment and it sounds to me very much the same sort of pleasant place that mine was. I hear the same splendid fictions about the achievements of the masters, such as that Mr So-and-so is at least seven feet high and, if one hints a mild incredulity, "Well, anyhow he's miles taller than you." I hear of certain mysterious gangs with secret names and, for all I know, secret passwords, I hear of those who are fools and others who are "my best", and in short I hear all sorts of things which ring faint but reassuring bells in memory. I feel that here at least a reasonable conservatism prevails.

My father wrote that he was determined to be a conservative in education and I am very glad he was. When I was just eleven, a later age than usual he sent me to a very well-known private school near Oxford. It is now called Summer Fields, but it was then Summerfield and I would rather die than call it anything else. I have written something about it before, but am not vain enough to think that anyone will remember it. I will try not to repeat myself too much, but I was very fond of Summerfield and am not going to frighten myself into leaving it out.

Going to a private school is in some ways one of the biggest of all steps in life, for it means the first severance from home. I had been for two years to a day school at Cambridge and so had grown used to the company of boys and lost something of my solitary ways, but home had been

SUMMERFIELD

there as a background and a refuge. This was the real first plunge, and though I was soon very happy at Summerfield the going there was agonising. It is still agonising to think of, though it is not now my small self I feel sorry for, but rather for my father. I made the parting very hard for him and I am afraid continued to do so for some terms to come. My own family has treated me far better and went back to school if not positively as to a bridal at any rate with a stiff upper lip for which I cannot be too grateful. The first parting at Summerfield is so blurred with tears that I cannot recall it in any detail. I feel as if I must have lost consciousness from grief, so that my father left me in my bedroom and crept stealthily and miserably away. The first clear picture I have is of myself cast down upon my bed, sobbing and bedraggled, with the room having grown dark in the gathering dusk. Presently the other two occupants of the room arrived to find this poor little abject spectacle on the bed. In typical school story books they would have either mocked me heartlessly in my grief or told me with angelic kindness that everybody was very happy at Summerfield and that I should be happy too. They did neither, but they behaved, as I probably thought, awfully decently, affecting not to notice my condition and talking in a friendly way. I am still grateful to them.

Another memory of my first days is connected with the essential establishment for which nearly every school has its particular name. At Summerfield it was called the Vinery. Nobody told me where it was and I must have been too shy to ask, or perhaps I did not know the right words. At any rate for what now seems ages I did not discover it and must have suffered great discomfort in my little inside before I lighted upon it, even then more by luck than judgment. The relief was doubtless great, but my delicacy was shocked by finding everyone sitting there with the doors deliberately wide open.

There was another small mystery, which can never be solved now. After a few days someone told me that "Missis",

the formidable Mrs MacLaren, the founder of the School and then still there though in partial retirement, had said something about me in the dormitory, which was called "Big Dor". This was very disconcerting, the more so as neither interrogatories nor entreaties could extract any further information. It was nothing discreditable I was told and I was to enquire no further. I racked my brain, puzzled and self-conscious, but I never knew. Grown-up wisdom can only suggest that it was perhaps that I had no mother and had been brought up more or less like a small heathen, that I did not know anything about church and was not to be teased about my ignorance. I still wonder at times and my guess may be quite wrong. At any rate when it came to being examined in the catechism, of which I had never heard, I was given a question so easy that I could establish my character by answering it. Moreover, when in a term or two I was in Big Dor myself I comfortably fell in with the prevailing atmosphere of piety, wholly unenforced or even suggested by authority as far as I know, and joined a Bible-reading society which read so many verses every night before going to bed.

The School had no chapel of its own in those days and we went to Summertown parish church on a Sunday in an Eton-jacketed crocodile, having previously had our three-penny bits for the offertory doled out to us even as they had been by Dr Grimstone to the boys at Crichton House. I never heard of anyone secreting his threepenny bit. It would probably have been deemed sacrilege and in any case there would have been no chance of spending it; we handed over all our money at the beginning of term and drew cheques on it. What the cheques were for has escaped me, since there was nothing to buy except string for making hammocks, a dreary but popular occupation, and possibly in summer the tremendous spendthrift luxury of a private cricket ball.

We had one other resemblance to Crichton House in the shape of a walled and stony playground to which we resorted for a break in the morning. We did not play Chevy as poor

Mr Bultitude used to do, but a kindred game called Black Man, involving catching and being caught. Sometimes we played football and there was some skill in using the side wall. Ours may have been like the Eton wall game in its original form, when history says it was a fast game, a statement difficult to believe for anyone who now watches the static struggle on St Andrew's Day. Our side wall was only on one side; on the other there were the fives courts, fives being our name for squash rackets with no back wall. Naturally among eighty boys or so, a court only came to one at long intervals and the possessor of a court could confer no greater mark of favour than an invitation to play, an invitation, by the way, to be discreetly and modestly given, since it might suggest the awful crime of "sucking-up". The withholding of an invitation afforded a subtle opportunity of wounding the feelings of one's best friend, and boys of private school age live, in my recollection, in a constant state of having ostentatiously best friends and as ostentatiously quarrelling with them.

My old friend Arthur Croome, himself a schoolmaster and a very good one, used to say that everybody was a very unpleasant creature (he expressed it more tersely) at some time of his life and it was well to get it over as soon as possible. We may remain unpleasant in many ways, but most of us can take comfort in thinking that we sloughed at any rate one very unattractive skin at a private school. Perhaps we are really just as hateful now as then, but have cultivated a serpentine cunning in concealing some detestable characteristic. We may then have been more natural and more honest in saying exactly what we thought of one another. Several instincts had not yet been awakened in us. One was that of disliking rows, another, more meritorious, was of trying to behave kindly towards those in trouble. We could be perfectly horrid to one another and that is why I protest my gratitude to those who found me tear-stained and bedraggled on my first night.

In later life one is haunted by the tactless and stupid

things one has done and said, but conscience has not often to reproach one with the deliberate hurting of feelings. I can still feel hot and ashamed at the thought of one or two things that I said to people at Summerfield, things unspeakably "caddish", which even now I cannot bring myself to reveal. How unpleasant one could be about other people's odd Christian names or the clothes of their parents! How arrogant about their inefficiency in games! I can still remember with a blush calling a friend a "third game kid", I myself having attained to the splendour of the eleven. No, it is not an attractive age. Doubtless its loathsomeness proceeded largely from a pure lack of imagination as to anyone having feelings except oneself. We may legitimately thank heaven that we are not as we were at ten or eleven or twelve. It was an age of innocence, but an odious one.

And yet nasty little creature as I seem to myself to have been, I believe that in one respect I had then a better balanced mind than I had for many a long year afterwards. The balance was nicely adjusted between games and lessons. I was very keen on games and most unattractively anxious to win, as I remained ever afterwards. The getting into the eleven and exchanging the plain red cap of the rank and file for the red and white stripes of the elect went to my head, as witness the deplorable remark above quoted; but I continued to be industrious and interested and anxious to excel in school. This was not so much a personal virtue as a virtue of Summerfield. Games seem in looking back to have held their proper place and no more. There was no solemn priggishness about them on the part of the authorities, and it is just as possible to be priggish about games as about learning. We were coached in reason but not to excess. I have since been present in another school at a conference between three masters, which seemed to go on for ever, as to whether the bat which somebody minor's father had given him was or was not too heavy for him. Nothing of that sort happened to us. I have a grateful recollection of nice old Mr Evans with a beard, bowling lobs to me in a net to instruct

me in the art of playing forward, but generally speaking there was no too passionate interest taken in us, or, if it was, it was skilfully concealed. We were not very good and were not infrequently beaten by our rivals. (I remember a dreadful day of many goals scored against us at Cordwalles), but there was no public mourning on that account. Lessons never lost their due importance and quite apart from scholarships, for the gaining of which the school had a great reputation, we were all, clever or stupid, well and truly taught. I gather that since I only went to Summerfield at eleven whereas most people arrived there at eight or nine, my chances of a scholarship were lightly esteemed. This was a fault on the right side, since I have known other schoolmasters hold out hopes in this direction that were obviously fantastic. In fact I did get an Eton scholarship when I was twelve and I imagine that this was in the nature of an outrageous fluke, for I was only sent up for a trial run and was not even in the top form of the school. On that account, save for some stimulating half-hours of Latin grammar before breakfast, I was hardly taught at all by Dr Williams, who had an unexampled genius for making people get Eton scholarships. His genius lay partly in an intuitive and uncanny knowledge of the minds of examiners, but chiefly, as I believe, in making learning seem such fun, a delightful game full at once of the competitive spirit and of team work. Naturally we had to try to beat one another, but we had also as a side to bear aloft the banner of Summerfield and beat the forces—how sinister and formidable they sounded!—of Temple Grove and Cheam. We knew the names of past heroes who had borne that banner. In the very year before ours three whom we all knew well had got in as a solid and triumphant phalanx—second, third and fourth. Here was something to live up to. It may seem odd to those who do not like examinations, and indeed I had no love for them in later life, that we went up to Eton not in any agony of nervousness but in a spirit of joyous adventure. We were as athletes trained to the minute, bursting with exuberant

health and glorying in our strength, anxious no doubt but far from miserably apprehensive. I think Dr Williams must have had over us something of the power that American football coaches have over their teams.

At the White Hart at Windsor were our training quarters. Thence the Doctor marched us to Upper School at Eton, where we looked at other small candidates like strange dogs with our hackles up, and I suppose he and Mr Edgar or Mr Tabor, the most dangerous of his rivals, exchanged double-faced courtesies outside. There he was always waiting for us, when we came out, and demanding our rough copies which we must by no means leave behind us. Only two things do I remember of the examination. One was that the General Paper asked for an account of my favourite book. Here was a chance and I spent so long over the first chapters of *Treasure Island*, Billy Bones and the blind beggar Pew, that I could do little justice to the rest of the book. The other is that for verses we were set some lines of Gray beginning:

"In vain for me the smiling mornings shine
And redd'ning Phoebus lifts his golden fire."

I had almost forgotten them till I read the other day a book of Mr Charles Morgan's, in which the hero gets an Eton Scholarship and is set those very same lines. I can only suppose that even as clergymen with their sermons, examiners sometimes repeat themselves. And certainly there never were more cheering lines for a small versifier to see on the paper before him. He had been writing about Phoebus ever since he essayed his first copy of elegiacs. I almost feel as if at a pinch I could do it now.

I have been trying to think of what we read, and the thought instantly brings to my mind the scene of the dining-room with its two long tables and its dais at the top. It is tea-time, the big baskets of bread and butter have gone round and round, everybody is waiting for an announcement. Presently it comes from the dais, "Those who have

finished may read." Instantly the white tablecloths take on a glitter of gold and green and scarlet, and we have all produced from the floor our volumes of Henty in their resplendent bindings and slapped them simultaneously on the table with a mighty sound, as of eighty boys playing up-jenkins. Judging by Summerfield—and I have no doubt the same rule held good everywhere else—Mr G. A. Henty ought to have made an enormous fortune, for he produced his two volumes a year for countless ages and what more obvious Christmas present could there be? Or what better one? Of Henty I am still in retrospect a fervent admirer, and if I do not try to re-read him today it is lest an unbearable disenchantment should ensue. Even in those days I remember to have resented his prefaces which began "My dear lads." There seemed something too familiar about it; I was not his dear lad, and I hated as I still hate that word. But that was my only criticism. I loved him and the pictures by Gordon Browne, and will still maintain that no better or more trustworthy ~~jam~~ was ever provided to drown the powder of a little history. There was *The Lion of the North* for instance, all about Gustavus Adolphus. It would be to flatter myself unduly to say I now know anything at all about Gustavus Adolphus, but should the subject be introduced and should I reel off the names of Wallenstein, Papenheim and Tilly as his chief opponents, it is to Henty I should owe that triumph of showing off. *St George for England*, *In Times of Peril*, *The Dragon and the Raven*, *The Young Carthaginian*, the titles come back to me not without a thrill even though the contents are wholly forgotten. Hentys are like tin-soldiers and stamp albums and other beautiful, youthful things, they vanish, thrown away by heartless parents or given away to other little boys, which is worse, and I now possess only one. It turns up now and again in a spring cleaning, but it was never of the best vintage and did not figure high on the list of favourite books which we all composed. Most of my list were by Henty (Manville Fenn was not to be despised), but the Hentys,

though they might win by pure weight of numbers, yet only composed, as it were, the second line troops, a fine solid body but not the books *d'élite*.

There were three other works of a higher class which came at the very top—*Treasure Island*, *King Solomon's Mines* and *Q's Dead Man's Rock*. *Treasure Island* was, as I have already said, my favourite, and I believe I was honest in putting it top, but there was no doubt that King Solomon was a very dangerous rival. Most people, goodness knows how erroneously as I now perceive, preferred it, and I was conscious of a little superiority, partly priggish and partly snobbish, in clinging to *Treasure Island*. I knew that grown-up people of taste, my father in particular, loved it and quoted John Silver and Israel Hands, whereas they were partially blind to the merits of King Solomon and thought the jokes about Captain Good's movable teeth and white legs a bore. I might even be guilty of the meanness of putting King Solomon unduly low, in order to affect its position when an average list was laboriously worked out between several of us. It was not fair, but anything that helped to maintain Stevenson in his right place seemed justifiable. *Dead Man's Rock* has now clean gone from my mind, as far as incidents and characters are concerned, but it has left behind it one feeling, inchoate but still a little terrifying, the feeling of a face looking for a moment through a window. Whether in fact the villain did look through a window I have never since been at any pains to discover. Perhaps he did or perhaps the essential awfulness of the book has been distilled into this one imaginary picture. I only know that the mere name of *Dead Man's Rock* makes me cast an uneasy glance over my shoulder. There was another book that I wanted to put in my list but was restrained by some self-conscious motive, and this was Erckmann and Chatrian's *Le Conscrit*. I was and am devoted to it. The picture of the Great Army passing day after day through Phalsbourg on its way to Russia, in all its jingling glory of spurs and gold and furs, is still full of the ineffable romance of uniforms.

The moment when last of all comes the Emperor himself, his pale face looking for an instant out of his carriage window, is stirring beyond words. But I had read the book in French—beautifully simple French it is—and to have admitted as much would, I instinctively felt, have been a mistake.

When one grows a little older at a public school, masters take on a variety of aspects, some of them ridiculous. They become the objects of mimicry for those possessing the requisite talent. At a private school one may like some and dislike others, but they have all a certain godlike quality. Their learning is generally believed to be profound. Their clothes are intensely interesting and I have the clearest recollection of the shapes of their collars. In one of the volumes of Sir Osbert Sitwell's entrancing autobiography he seems to me unreasonably hard on some of his private school masters for being blues or good at football. "How different from us", or at least how different from me! I could have wished for far more blues; we had two and that was something. Mr Alington, who was the brother-in-law of Dr Williams the Head Master, was a soccer blue, and I believe myself to have seen him arrayed in a dark blue and white shirt, in which he dribbled very slowly and gently through our serried ranks that hurled themselves against him in vain, like waves on a lighthouse. Mr Orr was but a half-blue, for lawn tennis, and Mr Salter, so we believed, had played soccer for Oxford though he had not got his blue, owing doubtless to some monstrous piece of favouritism and injustice.

I don't think we were very good at games at least in my time, and certainly Radley under fifteen, giants in pink caps, always crushed us. I can only remember one football blue that we ever produced among my contemporaries, L. H. Wace, afterwards of Charterhouse and Pembroke. I got my colours before him, but he very properly got his "distinction cap" later on and I did not. Neither had we any destined to achieve greatness at cricket. One great runner we had,

Jack Fremantle, who was in the election above mine in College at Eton. If anyone looks at the records of the University Sports he will find him winning the Three Miles for Oxford with inconceivable ease year after year in times that now seem very, very slow. We who were at Summerfield and Eton with him shall always retain our early faith. They can talk of their Lutyenses and Horans and today of their Bannisters and Chataways, but we shall always believe in our hearts in Jack Fremantle, who did with such scornful ease all that he had to do.

Apropos of running, we had one curious pastime, I suppose in the Lent Term, which in pious imitation of the river went by the name of Torpids. They were bumping races over flights of hurdles, sloped at a very unalarming angle. We each took to ourselves the name of some College at Oxford or Cambridge, and some Oxford Colleges had many boats on the river. I suppose the order in which they started was decided by lot. A bump was made by touching the boat or boy in front of one. I naturally chose my father's boat club, First Trinity at Cambridge, and thought I should bring it much glory, since I could run rather fast and jump reasonably high. Alas! how little did I know of the art of hurdling! I treated each hurdle as a high jump and was soon bumped by a pursuer, whom I had regarded with contempt. It was no doubt a salutary lesson. I once knew a man who some thirty years before had been caught in a Lake Hunt by the late Professor Joad and had never got over the blow. That is how I still feel about that humiliating bump.

Now for one final point about Summerfield which I must reiterate, because I have found that people will not believe me when I tell them that we wore black and yellow ribbons round our bowler hats. We only wore them, as far as I know, on our railway journeys at the beginning and at the end of the term and once a week when we marched in crocodile formation into the gymnasium in Oxford. Our ribbons were black with a yellow edging, because those were the colours of Brasenose, the Doctor's College. Let it be remembered

that once upon a time the I Zingari had complained of the new M.C.C. colours because, if worn on a black bowler they might be mistaken for the more ancient and select red, black and gold of I Z. So let no young scoffer dispute it: black and yellow ribbons on bowlers were worn.

COLLEGE AT ETON

I AM sitting down to write about Eton a few days after staying there for St Andrew's Day. In the same kind house there was another Etonian by almost innumerable generations my junior. He said he didn't think Eton had changed much and I said, not very brilliantly, that I didn't think so either but I really didn't know. Since I left sixty years ago I have had many friends among the masters and have had a son both a boy and a master, and still I don't know. All I am sure of is that it is a place I am devoted to and that I can only try to describe it as it was to me.

At least it seemed immutable on St Andrew's Day. The tall hat has almost vanished, the mud was a little more glutinous than I ever remember it and there was much less shouting than of old at the Wall match. When I was a small Colleger we were fagged to shout and threatened with dire penalties if we ever stopped. Naturally enough the Oppidans retaliated, but now by comparison silence appears to reign.

St Andrew's Day makes a good place to begin because for a Colleger it stands for the winter half and, for me at least, the winter half stands largely for Eton. Perhaps because it was my first half and is most Colleger's first half, perhaps because we had such a bellyful of that blessed Wall Game, a great but sometimes tiresome tradition, nearly all my most vivid pictures are of Eton in the winter. The new boy in College enjoys one memorable sensation which is not granted to the corresponding Oppidan. Lower boys and new boys come back on the first day, but there are no lower boys in College, so the new Colleger has all to himself for one whole day the place which Dr M. R. James called "the very heart and nucleus of Eton". He will never cease to have the feeling of possession which comes after lock-up, when School

Yard and Chapel, Hall and the Cloisters are his and his alone; but he may never have it quite so intensely again as on that first night in College. Next day he enjoys other novel sensations such as the glorious freedom of shopping, of having his timid behests obeyed by urbane gentlemen in white aprons, so that the scent of the grocer's shop comes back to him in after years, warm and rich and cake-laden. But this is common to all the world, while that aloof knowledge of possession whether for good or ill, and I do not think it is all for good, is only the Colleger's.

Of course one of the great events of any Eton boy's life must be his first meeting with his tutor. When I have before written anything about Eton I could write nothing of my tutor, Edward Impey, because to say that he would not have liked it would be a sad understatement. But alas, he is dead now—he lived well into his eighties—and I must be allowed to pay him a little tribute of affection, which I hope a few of those who remember him may like to read. I don't know whether any school but Eton has quite the same relationship as that between a boy and his tutor. Your tutor is your best friend, your repository of confidences, your very present help. He will, metaphorically, bail you out in case of trouble, take your side, if he reasonably can, and see you through. That is a great bond, but apart from that I do not think that anyone who was at Eton in my tutor's time, even if he had never been taught by him, could fail to remember him as someone intensely vivid, a little different from most of his colleagues, with a characteristic air and flavour of his own.

At a dinner of his old pupils the Chairman, Davson, the first captain of his house, quoted a remark supposed to have been made by a small lower boy: "Impey, the only beak who dresses decently and says 'Damn' like you or me". Possibly that lower boy never existed, but whoever invented him was the inventor, within the permissible limits of exaggeration, of essential truth. I would never say that my tutor tried consciously to live up to that reputation, but perhaps he

may have had a faint picture of himself, and he was not an unself-conscious man, playing some such attractive and mildly outrageous part. He knew, I feel sure, that schoolmasters can acquire certain characteristics which frighten the outside world and did not mean to fall into the trap if he could help it. So he would take some pains to cast his pedagogic skin. I have a distinct vision of him sitting at the cricket in Upper Club on the afternoon of the Fourth of June. He has got rid of the parents or at least the worst on-rush of them, at lunch, and now, when everyone else is in tall hats and white ties, here is my tutor in an elegant grey "change suit", a straw hat and a Rambler tie, looking extremely dashing and handsome, disguised as a private citizen.

I believe he was a very good schoolmaster indeed, very fond of his boys, though perhaps through some deep, internal shyness not always quite at his ease with all of them, most sympathetic and understanding. That he found it harder work than do some of a more placid nature I cannot doubt, for he was of a rather irritable temper and disinclined to suffer fools. Two small instances come back to me from the time when I used to go to see him in a nursing home in what proved his last illness. He was in considerable pain and dreadfully deaf, and no man could have borne his major afflictions with greater heroism. It was the small things that goaded him. If he could not hear what one said, he could not believe but that one was making a bad shot at his ear trumpet. And then there were the cross-words in *The Times*. These had to be read to him, clue by clue, by a nurse to whom he would after consideration dictate the answer. If he heard the clue wrong, as he often did, or if the nurse was not sufficiently quick in the up-take and did not grasp what he was driving at, he had to make a great effort to suppress his feelings. Looking back I am sure that certain boys must have roused him to a white heat, as certain of his colleagues unquestionably did, but generally speaking he kept a noble control of himself. There were in his pupil-room two of the

stupidest boys that it is possible even in a nightmare to imagine, but he treated them with a gently humorous patience that was a model.

I never heard of anyone even attempting to rag him, and if anyone did, I am sure he did not do it twice, for my tutor could be formidable if he had a mind to it. I only recall one small row that I ever had with him, if such a word can be used to describe so one-sided a battle. It was in my first year at school; the immediate cause has vanished from me, but not the result which was that I slammed the door of pupil-room as I walked out. I can still hear the blare in his voice as he called me back. I ate humble pie but not humiliating pie, for I think he had a feeling for a silly little boy who had suddenly lost his temper. The tiny incident had never again been referred to, until, on almost the last occasion I ever saw him, he recalled it. That I should remember it was not surprising, but that he should some sixty-five years later, after all his dealings with tiresome little boys, showed how sympathetic he was. It was not a mere question of making allowances, of permitting a dog to have a first bite; it was a deep-down affectionate understanding, never more noticeable than in the case of weaknesses that some schoolmasters are not very good at understanding at all. That was to my mind the utterly lovable and disarming thing about him, and whether he would have liked me to say it or not, and perhaps in the very depths of his heart he would, I cannot for the life of me refrain.

My tutor had been a Colleger in what I feel must have been a golden age of College. He was a great friend of J. K. Stephen and had some entertaining letters of his which he once showed me. When he was at King's he was deemed fit to compete in a Pickwick examination against "Monty" James himself, and that great man, a truly redoubtable adversary in any quoting match, did not win the prize. He was beaten by Childers, who had, as his victim rather grudgingly owned, a very accurate visual memory. I don't think my tutor was quite in their class, but I am glad to think he

was thought worthy. He liked the sort of books that I liked and that was a pleasant bond. He liked golf too and that was another. Indeed it was because my father had met him on a golfing expedition that I became his pupil. I have blessed Westward Ho! ever since.

Everyone, Colleger or Oppidan, has a tutor, though I think very few had such a good one as I did. In many other respects College is a peculiar institution with a tradition, even in some respects a language of its own. Few Oppidans know much about it even as a Colleger knows comparatively little of the life in a house. When Brigadier Bernard Fergusson wrote his delightful book *Eton Portrait*, he wisely did not touch College and left an old Colleger, Mr Brownrigg, to write that chapter.

There are various reasons for this separate life of College, though it is much less separate than it was in remoter ages when it had its own boats, its own pack of beagles and I know not what beside. One is that it is much larger than any house, with seventy boys as compared with just over forty. That makes it apt to be self-sufficient in point of society. It is also, I tentatively suggest, more of a republic while a house is more of a monarchy. The house-master is a more important person among his forty subjects than the Master in College can be among his seventy. Besides the Master there are in College ten members of Sixth Form who make up a solid block of authority, such as I imagine no house library can equal. They have behind them a long record of running College which no wise Master will lightly call in question. As far as he is a monarch he is emphatically a constitutional one.

That College has its own separate tradition is not at all surprising. A great house-master may by his character and influence leave a permanent mark on his boys, but once he has departed his particular flavour and tradition cannot very long survive. The body to which it belonged is fused in the far larger one of the School. College goes on for ever. My host on this last St Andrew's Day has for his house colours

the blue and yellow in quarters which for me stand for Arthur James's with Hugh Mytton, fierce and formidable, at their head. College are always purple and white. The late Mr Eric Parker, who might have been my fag-master had I gone one half earlier to Eton, has given an almost photographically accurate picture of life in the College of his and my time in *Playing Fields*. I know no such true and moving account of the spirit of it as that in his description of St Andrew's Day, both in that book and in *Eton in the Eighties*. How accurate those pictures appear to a Colleger today I do not know, but I doubt if there has been much material change except in such a pleasant respect as hot baths.

There is one small but definite peculiarity of College that must always remain; its population is divided into perfectly clear-cut sections. According to the year in which he gains his scholarship, a Colleger belongs once and for ever to that year's Election and goes up the school with its members. He may not like all his fellow members; he almost certainly does not, but there is this chain around them never wholly to be severed. A Colleger never forgets that someone was an Election either above or below him. It would be absurd to say that for the rest of his life he treats one with respect and the other with condescension, but the dividing line is there still unforgotten. Since they thus hang together, as if made of one closely woven substance, each Election seems to possess a character of its own. Split an Election up into its component parts and they are quite different from one another, but shake them together and they all fit neatly into their places in the familiar and unmistakable pattern.

College differs from a house since it consists of boys who at any rate at twelve or thirteen are considerably above the average of wits. So it has a traditional respect for intellect. It has also a tradition of work, not only on intellectual grounds but on those of necessity. By no means all Collegers' fathers are poor men, but the average Colleger is brought up to the knowledge that he will have to depend on himself. To be sure everyone has to work nowadays, but it was not so

once, and the Colleger's vision of the future was more arduous than the Oppidans. I think one rather unfortunate effect of this tradition was that the small Colleger tended to take a too scornful view of Oppidan wits. He thought of a few contemporaries as "clever Oppidans" thus casting an often unjust slur on all the rest. As he grows older he learns better, but he sometimes finds his old arrogant weakness cropping up. It is fair to add that the young Oppidan was also to blame for believing his College contemporaries to dwell in sunless caves of learning.

There was one respect in which Oppidans were beyond doubt our intellectual superiors, namely in producing from time to time someone with a supreme and delightful talent for ragging. Being myself the least lawless of mortals, lacking alike the courage, the high spirits and the inventive genius required, I write perhaps with too heartfelt a jealousy. One with whom I played golf regularly at school used to tell me terrific stories of his house and how he and some others had made a secret cellar in the wall of one of their rooms. I did not want a cellar myself, but there was something splendidly and enviably dashing about it. Of milder and more agreeable rags I have heard many stories before or since, such as this one told me by the late Lord Norwich, Duff Cooper. His division arranged with a fellow conspirator in the Music Schools near by constantly to play "God Save the King". Thereupon the whole division as constantly sprang to their feet, saying in answer to bitter protests from authority, "Oh sir! you wouldn't like us to be disloyal, would you?" There is a beautiful simplicity about the joke that makes it in its way unsurpassable. I wish I could claim its authorship for a Colleger, but for the most part they were lacking in either the reckless dash or the elaborate preparation which are essential. And yet I must not forget two really heroic figures, by one year my juniors, J. G. E. C. *qui ante diem periit*, and E. F. M. They explored wider fields than that of Eton. They fell into the playful habit of filling up any form that came in their way with the

name of a contemporary, H, and sending it to seek its fortune. They bamboozled a promoter of gold mines of some infamy and an Insurance Company of great respectability. The Company finally proposed to send a doctor to examine Mrs H., who had thereupon to be killed on the spot. The *Spectator* of their day likewise published, allegedly from Oxford, a pleasing story about a dog, a cat and a Cochin-China hen too long for repetition. They were the exception to prove the rule that the Oppidans were in some lines of country altogether too good for us.

The Wall Game was at the very heart of the College tradition and may have accentuated our aloofness. *Hic ludus noster muralis*: it is our game. It is one about which I feel a reasonable patriotism and I wrote the annual account of it for *The Times* for long ages. While the match is in progress I can muster a fine, boyish hatred of the Oppidans. Yet I do sometimes wonder. The familiar waiter said to David Copperfield that young gentlemen had generally been overdosed with eaters and it may be that the young Colleger is overdosed with the Wall Game. On every "short after four", that is three times a week, he is or used to be hard at it, nor does he pick it up casually as he does the Field Game; the Keeper of the Wall himself, resplendent in his red and blue cap of Mixed Wall is often there to supervise his early steps and to form a Calx bully for him. For the Oppidans, except the very few from whom the team is chosen, the game is simply a mysterious rite which will amuse their people before lunch on St Andrew's Day. As to the rules and even the object of the game, to use a modern idiom, they haven't a clue. On the other hand, it is the Colleger's burden which he must take up. He may think it, in the words of J. K. S., "a truly noble game", or he may have his doubts, but it is his duty to play it as well as he can, and to stand for the few against the many. If College wins, the team come studiously late into Hall headed by the Keeper, and the other fifty-nine Collegers break into the rapturous beating of spoons upon tables, great waves of sound dying away and then springing

to life again and again. The emotion of the moment is worth living for and even playing for.

I am in many ways a dyed-in-the-wool Colleger. I can always be swept off my feet, I can sweep myself off my feet, by enthusiasm for College. I would not have been anything else, but in calmer moments I often think the Oppidan has a wider and so in some ways a more rewarding life. The Colleger, unless he is a really eminent person in the life of the School, is apt to keep himself too much to himself. I have had so many Oppidan friends since I left Eton and had so few when I was there. Nor do I think I was peculiar: I was to be sure quite an obscure person, but so were most of us, and we had only the barest nodding acquaintance with a very few Oppidans. The Oppidan may be equally obscure and yet have more friends in other houses than his own, especially if his interests lie in other than the strictly orthodox directions, whether of work or play. I find other Collegers are sometimes of this almost profane opinion, and I think in particular of one old friend, who was anything but obscure, Captain of the School, Keeper of the Wall and heaven knows what besides. I daresay he and I are both wrong and I don't wish for a moment I had been an Oppidan myself. As Mr Silas Wegg observed, "I only put it ha'-porthetically."

I have been trying with very small success to remember what I used to read. Beyond *David Copperfield* every night in bed, *Pickwick* occasionally and *Sherlock Holmes* during my last two years, my mind is almost a blank. Not quite, for though I do not remember exactly in what year, I know I read *Vanity Fair* and *Pendennis*, *Guy Mannering* and at least some George Eliot, and they have stayed my friends ever since. I exclude *Eric or Little by Little*, of which we used periodically to have public readings in Reading Room. Eric was too fatuously bad to be funny for long, but for a little while it moved us to mirth. In my picture of Reading Room I see one entirely solemn face in the midst of this ribald merriment. This is my old friend D. McL., who does not

join in our vulgar guffaws, because he is engaged in a gymnastic feat requiring perfect gravity: he is trying to break the record for balancing on the library step-ladder. He had, I suppose, the frame of mind that later made the great "pole sitters" of America. There he stands firmly gripping the ladder, unwinking of eye, poised and motionless, until after twenty minutes with scarcely a wobble he steps down sated with triumph, still undefeated.

Sherlock Holmes I had first read in my second half, when I had the measles in company with Bigham minor afterwards a great friend who has just died as I write, himself a great reader of beloved old books. It was *The Sign of Four* that we read, and I stole the copy from the staying-out rooms and have it now, presumably still full of germs. Reading Room came into the Holmes saga later, when the first series of adventures were appearing in the *Strand Magazine*. The paper-boy used to arrive with the new *Strand* on the appointed morning about nine o'clock, and there was just time to read the new Holmes before the Chapel bell began. Naturally there was great competition to waylay the boy. First we lay in wait for him in Weston's yard and then gradually more eager privateers went uptown far over Barnes Pool Bridge. Boscombe Valley, the Red-Headed League, the Speckled Band—what magic there is in the names! I cannot now say what was the exact quality of our love for Holmes. The absurdity of Watson we had already grasped even as his creator came to do, investing him with what Holmes called a pawky humour. In what exact proportions excitement and amusement were mingled in our youthful breasts I do not know, but I will roundly assert that we were never wholly serious.

As to what I read in School that is a shamefully hopeless business. To be sure I can with a little prompting say an ode or two of Horace, I know by heart the original of Heraclitus, of which William Cory made a lovely English poem: likewise some heartbreaking lines of Moschus's *Elegy on Bion*. That is no doubt better than nothing, but it seems an

inadequate store after five years for one originally supposed to have some aptitude for classics. No doubt I was idle, and with a paltry kind of idleness that gave the minimum of satisfaction. Not for me to enjoy what R. L. S. called the "full, vivid, instructive hours of truantry". I had not the spirit which makes someone turn over deliberately in bed and refuse to get up for early school, knowing that the penalty will be a Georgic. My verses were not torn over; I was not easily to be caught in not having learnt at least something of my lesson. My idleness consisted in doing everything beforehand and as quickly as possible in order to look forward to a time of having nothing whatever to do. I would carry this practice to a positively morbid degree. If verses were given out on Friday evening to be shown up on Tuesday I would rouse myself with the summer dawn of Saturday by means of an alarm clock and have the whole copy turned by pure brute force of dictionary and gradus into some sort of Latin that would scan before going into early school.

As to those who taught me Classics, I hated and still hate one of them and liked all the others. If I have to choose one above the rest it should be Mr Ainger. An atmosphere of well-bred, scholarly dignity, not too prostrating, pervaded his schoolroom. One who, I feel, ought to have interested me was Arthur Benson, in whose division I was in my first half. He did not, but then neither did I interest him. He was my stepmother's cousin, and years afterwards he told someone that I had always been on his conscience because he ought to have asked me to breakfast. On the whole I think he ought, but I had and have no grievance. I do not count the mathematicians; I suffered under them all equally but not severely. There was one of them whom I afterwards came to know very well as an endlessly kind host, Mr C. H. Allcock, but I was never up to him. My only knowledge of him then was in facing, usually for a short time, his very accurate bowling in College matches. By all accounts he could have made me understand sums if anybody could.

There was very little attempt as far as I know to instruct us in the subject now so uninvitingly described as "Eng. Lit.", but towards the end of my time my tutor made me write some essays for him which I enjoyed. We certainly did some history, but it can have been very little since I have clean forgotten all about it. Since those days there have been peripatetic teachers of history who do nothing else, but in my day I think the division master did all that was deemed necessary. "Divinity" I recall as consisting of Greek Testament at early School on Monday morning and Sunday Questions, which have vanished as if they had never been. To be sure I had been badly grounded in this subject and never quite caught up with it. And yet I only missed distinction in Scripture by five marks in the Higher Certificate examination, through spending one long strenuous Sunday with Maclear's *Old Testament History*. It must have been a very good book.

I am afraid it was at Eton that my passionate interest in games got thoroughly out of hand. The Wall Game was the official religion of which one became a votary in that first winter half. An unofficial one with no definite rites was swell-worship. There were some who from their earliest youth saw with clear eyes that all colours were vanities; and felt no itch to know who it was that had just emerged radiant and transfigured from a scug cap into the glory of house colours. They did not know all the members of Pop by sight, and what was more, did not want to. They were strange and strong-minded beings whose kingdoms were not of this world. Most of us worshipped swells and they were nearly all athletic swells. I still remember wondering as to one who, besides his house colours, had positively nothing to recommend him beyond being secretary of the Musical Society. How could he have found his way into that Olympian society, so that he was photographed with six other deities, real, genuine ones, arm-in-arm in a blaze of fancy waistcoats.

If this worship of swells and colours had in it the grains of snobbishness it was of a wonderfully innocent kind: it

was not that of one who cultivates or pretends to the acquaintance of the great; it was rather that of the humble and adoring reader of "Society Snippets". As to what sort of people the swells were apart from their athletic prowess we had no notion, unless indeed they were Collegers, but we took violent fancies to them or violent aversions on the very smallest evidence. As one grew older and, however far removed from swelldom oneself, came nearer to moving in the same orbit (one might be in the same division) this excessive solemnity of worship somewhat abated. And indeed there never had been any swells quite like that of one's first year. Younger persons might think so but it was a delusion of youth.

There is this to be said, moreover, that in those days a swell really did look a swell. Now sumptuary laws, doubtless right, proper and inevitable, have limited the display of colours. Once upon a time a swell who cared to think out his costume with some little feeling for effect, with every item representing a separate glory, was a fine many-hued figure. Especially beautiful were the long woollen scarves that twice encircled the neck and yet depended below the waist. I have a vision of the Keeper of the Field, holding in each hand one end of his scarf of scarlet and light blue and jumping to a volley as he comes running on to School Field. My heart would still be stirred by that sight today; it would enjoy the lightness and litheness of the young leaping figure, but once it would have been rather its awe-inspiring magnificence. I can still gaze on a swell with cordial respect, but when I think of my first half, of Brocklebank, Captain of the Boats, Dupuis, Keeper of the Field, and Gosling, Captain of the Eleven, I know that the present is a decadent age. There are no swells like the old swells.

In the summer by contrast with the winter half the religion of the swell was celebrated in two different places of worship: Upper Club and the River. Since I was a dry bob, it was before the deities of cricket that I prostrated myself. To lie on one's stomach on a rug and watch a School match

for a whole long afternoon was a way of passing the time at once pleasing and pious. It gave one an excited feeling of battles long ago to see one of the eleven talking to Granny Martingell, an old, old man hobbling on a stick, who had played in the heroic days of Fuller Pilch and Alfred Mynn. One had to own reluctantly that the Eton cricketers of one's first year or two were not themselves of heroic stature; they cut a poor figure beside A. C. MacLaren of Harrow and J. R. Mason of Winchester, and it was idle to pretend otherwise.

The gods of the river must inevitably take a secondary place in interest, but they inspired at least an ignorant respect. It was quite entertaining to stroll down to the river after tea and watch School Sculling or Pulling. Let the wet-bobs run with the race if they would. The dry-bob waited by Brocas Clump and speculated with a temperate zeal as to which boat would first appear under the railway bridge. And hoisting was definitely good fun. It was not only a display of swelldom at its most gorgeous; it demonstrated the fact that High Street belonged to Eton by the simple process of blocking it. Today when the narrow street is shaken by the rush and roar of endless lorries and buses and cars, hoisting sounds as dead as Montem itself. Once all Pop assembled and bore the winner of the race up and down the street and finally carried him to his house and stuck his resisting head out of a window amid general applause. Then the ordinary citizen and his gentle horse-drawn traffic passed on.

The Easter half, when there was no game that had to be played and one could please oneself, became in the end, I think, my favourite, because I could play golf. There were plenty of other things to do: fives, the beagles, and for those who had obtained a house colour standard, Association football. Fives is a noble game, but for a small boy to get a court was hard work fraught with disappointment, and my recollection of my first Easter half is rather of walking round the New Fives Courts in a pleasing aroma from the gas works, with "Squashed flies" and lemonade to be had near by. As

I missed the whole of my second Easter half through illness. I only discovered after I had left the true greatness of Fives.

There were the Sports to be watched, and it was a great moment when Jack Fremantle, absurdly young and small, won the School Mile in an astonishing time, with the wind behind him. There was much banging of spoons in Hall that day, but generally speaking the Dorney Road was a cold spot and the race was hardly worth the waiting for. Watching the steeplechase also involved much waiting, but there was a ghoulis pleasure which repaid it, since School Jump came at the end and each exhausted runner must splash his way through it to emerge muddy and dripping. Though not then of any impossible width it had a broken take-off and a slippery place of landing; there was no jumping it and everyone waded through as best he could. Once, however, we saw it cleared. Lambton at Austen Leigh's was no great runner but a professed long jumper. He ran as slow as he decently could, came in a good last, then sprinted the last twenty yards or so and sailed with supreme dominion over the jump. Who won I have forgotten, but the name of Lambton, who stole the winner's thunder, has not perished. The rest of the Sports used to be conducted with a most unprofessional casualness in a field ill adapted to the purpose. They were reasonably amusing, but only the name of Esmond Lee, who won five School Events, now dwells in my memory. C. B. Lawes, the defendant in the famous case of *Belt v. Lawes*, a mighty Etonian athlete in his day, had won these five events and was said to have promised a cup to anyone who should do it again. No cup, however, was forthcoming, and this seemed hard, because the judges, as most of us thought, had stretched honesty to its extreme point in awarding Lee the verdict in the Hundred.

But it was golf during my last two years that made the Easter half so pleasant for me. Neither Sunningdale nor Stoke Poges then existed: the good players, among the masters, such as Mr R. A. H. Mitchell, the famous Mike, and Mr P. V. Broke, had to go to Ascot for their golf, a long

way in the days before cars, and so would sometimes play on our muddy little course, with its holes clustering round the bathing place called Athens. As long as they took an interest in it, it was kept in repair and had a certain fascination. How short is memory or rather perhaps how old am I! On St Andrew's Day my host brought in to see me three of his boys who were keen golfers. Not one of them had heard that there had ever been this course at Athens, and indeed it was a long time ago. It survived for some while in a nine-hole form, but in my day it had eighteen holes, and the most exciting part of it came when we teed off the Acropolis itself and drove towards Boveney and a line of willows in the distance, with the river on our left and a plough on the right. That was where the best holes began and also the most terrible, greedy of errant balls, ruinous to empty pockets. Not once but twice did we thread our way between those two devouring hazards, and at one of the holes I would gladly have accepted a six from Providence and left it unplayed.

We had some capital boy players, afterwards very well known, and I never lacked a good match if I wanted one, but the rounds that I recall most vividly are those that I played by myself. That was on half-holiday afternoons, when there was no need to hurry back. Lock-up was getting later, the light longer, the holidays nearer, and there was a spell of hot, sunny weather, which dried even our Eton mud, so that I could lie down on the grass between the strokes in an ecstasy of gloating over things in general and golf in particular.

When I read what I have written I fear much of it must seem very trivial. Yet my feelings towards Eton are certainly not trivial, for I have the deepest affection for it. "My brethren and my home are there" and it is nearer to my heart than all Cambridge. I do not want the reader to think that other people in College were trivial too. They grew up faster than I did and were both wiser and pleasanter. They were never prigs, but took life with a reasonable mixture of seriousness and gaiety.

I have been trying to remember what we used to talk about on those agreeably vacant evenings, for the sake of which I had risen so early to commence poet. In books young persons sit up talking for ever, and their scintillating talk is of all the problems of life and the universe. I lately read a delightful book by my friend Mr Ivor Brown, in which he and his friends at Balliol seemed for ever to have been discussing philosophy and politics and "heaven knows what beside" on the top of Welsh Mountains. To be sure they were not only much cleverer but also some years older than I was at Eton. The appetite for that sort of conversation comes, I fancy, a little later and it reaches its zenith in long walks round moonlit quads and courts. If it seems to me that our talk in College was less tremendous, and more personal, I may be doing grave injustice. I think we all more or less innocently accepted the then comfortable state of things as likely to see the stars out and did not expect such a world as exists today; but then neither did other people ever so much older and wiser than we were.

I don't think, and this is my last word, that I realised when I was there what I have come to realise since, that Eton is a wonderfully free school, where the boy of unorthodox tastes can do to a great extent what interests and amuses him. I don't know that this was so in College in my own day, when we were all superficially formed on one pattern, except perhaps my old friend G. C. A., the best scholar of his time. He spent his spare time in walks to see the Great Western expresses thundering by and wrote a moving elegy on the Death of Broad Gauge. There was another, too, that I recall on a famous Great Western figure beginning:

*"Sir Daniel Gooch the bucket's kicked,
An engineer was he,
Whose engines oft the record licked
To all posterity."*

But I grow too irrelevant and affecting. I believe there is now a society of railway-worshippers, of which G. C. A.

would certainly have been president. Music, drawing, and, among the more recondite arts, puppetry, have given pleasure to many people who may be a little bored by the routine of ordinary work and games. Even in the domain of play there have been notable eccentrics. I remember an old friend and golfing adversary, Tom Ranken at Mitchell's, a mighty rifle shot, who used to fish from the Playing Fields, with what success I do not know, and I believe Eric Parker had done so four or five years before. Even golf sixty years ago afforded an example of toleration. The outside world is apt to think of Eton as a severely conventional place. My own belief is that it is in many ways a blessedly free one.

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AT TRINITY

I SOMETIMES think that I ought to have gone to Oxford. To anyone who has seen me at any University match suffering tortures of anxiety relieved at intervals by bursts of indecent joy, this may appear a surprising remark. I do not wish I had gone there, for that would imply a horrible treachery. I am merely stating a principle. I find it hard to believe that a day-boy can squeeze all the pleasure out of his school or feel quite the same unreasoning affection for it as does the boarder, and the same rule applies to a university. Of course I lived in College but I had something of a day boy's sensations, if it was only the flatness of going home in a cab at the end of term instead of a train. Cambridge was full of my relations apart from my own household and it was very pleasant to see them now and then, perhaps on a Sunday afternoon, but I was always a little conscious of an all-seeing family eye.

Cambridge is a lovely place; to my mind, and here prejudice no doubt comes in, it is the more beautiful of the two, but somehow I never could feel the love for it as my home that I had for Downe, nor the romantic loyalty that I felt and feel for Eton. As an institution for beating Oxford it has my deepest, perennially boyish devotion, but as for my own time there I have always been conscious of something missing, something that I had vaguely hoped for and never attained. The feeling that it was probably all my own fault does not make it any less poignant.

The golf was good fun, to be sure, though not such good fun as that enjoyed by the young gentlemen of today. Nobody thought very much of us, and indeed a good many people did not know we existed. The unique social genius of John Low had made people take to golf in large quantities,

even on Coldham Common, but he had departed, we had none of his quality and golf suffered a reaction accordingly. Still I loved the game, and to be more or less cock of any walk, however humble a walk, is no doubt something. A very humble one it was, and I sometimes feel a little envious of my successors of today, watched by considerable crowds and not one of them without at least one parent to follow them. One has even had a wife and family, but that was exceptional.

However this is all vanity and I have said more than enough about golf in another chapter. One thing I feel sure about, namely that I was too young. I should have enjoyed Cambridge much more if I had been at least two years older. I cannot easily imagine hating anything more than National Service, though it would have been very good for me: but I think that the young men of twenty and twenty-one who go up to Oxford and Cambridge with that safely behind them are in every way readier to appreciate and enjoy the life there than they would have been at eighteen. I was barely eighteen and I'm afraid I was too young.

There is another kind of vanity besides that before mentioned, the vanity called shyness, the shyness that often does not get what it wants from lack of asking. I would not make any effort to belong to clubs in which I had plenty of friends and to which I think I could have belonged if I had tried. Looking back on my later life I have been reasonably good at making friends, or at any rate have had many very kind ones, but I somehow missed the knack of it at Cambridge. I read lately with great pleasure Sir Laurence Jones's *A Victorian Boyhood* and I was particularly struck by one of his remarks about Eton. It was that the fact of being a great swell there, Captain of the Boats and with caps of many colours, had been very good for him, giving him confidence and taking away self-consciousness and "social fears". I believe that to be, generally speaking, true, and that the average boy is a much pleasanter creature for being reasonably successful and popular. I have never been a great swell

anywhere, but after Cambridge I was certainly much more of a success than I was there. To be a small somebody even in a very limited domain has, I think, been beneficial, and if I may say so, people have seemed to like me better.

The proof of this comparative friendlessness of mine is the fact that the only time to which I look back with any real glow of pleasure is the Long at the end of my first year at Trinity. Oxford men who proposed to do any work in the Long Vacation went on reading parties, those at Cambridge came up for the Long, a sort of unofficial term out of term-time. Everybody lived in College and that instantly made for friendliness, for everybody got to know everybody else, and in so big a College as Trinity that is far from being necessarily the case. It seems to me in recollection a time when one really did what is described in University novels, my beloved *Pendennis* in particular, and walked round and round the Great Court on a moonlight summer night talking no doubt great nonsense but talking it very pleasantly. The games too were good fun. With so few people to play them the standard of skill required was not too high; I played for Trinity against Pembroke and had a blue, no less a blue than W. G. Grace, Junior, caught at the wicket off a long hop. There was village cricket too, to which we drove on a coach, with a horsy young gentleman, as it might have been Harry Foker, handling the ribbons. We won one match because, with the score a tie, the village parson bowled a very, very slow wide. I am afraid we laughed and he did not like it.

That seemed to me the real communal life which somehow or other I missed in term-time. It is one of the arguments for going to a comparatively small College, that granted a very modest degree of skill and a reasonable patriotism, a man can play all sorts of games for his College. Trinity is a great and noble College, and so big that there ought to be scope in it for everyone to find his own level and his own companions. Yet it is possible to fall between a variety of stools.

I think one of the few occasions I ever moved in dis-

tinguished undergraduate society was when I was driven by my family much against my will to learn dancing, in order "to qualify me for joining in the most polite assemblies", as Lord Chancellor Campbell said when he took lessons under an assumed name at the age of thirty-four. One of my fellow pupils is now an O.M., the philosopher George Moore, and another was my cousin Ralph Wedgwood, subsequently a person of vast eminence in the railway world. I think there was also an agreeable but rather incongruous cricket blue in the party. Charming young ladies taught us and the progress of my fellows was rapid, mine was more leisurely. Finally I was considered fit to go, again reluctantly, to a dance at the J. W. Clarks' at Scroope House. I do not know how Lord Chancellor Campbell felt when he emerged for the first time from the privacy of lessons to the publicity of the ballroom. I felt very ill at ease. It was like suddenly appearing on the first tee at St Andrews after a little solitary driving practice in a meadow. I danced about two dances with some unfortunate young ladies found for me and then made a bolt for it. Nor did I ever again, in the words of the noble and learned lord, "figure on the light, fantastic toe". You can take a horse to the water, but if he drinks sulkily enough he wins in the end. My family had done their best and failed. Some years later a pretty young lady, afterwards my sister-in-law, tried to teach me to dance a jig. She failed too. There is nothing like passive resistance.

My other incursion into an alien world was in my last year when I went to "training hall" among the lights of the rowing world. I never sat in a boat in all my life, but it was the duty of any Etonian of the least patriotism to join the Third Trinity Boat Club. It badly needed subscriptions, and by way of compensation one could wear a very pretty tie of dark blue and silver. The club, as I presume, was entitled to so many places at this training hall and I secured one of them, thus getting a rather better dinner at a civilised hour and with pleasant companions. One of them was Claud Goldie, whom I now meet once a year watching his admir-

able granddaughter play in the Worplesdon Mixed Foursomes. Third Trinity was under rather a cloud during my time. There had unquestionably been too many members of that club in the Cambridge boat of 1894, and this led to a revolt and the appointment of a comparatively elderly president, J. B. Close of First Trinity. There was not another Third Trinity man in the University boat till my last year, when there was no keeping such an oarsman as Dudley Ward out of it. In any case I imagine all explosive sentiment had then calmed down. Nearly all the distinguished oarsmen of my own time at Eton went to Oxford, but a year or two later Third was in its glory again. Dudley Ward, Goldie, Gibbon, Chapman, Cockerell, Nelson—these are names that sound proudly even in my dry-bob ears. First and Third are now fused and I have no manner of doubt that this is the best plan from every point of view, but I always derived a small thrill, now vanished, from the thought that I belonged to Third.

I probably had a larger acquaintance among dons than had the ordinary undergraduate because I "knew them at home", but here again I did not make enough of my opportunities. I ought to have gone to smoke at the great Henry Jackson's rooms on Sunday evening, but perhaps because I had not taken to tobacco I went once and fled affrighted. Mr Verrall, my tutor (famous for emending Aeschylus and Miss Austen), and Mrs Verrall, tried conscientiously to ask his pupils to dinner, five freshmen with one third-year man to leaven the lump and in due course to give the signal for departure. This was often very necessary, since shy undergraduates, though having a painful longing to go, often lacked the courage to act on it. At my freshmen's dinner the third-year man was George Moore, before mentioned, and he will forgive me for saying at this distance of time that he did nothing noticeably to cheer the gloom. I don't recollect that he spoke but he did help us to get away in good time.

I think the only fellow of Trinity to whose rooms I went

was the adorable J. D. Duff, perhaps best known to the outer world as the translator of Aksakoff. To learn Russian in order to read the great Russian novelists in their own language was something of which comparatively few would be capable: to learn it well enough as to translate it so beautifully showed greatness.

He was a close friend of my father's and would often come to tea at Wychfield on his way home from lecturing at Girton. I have the clearest vision of him sitting rosy and plump in a wicker-chair on the lawn conversing amicably with our two dogs. My chief bond with him was golf, for he was an Aberdonian who had played from his youth up, not very well indeed, but with a knowing, florid, Scottish waggle, and had got a place in the Cambridge team of his year. Through golf I knew various fellows of Colleges, since I used to play with them at Royston, in vacation. There was Welsh of Jesus, once a Senior Wrangler, and a really good and dashing player, who was the pride of Machrihanish in the Long Vacation. He was a delightful and friendly person, but I don't think he wanted to play with me, preferring a less strenuous opponent in the eminent astronomer, Sir Robert Ball, to whom he could give at a conservative estimate a stroke and a half a hole. R. A. Nicholson, a fellow of Trinity, was also a good player. The great J. J. Thomson was much less good. It was a pleasure to hear him pronounce "putt" with the genuine accent of his native Lancashire. He generally allowed himself only just time between trains to play thirteen holes and so raced round by himself.

I don't know whether Charles Pigg came precisely under the head of a don. He was not a fellow of a College nor a man of vast erudition, but a very hard working coach. His pupils were not men as a rule of any learning, for they were struggling with the Littlego or the General. Charles was strictly a "poll" coach. The ambitions of his pupils did not soar as high as an honours degree. Charles had a large practice, if I may so term it, among the best young men and he used sometimes to complain of them a little bitterly. He

would tell one of them to look up just three things, let us say, immediately before the paper. He had seen into the examiner's mind with intuitive genius; all those three questions had been set and the wretched young man had been too lazy to look up any of them. All his pupils loved him, but that was an amount of trouble some of them would not take for him. He was a very good and kind friend to me, for he became secretary of the Golf Club in my Captain's year and kept us all straight and tidied up our neglected finances.

I was not so idle as Charles's pupils. If far from industrious I still did some work at Cambridge. I think I must have begun with the Classical Tripos in a state of equable despair. I had never done anything else and it seemed the easiest thing to do, but I knew wearily well that I was no good at Classics and soon those who taught me knew it too. So I turned to the Law Tripos, and it was wonderfully reviving to the spirits to put the old books behind one and begin something new. At the same time Roman Law makes a daunting start. Gaius and Justinian were the driest of dry company. It really was a comfort to get to the second part of the Tripos, with real, live law and dear Mr Shirley's *Leading Cases*. To be able by however bad a joke to make some piece of learning stick in a pupil's head is a feather in the teacher's cap. Eustace Miles, of great fame at tennis and rackets, was a classical coach when I was up and he had a *memoria technica* for the fact, or at any rate I believe it to be a fact, that slingers came from the Balearic Islands. He said they were "bally erratic". There could be no worse joke, but it cannot be forgotten. Mr Shirley's jokes were not so bad as that, though he was sometimes rather laboriously facetious. He permitted himself the kind of journalese that says not that a ship has sunk but that she has gone to the Mermaids. But he had a distinct gift, and the only little, very little, law that I now know, I owe not to years in a solicitor's office and in barrister's Chambers but to my study of Mr Shirley for the Law Tripos. He had such a way with him. "Leading eastward from the Grays Inn Road there is,

or till recently was, a street called Liquorpond Street". I have only to murmur those magical words to summon up the famous case of Mitchell v. Reynolds and the baker who "baked himself a fortune" before retiring. There is a great deal of law about contracts in restraint of trade and I now know very little of it, but I shall never forget Liquorpond Street.

It was delightful to feel genuinely anxious to learn some new thing. It recalled the keenness with which at Summerfield the scholarship boys had got up before breakfast to plunge into the joys of *Supellectilis* with Dr Williams. Years afterwards I felt it again in a minor degree in trying to grasp the mysteries of the Ordnance and its Vocabulary of Stores in the war. Alas! it wears off too soon, but Mr Shirley, with some help from Stephen's *Criminal Law*, continued to inspire a reasonable interest "whereby" in the words of J. K. S.

*"I did not merely pass
But even managed to obtain
A very decent second class."*

I must not give all the credit to Mr Shirley. There was also a charming person and eminent Johnian oarsman who coached me, L. H. K. Bushe-Fox. The lecturers to whom I listened have almost wholly faded. The great Maitland ought to have been exciting, but he asked questions of his class and, deprecating that inquisitive habit, I ceased to attend. Dr Kenny, I fancy on jurisprudence, had perfectly mastered the art of lecturing at the right speed to facilitate the taking of notes, but to call him inspiring would be an abuse of language. Still the law was not a wholly unrewarding study, and among those I defeated, and that heavily, was one who subsequently became a Lord Justice, A. F. C. Luxmoore of Jesus.

He was likewise a distinguished Rugby forward and I used sometimes to go to watch him and his fellows on the Corpus Ground. Another of them was also a competitor of mine in the Law Tripos, T. M. W. McGown of Clare,

whom I afterwards came to know very well when we were in the Ordnance together at Salonica. He played for Ireland in the team that won the Triple Crown. My chief recollection of Rugby forwards, however, at any rate in my first year, is that they came from Caius. One of them with a red-head, always a formidable feature in a football player, had a little trouble one night with the police, whereupon a peaceful and respectable friend of mine, who subsequently became a Metropolitan Magistrate, tried to rescue him. I think my friend must have been seized with an attack of temporary insanity even as was Mr Winkle when he tried to rescue Mr Pickwick from the Sedan-chair at Ipswich. His attempt was equally unsuccessful.

The three great ones from Caius, however, on whom no such reflection is made, were Tucker, Frank Mitchell (the Cricketer) and Todd, all three of whom played for England. Tucker especially was terrifying. I am no judge of Rugby football, though a great admirer, but he seemed to me wholly magnificent, and I never saw one whose path when in full spate I should less desire to cross. Even as at school one remembers best the Sixth Form of one's first half, so I remember best that mighty phalanx from Caius.

When I had watched football as a small boy, Cambridge had been on the highest pinnacle of glory at Soccer. W. N. Cobbold, A. M. Walters, Lindley, Spilsbury, Amos and Blenkiron—my reverent pen trembles in setting down their names; but by the time I was an undergraduate Rugby had begun to attain the position which it has held more and more markedly ever since. Of course I am talking only of the University world, and even in that world, as I write, I see Soccer beginning to come into its own again. If so, I believe this is largely due to the writing, as learned as it is dramatic, of one man, the Association Football Correspondent of *The Times*; he fills my journalistic soul with admiration. And really when the Warden of an Oxford College condescends to write a sparkling five hundred words about the Wolverhampton Wanderers in a Sunday paper, can Soccer

climb higher? What would the Rev. William Hepworth Thompson, some time Master of Trinity, have said about it? There were good Soccer players at Cambridge in my day, notably another red-head, L. V. Lodge. Hugh Bray and Burnup I came to know well afterwards, but I knew them then hardly if at all; in fact nearly all my friends in the world of games came later. They were good, but Oxford, with G. O. Smith, C. B. Fry, Oakley and Raikes were undeniably better.

It was an agreeable if chilly amusement to go to Fenner's in the Lent Term and watch the Sports. The three great heroes were Lutyens, Horan and Fitzherbert. Lutyens whom, as a schoolboy, I had seen win his first mile for Cambridge was still there to win his fourth. Horan was a great three-miler, but one year he had only a leg and a half to run with and was beaten by J. M. Fremantle, who had been with me at Summerfield and in College at Eton. My loyalty might have been severely tried had I been at the University Sports that year, for Jack, Oxford or no Oxford, was such a very old friend. I don't say I should have wanted him to win. If I did say so, and Mr George Lyttelton were to hear me he would never speak to me again. I will say I am glad I did not see the race and so was preserved from temptation. Jordan and Fitzherbert, two mighty quarter-milers, met four times. Each won twice, but I only saw the two races that Jordan won. That seems somehow unfair on the part of Providence.

Fenner's was more attractive in summer-time, especially as Coldham Common was then a hayfield and there was no golf or at least no official golf to play. Norman Druce I remember as the most beautiful batsman who never quite came off as he should have in the University match. "Elegance, all elegance, fit to play before the King in his parlour". He and his brother W. G., Clem Wilson, of my own year, Hugh Bray and R. A. Studd were all at Trinity, which I think produced more blues of all sorts then than it does now. In fact today it has scarcely as many blues as it has

O.Ms. Frank Mitchell had a fine daunting pose at the wicket with bat held high in the air. When Foster Cunliffe of Oxford, who had not seen him before, was about to bowl to him at Lords he waited thinking he was not ready until Mitchell told him to come on.

This is not Wisden, so I will only mention two other cricketers, who played in golf sides with me, Harold Marriott and my old Eton friend, Herman de Zoete, the most graceful of left-hand bowlers just as he was the most graceful and perfect swinger of a golf club. There was one more not to be forgotten, Gilbert Jessop, who though older than I am came up only in my second year. I remember him slaughtering some unfortunate Philadelphians to the tune of innumerable boundaries, but otherwise I fancy he was then thought of as a fast bowler quite as much as a batsman.

On the same level of fame at another game must be set the two Dohertys, who were at Trinity Hall. Already they were great lawn tennis players in a different class to all the other undergraduates, and R. F. was within a year or two of being champion. Yet I believe I only saw them play just once during my time at Cambridge. That seems a sad waste of opportunity, but I doubt if anyone did go to see the University lawn tennis matches to any great extent. Here again were two illustrious game-players that I only came to know later.

The gods of the river I have already touched on. These I never watched when I was up, but there does come back to me one scene which I owe rather to walks with my father in my school days. There would be the usual more or less obscure crowd of Lent boats or unfortunate freshmen being tubbed. Presently there would fall a sudden hush, the small fry drew in close under the banks, there was the sound of galloping hoofs on the tow-path and then in all its pride the University Boat came by. It was something that even the driest of dry-bobs could not resist. It was John Gully driving to his fight against Gregson surrounded by an escort of noblemen and gentlemen; it was Napoleon passing

through Phalsbourg on the way to Russia in my beloved *Conscript*. It was everything that was romantic and processional. Nobody could in his heart despise the University Boat.

Very few things of general interest seem to have happened during my three years at Trinity, but there was one, the great battle over Women's Degrees. My father was a strong *Placet*, which was natural enough as my stepmother had been a lecturer at Newnham. The whole inclination of my mind was therefore the other way and the undergraduate world was, I think, more or less unanimous on the unenlightened side; certainly the more vocal part of it was. Above everything else the voting day was a great festival for the country parsons. They are members of a profession to whom an M.A. degree is essential, and they are or were also inclined to be good Conservatives. So it was on them that the *Non Placet* chieftains relied and had made great efforts to mobilise them. And grandly those sable cohorts responded to the call. To spend once more a day in Cambridge, scene of their happy youth, and to strike a blow for reaction, here was a double opportunity.

*"Backward moves the kindly dial
And I'm numbered once again
With those noblest of their species
Called emphatically 'Men'."*

That was, I suspect, the governing sentiment from the most delightful and melting of the Cambridge poets. My memory may exaggerate, but it seems to me now that the place was solidly black with them. They had been met at the station and driven up in open *Non-Placet* vehicles and were received with passionate cheering by the mob of undergraduates outside the Senate House. They in their turn cheered back and left us in no doubt of their loyalties.

The voting in the Senate House took a long time and obviously the crowd needed something to keep it amused; so it conceived the luminous notion of denouncing some

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innocent passer-by as a *Placet* voter even as a London mob of years ago would discover an Old Bailey spy.

The M.As. having voted walked about on the lawn between the railings and the University Library, but they did not stay there for long, since the crowd bombarded them with squibs. All but one of them prudently retired out of range; the one who remained was a young barrister, Chaytor by name, with a pugnacious red-head, later on a distinguished K.C., who had just taken his M.A. degree. He carried on the fight with the greatest gallantry, picking up the squibs and throwing them back over the railings. Perhaps he remembered the leading case of *Scott v. Shepherd*, in which the defendant, "a man not destitute of humour", threw a lighted squib into a crowded market-house. Unlike Mr Shepherd, however, he put nobody's eye out and clearly enjoyed himself. When these resources failed, placards appeared on the railings, wholly unauthentic, professing to show the figures so far, always with a strong *Non-Placet* majority.

So the day wore on and the final declaration of the result has grown very dim. Perhaps I grew weary and did not wait for it. At any rate the *Placets* were soundly defeated, and some people, lamentably forgetting their manners, shouted outside the gates of Newnham. My family was much cast down and I trust I did not rub it in. When I was an M.A. myself and so had a vote, though heaven alone knows why I should, I made some amends by voting on the side of enlightenment; I helped to abolish the Senior Wrangler. Not indeed that I could know anything about it, but my mathematical Uncle George said he ought to be abolished and I was content to take his word for it. Anything more ridiculous than that such a person as I should have a say on such a subject it is hard to imagine. However neither I nor the country parsons can do any more harm now; our votes have been taken away from us.

At any rate, after a very long interval, the fact of being an M.A. did me some good. This was in the last year of the

war, when the behaviour of the doodlebugs and rockets was so persistently offensive in our part of Kent that my wife and I retired for a while to Cambridge. We stayed with my aunt at Newnham Grange, the scene of *Period Piece*. It was naturally a strange Cambridge, almost stripped of undergraduates except medical students. However there were matches to watch, including one against Oxford, on the University Rugby ground, the same Corpus ground from which, as a small boy, I had been led away weeping when Cambridge were beaten by Richmond by a goal dropped in the last minute. There was even a University Golf Match on the Gogs, of which I was the only spectator. The pleasantest part of it all for me was the dining at various high tables. At Trinity I was kindly made for the time a member of the high table, wore my M.A. gown, or rather somebody else's, with an ever bolder air and had very good talk and very good wine in the Combination Room. I almost recaptured something of the joys of that first Long, just fifty years before.

(<http://darwin-online.org.uk/>).

GOLF'S GOLDEN AGE

EVERY pursuit has for a devotee what he regards, either secretly or openly, as its golden age and I am coming to mine in golf. It is mine for personal reasons because, I suppose, I was young and so the game was new and exciting, but I am prepared to defend my choice on more general grounds. I feel as if Golf's greatest age had consisted of the last few years of the gutty-ball era and perhaps, though golf would have been better if it had never been invented, the first few of the rubber-cored era. And now let me make a profession of opinion to which I am entirely wedded. It is often said that the great and world-wide popularity of golf is due entirely to the coming of the rubber-cored ball in 1902. I do not think this is true. That the easier and more flattering, even in a sense the pleasanter ball, did increase the number of players I will never deny, but the victorious march of golf was on the way before ever Mr Haskell devised his ball. The trampling and the hum had long been audible; the conquest had much more than begun. The realm of golf might never have been quite so great as today, but it would have been no secret little Ruritania; it would have been a mighty empire.

Let me take my own little private golden age first. It began when I went down from Cambridge and came to live in London at the end of 1897. I played to be sure much less than I had done, for I was in a lawyer's office for five days and sometimes, such was the barbarity of that epoch, five and a half days a week; but I was introduced to a wider and more grown-up and more interesting world of golf than I had known before, the world of London and especially of Woking golf. In those days the star of sand and heather had barely risen to illumine the Londoner's darkness. Even

Sunningdale, now so venerable and illustrious, did not exist. There was charming New Zealand among its fir woods, where Mure Fergusson held his somewhat eclectic sway, and there was Woking, in all its main characteristics as good and delightful a course as it is today.

The waiting list was vast; it was supposed to take a candidate seven years to get into the club, and I was wonderfully lucky to be elected at once on the strength of being a young University player. In fact the Committee, having been invested with extensive powers of picking and choosing, did much as it liked in the matter. It produced the pleasantest of clubs, and the only possible defect of the system was that when at last members were wanted it was found that all those on the list had died in waiting. The club had, I believe, been originally intended to be a Bar club, but this notion of what would today be called a closed shop was wisely abandoned. The club had a strong legal flavour however. Some of those early members will always be remembered, such as A. T. Lawrence, afterwards Lord Trevethin, the Lord Chief Justice, a beloved person and an admirable foursome partner, who hit the ball extremely straight if also an extremely short way. Alfred Lyttelton was another, too modestly cultivating something like a parody of a full golfing swing when he would have done better to trust to his natural and unequalled genius for ball games. Yet a third memorable figure was that of Mr Coward, of the great firm of Hollamses, who played in a tail coat of brown tweed and knickerbockers, and ran so frantically for the first tee with his coat tails flying that no one was ever known to beat him in the race from the station brake.

There were good golfers too, apart from good lawyers—Ernley Blackwell, my old friend of Eton and Oxford Guy Ellis, and a year or two later the two Hunters, Mansfield and Norman. John Low came to live there and became one of the institutions of the place, having a bunker of devilish ingenuity and daring called after him. Freddie Tait would often come over from Aldershot, and there was a pleasing

legend of his hitting his tee shot at the fourth hole into the cross bunker in front of the green, a perfectly vast carry, and apologising to an irate old gentleman on the ground that he was a beginner.

Much more important than any of the golfers or judges was Stuart Paton. It was he who really made Woking. Stuart was not only a very delightful but a very remarkable man. To the general body of golfers he was almost if not quite unknown, but he was invited to be Captain of the Royal and Ancient Club and declined without telling a single one of his friends, well knowing that they would never have let him do so. He had played golf as a Loretto boy and was within his limits a very good player, particularly in the foursome, which he so loved. Indeed it was very hard, and became even harder, to induce him to play a single. His conception of golf was that of an older generation of Scottish gentlemen. One medal day a year he would allow, but no more. Our legal magnates had given us plenty of silver pots and pans, but these somehow disappeared. There had been monthly medals, and I remember to have competed in one and to have won my own half-crown with a really good score. That, Stuart thought, was just as it should be; the monthly medals went the way of the judicial prizes and I felt that I had disgraced myself. As to a Bogey score, that would only have been made across his dead body. I once called him in *The Times* with cheerful impertinence "The Mussolini of Woking", and nobody who knew the place had any doubt who was meant.

There was in fact a touch of the totalitarian about him. Yet he was the most benevolent of all despots. He was always thinking of the good of the club and of the course, and he nearly always had his own way and that the right way. The Committee, as I said, had ample powers to elect whom they liked and I think he generally did it without them. In these days when everything must be democratically done I suppose his methods would be criticised, and indeed towards the end of his time there were, sad to say, symptoms of mild

revolt; but he made the Woking of his day the best and pleasantest place to play golf that I have ever known.

He certainly had his own way about the course, doing things that were at first deemed shocking. Thus the bunker bang in the middle of the fairway at the fourth hole, in imitation of the Principal's Nose at St Andrews, was thought a sign of incipient lunacy, but it made a bad hole into a good one and inspired one of the most distinguished of golfing architects to study that art. Stuart and John Low between them dug a bunker in the seventeenth green and people just could not believe that it was a bunker; that was too outrageous, it must be a well or perhaps a mine. But a bunker it was, and there it is to this day. There is hardly a hole that he touched that he did not adorn. I can think of one that was too fanciful, but it has now vanished and even that was an amiable weakness. If ever a statue were put up, as there is one to Charles Blair Macdonald at the National Golf Links in America, then Stuart Paton in bronze should stand looking out over Flook Heath. And how he would hate it!

It was a capital company that one met there Sunday after Sunday. Sir Edward Grey once wrote a delicious account of crossing Waterloo Bridge in the early morning on his way to court the Naiads of the Itchen or the Test. I had, in my humbler way, something of his sensations. I lived in the Temple and so walked over the bridge, slipping and sliding in my nailed shoes on a diabolical granite pavement to be found there and, as far as my knowledge extends, nowhere else. Half a crown—yes really and truly half a crown, was the price of a special second-class return ticket, and away we went in a huddle of golfers in a very slow train. At Woking we climbed into a brake which decanted us some way from the course. Then we rushed faint and pursuing after Mr Coward over a railway footbridge and so to the course. The narrow path was beset by ditches, rather dangerous after dark and still more after dinner. There was a match followed by a dinner against a team of Scottish Gentlemen, when it was recorded (by an attendant sprite) of one of them,

unfortunately lame, and known as Hoppy, that "im as 'ops fell into the ditch".

To those accustomed to be carried smoothly from door to door the journey must have a strenuous sound. Yet I do not think I am being too sentimental when I say that a fine winter day's golf at Woking in the consulship of Paton, was very hard to beat. Even the journey home, though a little comatose, gave opportunities for making a match against the next Sunday. I have noticed that since the days of cars golfers tend to play with the same neighbours week after week, whereas in those days, since they were all members of the commonwealth of traingoers, there was a greater variety of partnerships. In the summer I used sometimes to get a bed at a neighbouring cottage for the week-end, and very agreeable it was, but it is of the winter golf that I think most fondly.

In those days many London golfers played most of their golf by the sea. To go to Cannon Street Station on a Friday afternoon was to find three or four separate parties setting out. Sandwich, Deal, Rye and Littlestone had each its band of faithful adherents, some of whom were so regular that they kept their toothbrushes and dinner-jackets—golfers were virtuous dressers in those days—in their appointed rooms, whither they went week after week. Such splendours were out of my reach, but now and again some kind elder person would ask me to make one of a party to the Bell at Sandwich or the Dormy House at Rye. Then to travel hopefully was better even than to arrive. The journey on the Friday evening, the getting out in the dark to snuff the salt in the air, the cosy dinner, were all rich in the exquisite pleasures of looking forward. Given reasonable weather there is no golf so good as that of a winter day on a seaside course, with just that touch of wetness on the turf and all the burnt yellow of autumn turned to fresh green. It was all too dreadfully soon over. Even by lunch-time on the Saturday—hot collops at Sandwich or buttered eggs at Rye—the horrid feeling of the end of the holidays began to

intrude, and over all the Sunday golf hung the shadow of the evening train to London. That is the worst of treats; the sands are for ever running out.

Another thing that made this age so golden to me was the institution in 1898 of the Oxford and Cambridge Golfing Society, of which I am now one of the small band having the letters O.M. after their names in the book. Even as M. P. C. stood for Member Pickwick Club, so those two letters stand for Original Member, and there are not now so many of us as I could wish. In that society John Low as Captain and Arthur Croome as secretary created something that has given an incalculable amount of pleasure to its members, and indeed, if indirectly, to thousands of other golfers. It was largely in pious imitation that schools and professions and institutions of all sorts discovered the friendly fun of golf played with those between whom there is a bond, and also, I may add, of predatory swoops made on other people's courses.

I have many golfing loyalties, but that to the Society comes first; my attachment to it is intenser than any other. I feel towards it as did the engaging and slightly absurd author of *The Golfer's Manual* towards the game in general: "Thou art as dear to us now in the sere and yellow leaf as when first we flew to share in thy health-inspiring rites, with the flush and ardour of boyhood." To be setting out for Rye for the great and ever-growing assembly of the Presidents' Putter gives me a sensation different from any other that golf has to offer, and I wish I could express my heartfelt gratitude to all my friends of the Society. I could never do it orally and so I do it now, once and for all, very feebly and inadequately in writing.

There was no Presidents' Putter when we began, nor for many a year afterwards, but there were the spring and autumn tours to Lancashire and Cheshire, to Scotland, and to Ireland. It was, as ever, the earliest that were the most exciting, and, if perchance one were very lucky, to play with John Ball, Harold Hilton or Jack Graham at Hoylake, or

with Bobby Maxwell, Johnnie Laidlay or Leslie Balfour-Melville at Muirfield, was to touch the stars with uplifted head. And the dinners after the matches—what fun they were and how well, considering all things, we managed to play after them! There were all manner of old grouse-in-the-gun-room stories about those tours and the dinners, some of which have grown very dim, while as to others I refrain. I am not, in that most loathsome of all phrases, “a prince of raconteurs”, and even as there are horses for courses, so there are stories for particular companies and particular golf-courses. Like some sorts of wine, I believe, which are nectar in their native countries, they will not travel.

The match at Hoylake against the Royal Liverpool I have always regarded, with all possible respect to our other hospitable friends, as on a pinnacle a little higher than all the rest. With it I connect a series of sacred and ineffaceable pictures. On the night before there is “Jane”, Mr Harold Janion, the Secretary, in his invariable knickerbocker suit of black and white check, advancing at an exceedingly deliberate pace from his office to the board in the hall and affixing to it with a drawing-pin the order of battle for the next day. It was written with great precision in his peculiar handwriting in which each letter was perfectly separate from its neighbour. From that paper one’s lot for the morrow stared one in the face: it might not be necessarily fatal, though it could never be easy against Hoylake; if one were very lucky it might portend a glorious death at the hands of one of the three great men.

Then on the next day I see first of all John Ball with red tops to his stockings walking over from the Royal Hotel, his family home, iron in hand chipping a ball as he goes. I should like to put a rose in his buttonhole, but I don’t think we were worthy of that; it was reserved, together with the blue-jerseyed fishermen and the rope, for great Championship occasions. Harold Hilton I see in white canvas shoes, but that is also an anachronism; it belongs to Championships in summer weather and this is bleak March or April.

On the night before, Jack Graham had come out for a few practice shots, in an old tweed coat superimposed on to the respectable pin-stripe trousers, which he had worn at his Liverpool office. Now he was knickerbockered like the rest. There were plenty of other fine players; Charles Dick had come up from London and once Johnnie Laidlay had travelled all the way from Scotland to help in our massacre. Charles Hutchings might be there, gently massaging an elbow and protesting as to his aches and pains on which no opponent need found any hopes. There were Dinns and Crowthers, bred up to the Hoylake winds; it was a strong side down to the last man, but it is of that mighty trinity that one chiefly thinks.

In those earlier days moreover there were no foursomes after lunch; we played thirty-six hole singles. It was fine discipline, but against one of the three great ones the liability was unlimited. Dear old Jack Morris, another unforgettable picture, was always there to start us from the first tee, sometimes, I think, smoking a cigar to mark the occasion as a festal one. Festal it was in the end, but there had been stern work to do first. We used sometimes to wonder if we should not have done better had we begun our tour at Hoylake instead of enjoying first the shrimps and hospitality of St Anne’s and Formby, but I do not suppose it would have made much difference. Not that we have never won at Hoylake, for we have, but the balance is heavily against us.

The Scottish and Irish tours were likewise wonderfully pleasant, but I must not be led to write more of them here. From what I have said it will be seen that my golden age was an heroic one. The greatest heroes must always be those seen through younger or at least contemporary eyes. I am like the old gentleman who was asked by a neighbour at Lords whether he had ever seen Alfred Mynn. “Sir,” said the old gentleman, “I bowled him out.” Once the worshipper is older than the worshipped there is something lacking; his intellect may do the hero justice but his heart cannot render

quite the old undoubting assent. Like everyone else I am subject to this natural law and I do not ask forgiveness for thinking that the years I have chosen were rendered of unsurpassable brilliance and interest by the great Triumvirate. Vardon, Taylor and Braid, with Herd to make up what Arthur Croome called in the language of piquet the Quarte Major, gave not only professional golf but all golf an immense fillip. Here were four men all of great and notable character, all playing golf in strongly individual styles, between which there was little superficial resemblance, and playing it so well and consistently day in and day out that between them they were as near as might be invincible. If one did not win then the other bobbed up to put all lower aspirants in their places. Professional golf has now a larger public, but with all respect to the many fine players of today, I think those four great professionals put golf on a pinnacle than which there has never been a higher.

There were few then of what I and other people as well are fast beginning to think of as those dreary tournaments, 72 holes of score play, round and round and round again. There were a great many single matches between the four big guns. Many of them were "exhibition" matches and were played on courses of no great merit, but there was a constant interest in seeing which of them beat the other, an interest which I find I cannot take in this score-playing circus. Perhaps that is only another way of saying that I am getting old, and yet I am not quite sure of that. I am as interested as ever I was in the Open Championship and the *News of the World*, but there is something wanting in these other tournaments. I sometimes almost wish, but this is altogether too monstrous a desire, that people did not write so much about them in the newspapers.

Nobody can blame the professionals themselves. The more of these score-play tournaments the better for them, or at least for those that win the prizes. That is their business. Similarly nobody can blame them because there are no brave gauntlets thrown down. It is not worth a leader's

while to risk a downfall and the loss of his own money. It is true that there have been one or two "challenge" matches for which the players are provided with "sponsors", but they have been four-ball matches of such unutterable slowness as to tire the sun with putting. They are wholly unbearable.

No doubt the really golden age of such matches was before I was born or was at any rate in short frilly drawers; but there were some fine ones in my own time. The gallant Willie Park was always ready, the challenge trembled on his lips, and he was all the readier if half the match could be played at Musselburgh, with those whom Crawford called "they damned miners" to back him. Andrew Kirkaldy was another who longed to throw down his glove, especially to an Englishman.

There was a fine international flavour aroused by Park and Vardon, and later by the foursome over four greens in which Vardon and Taylor beat the other two of the Quarte Major. These matches aroused a genuine patriotic excitement very different from the languid interest with which we now read in the newspaper of the winner of the Sausage Maker's tournament. Later again there came the spirited ventures of insurgent youth, when Duncan and Mayo twice assailed two of the enthroned Triumvirate. I need scarcely add that it was in a foursome and not a four-ball match.

I think golf has become too popular and has inevitably been rather vulgarised in consequence. It has attracted a new kind of spectator who is himself not very attractive. A Scottish crowd was always a little inclined perhaps to be tempestuous or partisan, but it knew and knows the game. The crowds sometimes to be seen at Ryder Cup matches in England are largely ignorant and attend in the spirit of jolly bank holiday. What they really like best is a music hall or T.V. "personality", but failing him they prefer a wise-cracking exhibitionist dressed like a merry andrew at a fair. The professional is not to blame for the taste of the spectator. He hardly ever has the chance of playing a foursome because the spectator, God knows how erroneously,

thinks that a four-ball match will give him more for his money. At the time at which I am writing some of the professionals themselves seem to think that the system of tournaments wants overhauling and making more attractive. I hope they will have agreed among themselves long before these words are printed and will have arrived at a satisfactory conclusion, but I doubt if it will be easy. My own feelings are that there will always be people in any given neighbourhood to take the chance of seeing the best golfers; but to get a wider and less local interest, to make people in other places rush to their newspapers to see what has happened, that is a problem not so easy to solve. At any rate I can offer no solution.

As I am writing in a sense my testament of golf I suppose I ought to make some comparison between the leading players of different generations. I shall do so in the most guarded possible manner, if only because I have never been able to make up my own mind on the subject. I remember to have asked Mr Leslie Balfour-Melville, who had played with young Tommy Morris, whether he thought Vardon was better than Tommy had been. He did not snub me as he might, for it was a foolish question, but replied after some reflection, "I cannot imagine anyone playing better than Tommy did." It was a good and wise answer and I believe the right one as to any two great players of any game whom the years have kept asunder. Generally speaking, no champion can be more than the best of his time, with this proviso that now and again there arises a genius who definitely raises the whole standard of the game and compels others to follow him in gasping pursuit.

Young Tommy Morris was clearly one of these. All who saw him agreed that he was an altogether outstanding figure. There were others who might cope with him in the ordinary run of games, but when the real pinch came they could not hold him. Scores make most dangerous standards: they can be made to prove almost anything. But I cannot resist citing Tommy's great score of 149 at Prestwick in winning the

Championship Belt for the third time running. It was according to the calculations of contemporaries, but two over the par score for three rounds of the twelve holes. When one considers the clubs and balls with which he had to play and the relatively rough and unkempt course on which he did it, that score stands out beyond argument or criticism. He had only sixteen competitors on that day, but if he had had 160 it would not in the circumstances have mattered a single jot. I am going bang against the principle that I just now laid down, but I am convinced that he was much better than those who had gone before and those who came after until nearly the time of the Triumvirate.

With them came another upward surge. I believe a great amateur began it rather than any professional—John Ball, who hit full shots straight up to the pin in a way that came as a revelation. Then followed Taylor to be even more accurate, and finally Vardon, with something more of power added, a genius if ever there was one. For a little while there were two classes of people who hit a golf ball, in the one Vardon, and in the other all the other golfers. Nature enforced her invariable law; the others had to hunt Vardon and they drew closer to him, closer than ever they could have believed possible if he had not stretched them on the rack and dragged the golf out of them. Then he fell ill and was never quite the same again, so that he was caught and for a while even surpassed, but meanwhile golf had moved upward by a whole grade.

What exactly has happened since? Did Bobby Jones send the standard leaping up again and has Hogan improved on Bobby? Frankly I do not know. I could say in pious imitation of Mr Balfour-Melville, that I cannot imagine anybody hitting the ball better than Harry Vardon. J. H. Taylor, who knew his greatness if any man did, does say so. I feel—perhaps it is cowardly—that I must add the three conditional words "up to the green". The fact that the scores of Vardon and his rivals have been surpassed does not unduly upset me. When it comes to scores I always quote the fact that Sandy

Herd, when he was a few days short of seventy, holed four rounds of a good and full-sized course in an average of fours and that with a card and pencil and no charitable "approximation"; such a score as he never did in his prime. I cannot explain it with complete satisfaction, but there is the fact that makes nonsense of arguments about scores. Today amateur golfers, good but yet not so good as to have played in international matches, have done scores that Vardon never came near to achieving. It would be merely childish to say they were as good or anything like as good as he was.

Yet what I am prepared to say is that the putting of the best golfers has definitely improved. The Americans began it and our players have tried very hard to imitate them. They have not yet quite caught them but they putt better than their predecessors. They take fewer putts in the course of a round and so down go the scores. I think too that on the whole they chip better from near the green and so give themselves the chance of holing more putts. The thing that I really feel sure about as an improver of scores is the wedge. I am now so long incapacitated that I have never owned a wedge: I do not really understand the art of it, but I see what it can do in a bunker and that is enough. There it has in skilful hands produced a new stroke, and it merely laughs at the sand. John Ball said that he liked to see his enemy in a bunker where he had to scratch his head to find any way out of it. Today he would see that enemy, equipped cap-a-pie with an amourey of wedges, play an easy smooth sliding shot, as it were right through the ball, and lay it as likely as not stone dead. The head-scratching comes no doubt in learning that stroke, which I would never deny is a lovely and skilful one, but once learnt it seems to perform these miracles with perfect regularity. It is this infernal machine, and I wish it had never been invented, that has in my belief made more difference than anything else, clubs, balls, green-keeping and all, and I was glad to read the other day that Tommy Armour, a great golfer who knows American golf inside out, says so too. What a heavenly

feeling it must be not to mind in the least getting into a bunker! I wish I had ever enjoyed it.

I am not tortured by longings to have my golfing life over again, but it is natural now and then to reflect on what one would do with the years if they were given back. I know what my first good resolution ought to be and, I hope, would be, namely, to make a desperate effort not to get cross. No arguments are needed. It is a lamentable thing to do. I am not convinced that one does not play better sometimes in a mood of cold anger, but that is no justification. I would also try not to be made so unhappy by the confounded game, but that would be terribly difficult. Indeed I think that not to mind about how one plays is a rather anaemic state, such as makes a game hardly worth the playing. Doubtless one ought not to mind losing the match if one has played one's game and there are people who say they do not, but except in a very few cases I am not quite sure that I believe them. For my part I am free to own that I have always found victory a considerable consolation for bad play. If one is born a minder I think one will mind to the day of one's death.

I would be at once humbler and more energetic in seeking out a good coach. I can think of several vile habits of knees and elbows which a skilled golf doctor might have eradicated if he could have caught me in time. Moreover, there are today by all accounts such admirable coaches, judging at least by the conversation of some of my younger friends, who flit from one doctor to another and compare their merits like old ladies in the lounge of a spa hotel. I don't think I would patronise the profession to that extent, and I am quite sure I would spend as many happy hours as ever in lonely practising. I feel a distaste for the practice ground which is now essential to any self-respecting golf club. The student's struggles are there so horribly public. For very shame, I should imagine, he cannot try the fantastic contortion which has come to him in a dream or in the latest text-book. It is only in solitude and preferably in the dusk, when the lights

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begin to glimmer in the surrounding houses, that practice is truly heavenly, and the nearest possible approach to the great defiant secret may be discovered. I must be one of the few people in the world who have practised iron shots in the pitch dark in the garden of the Inner Temple. There was romance and to spare and I never lost a ball. The Benchers never found me out and today they will, I am sure, forgive me.

One good resolution I should be forced to make by the economic conditions of the age, namely, not to buy nearly so many clubs as I once did. It was a delightful adventure and not really a very expensive one. One's "judgment went out a wisitin'" sometimes, but as a rule for the first few days at least a new club was a joy and might even win back its modest price. What happens today to the man who falls violently in love with a No. 4 iron? Must he buy all the rest of the set in order to acquire it? I do not know, but if so there are economic consolations in giving up the game.

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Chapter Twelve

FLIRTATIONS WITH THE LAW

I HAVE carried on a long, fluctuating and weak-minded flirtation with the law, beginning in 1895, when after two terms at Cambridge I abandoned the Classical for the Law Tripos. It virtually ended some years ago when the hearing of matrimonial cases so depressed my spirits that I had my name put on the supplemental list of Justices, and confined my energies to careless people who had lost their ration books and foolish ones who did not want their children vaccinated. We have parted, I hope, tolerably good friends and certainly I have no bitter feelings against her. In many ways I have always had a great admiration for her. At the same time I have been conscious that she was too jealous and exacting a mistress. There was about me a certain indolence, a dislike of hard fighting and a desire to pick and choose my tasks, all three fatal disqualifications in her service. I never could give her the whole-hearted devotion she demands from those who would be her successful suitors.

Those who rise to eminence are not bound to have an all-embracing affection for law. I can think of one with whom I was for a short while in chambers, who was obviously a round peg in a square hole; he was entirely bored with the work he came across there and did not seem, at least to the rest of us, likely to succeed in that arduous race. We were probably stupid. Such mistakes of contemporaries are not unknown. Two of my uncles were at Woolwich with Kitchener and neither of them dreamed that he would come to any distinction. However in other Chambers, where was a kind of work more to his liking, he instantly found himself and from that moment went ahead. He became a brilliant and successful advocate and in time a distinguished Judge. I doubt if he loved law in all her moods any more

than hundreds of other people have done, but once he had found her in the right mood he made fierce love to her and she very properly capitulated.

It seems to me that from the beginning I liked some things about law, but always found some to dislike too much, an entirely hopeless frame of mind. By the time I had achieved the Law Tripos at Cambridge I had by no means yet come to hate law; indeed I never wholly did that, but already the first flush of my interest in it had paled. I do not know why it was thought a good plan that I should be a solicitor. There is something futile about a young gentleman who has no notion what he wants to do, and that was my case, or rather the only thing I wanted to do was to play golf, which was absurd. So other people had to decide what was to be done with me. As far as I can now remember, I received the decision without enthusiasm but with resignation, perhaps with even a faint feeling that it would be interesting to do something "real". My poor, kind father had taken much trouble in enquiring about the work and the prospects; he had had an introduction to some busy solicitor who had declared the life to be "as good as a play". This my father passed on to me a little tentatively and with a forced cheerfulness, hoping rather than believing that I should accept it. I certainly did not, but I had no better alternative to suggest. I thought perhaps that articled clerks could play golf at week-ends and that there were plenty of good golf-courses and good golfers round London. Oddly enough the great F. W. H. Myers of Cambridge, from some very slight knowledge of me, owing to my having become involved in a game of exchanging anagrams with him, had said that I ought to become a journalist, thinking apparently that I showed a certain facility of invention; but neither I nor anyone else had taken this prophetic utterance seriously. So fate decided with lamentably good intentions that I was to be a solicitor and I duly set off for London, to live for a short while at an aunt's house in Kensington and then to join two Cambridge friends in the Temple.

Here I am then in my black tail coat and my tall hat setting off every morning by the Underground from High Street Kensington to Crosby Square in the City. The first thing to say is that everybody there was perfectly kind and friendly, and if I did not like it much, it was probably my own fault. For a little while it was all so strange and new as to be interesting. I sat wedged with my back to the window in a tiny little slit of a room, and if I could have looked out of it there was nothing to see. The other occupant was the managing clerk who did the conveyancing, a kindly creature who subdued what was I imagine a naturally bohemian temperament and was in office hours a model of conscientiousness and industry. He knew his stuff, as we say now, very well indeed and, though he had a great deal to do, was patient and untiring in explaining everything to me. He soon formed the opinion, or so I now suspect, that I should not last the course, but he did his very best for me and I have always felt grateful to him.

For a while requisitions on title and the answers to them in inks of various colours had a faint interest of novelty. Yes, and even those dreadful forms that come from Somerset House for the winding up of the dead. Presumably the first step is always memorable; we were paying the duty on the estate of a testator who came from my own Merioneth and I can still remember the names of one or two of the shops in his list of debts. Could anything possibly be duller? Yet that survives when nearly everything else has vanished. What else do I remember? Very little except the spectacle of our one client who has since become famous, Ernest Dowson. I can still see him waiting in our little cubby-hole for an interview with the senior partner, of whom I think he was a distant cousin, looking a nervous wreck with fingers stained a deep yellow with tobacco. I meanwhile am casting covert glances at him and perhaps wondering about Cinara, while pretending to write "This Indenture Witnesseth" in my best copperplate with beautiful thick and thin down strokes and up strokes.

The pleasant part of the day came at one o'clock when we went out for a good long hour's lunch, sometimes to Crosby Hall, which has since been moved to Chelsea, sometimes further afield to St Mary Axe, where one gave a penny to Peter the waiter, even as Mr Guppy had given a penny to Polly the waitress at the Slap-Bang dining-house. Another penny went to the man who carved the joint. Thence to an underground café, I think in Great St Helens, which resounded as if with machine-gun fire, with the rattle of dominoes on marble-topped tables. There we played matador, the loser to pay the price of the coffee to a lady at the desk, a lady of a certain dusky charm known to us as the Ethiopian Beauty.

It seems hard to believe now that I spent the best part of three years in this monotony of office pottering. The Law Courts might almost as well have been a hundred miles away instead of in the Strand. Only one faint recollection comes back of being in court and hearing Sir Edward Clarke, polished and dignified beyond words, making some form of application, perhaps for a postponement of a case, to Mr Justice Grantham. It led to a mild argument in which the advocate made the Judge look a very inconsiderable personage.

I do not recollect a single action in which we were involved, and in fact most of our work was of a conveyancing nature and our litigation was not exciting. We acted for some form of Trade Union of Schoolteachers. It seemed to me that they were unduly sensitive about the dignity and the difficulty of their situation. They were then neither of quite fish nor quite fowl. They would write long letters to the effect that their position in the village was rapidly becoming untenable since someone had called them mildly abusive names. But in my youthful arrogance I was probably unjust to them. I was not positively unhappy. There was always golf at the week-ends, and with the torpor of the Long Vacation came the blessed counting of days till I drove up Middle Temple Lane to Euston on my way to

Wales. I don't know how much I had of a guilty feeling of wasting my time, but not so much as I ought.

Meanwhile, having been duly coached I passed my Solicitor's Final. Nevertheless I clearly knew nothing practical of one half of my business, so I was sent for a short while to some common law chambers, where I met one of the kindest and best of men, the late George Wallace, afterwards K.C. This was something of a revelation in point of interest and most reviving to the spirits, but as I was destined to return later to those chambers I will say no more of them now, save to give one example of Wallace's high-minded conscientiousness. He was for the Plaintiff in a certain action in which he obtained large damages for libel for a potted-meat manufacturer who had lost a case in the County Court over a defective pot. A young man in a newspaper, doubtless racking his brains—and I now feel very sorry for him—for a facetious note, had written that if some of the manufacturer's goods were sent out to South Africa we should be sure of giving the Boers "a nasty jar". After the case was over I expressed some admiration for the way in which the defendants' leader had conducted his case. Wallace thought that he had conducted it badly, but he said nothing and let me vapour on uncorrected. It would not have been fair to point out another counsel's mistakes to one who was going to be a solicitor and might employ members of the Bar. That he told me afterwards when I had decided not to be a solicitor. Could conscientiousness and, if it may be so termed, team spirit go further?

This pleasant interlude could not last long. A job had to be found, and once more there was somebody to be kind to me. My cousin Dick Atkin, afterwards Lord Atkin and then a junior with a flourishing practice, had a good friend and client, managing clerk to a big firm in Lincolns Inn Fields, whose office was close to that of Mr Tulkinghorn of *Bleak House*. They took me and even paid me £100 a year. To be paid a little money was an agreeable novelty and the

bread and butter that one earns oneself unquestionably tastes good, but its flavour is a little spoilt by a consciousness of complete unworthiness. To say that it was earned was an abuse of language. No one could have asked to be in a better office; everybody was friendly; everything was conducted with a pleasant decorum; there was plenty going on and much of it was, or at any rate ought to have been, interesting. One scene I remember that was of painful interest, the examination in bankruptcy of a solicitor who had crashed to ruin by a series of famous frauds and now came up from prison to be examined. He had been a great figure in the days of his prosperity and carried matters with a high hand, and the prospect of seeing him as a convict was rather an agonising one. One felt a natural curiosity and an equally natural inclination to look anywhere in the room but at him. I can see him very clearly now dressed once more in his old garb of respectability. Perhaps it was imagination that made it sit uneasily upon him; his black tail coat looked ill-fitting, as if he had already a little shrunk out of it and for some reason he had not, as I suppose, been allowed to shave and had at least a day's stubbly growth of beard. He carried it off on the whole with wonderful dignity and made but one slightly self-pitying remark. Otherwise if he looked uneasy himself, he put everyone else as far as possible at his ease. It was not hard to see how he had inspired confidence. But it was a little too like going to see a man hanged who comforts himself bravely, and I was very glad when it was over.

How long I was in that office I do not precisely remember, but it was a very short time and made no impression on anyone but myself. When a friend of mine, since a partner in the firm, discovered my name on an old list of salaries he did not believe in my existence there, until I solemnly confirmed it. I spared that kind firm the trouble of getting rid of me, since I decided that I could bear it no more and threw up the sponge.

So now I was to go to the Bar. I had made a bad and futile start; I must try to whip up my rather jaded enthusiasm for

the law and there loomed ahead of me three whole years of eating dinners and passing examinations before I could even pretend to be anything but a learner. Those three years had to be filled up and that meant finding a home as a pupil in various sets of Chambers and my father having to pay my masters for teaching me. How horribly well I remember a schoolmaster friend of mine turning suddenly on me on the links at Aberdovey and saying, "My goodness! You've been a pretty expensive young man to bring up." It was a salutary observation, but I don't know that it had any real effect, or at any rate no lasting one. If I ever thought of trying to write I certainly took no definite step towards doing so, and in more depressed moments felt like the draper's apprentice in *Kipps* who said, "We're in a blessed drainpipe and we've got to crawl along it till we die."

Meanwhile life in chambers was pleasant and interesting, and I think I tried reasonably hard, if not quite as hard as a man tries whose whole heart is in it. I was with Wallace again for a while, then in Chancery Chambers with Kenyon Parker, then back to the Temple with Cecil Walsh, later Sir Cecil and an Indian Judge. Finally, when at long last I had been called, the angelic Wallace asked me to come back and devil for him, though to apply that term to anything I could do to help him is, I am well aware, to flatter myself. All three sets of Chambers were very agreeable places and indeed, leaving on one side the question of having anything of one's own to do and of earning money, as a grown-up man ought to do, there seems to me no companionship more full of friendliness and interest than that of chambers. I suppose those who have very little to do must feel some natural envy of those who have much. They must reflect now and then that the lucky turn of Fortune's wheel might just as well have befallen them, but, if they do, they conceal it very well. Apart from my three Masters, each set of chambers had in it kindly and interesting people. The great man in Kenyon Parker's chambers (if I except the clerk, Mr Smith) was Methold, a charming old gentleman

with a large practice, vast erudition and great shrewdness. He had never taken silk, and indeed if he had to open his lips in court he was anything but impressive; but that appeared of little moment, since it was always said that all the Judges had at some time been his pupils and were inclined to favour his applications. Then there was P. M. Walters, once the most famous of football players, and, with his brother A. M., one of a pair of full-backs of whom the professionals had a well-grounded fear. Naturally he was a hero to me, for had he not played with and against W. N. Cobbold and Tinsley Lindley and the other great ones of Cambridge whom I had watched as a little boy on Parker's Piece? What is more, being suddenly bidden to play in a Wall Game at Eton I borrowed his football boots. It seemed almost a sacrilege but I dared it, and so the very last ball I ever kicked was with a boot that had once taken the field against "Proud Preston", Preston North End in its very greatest days.

P. M., by his own account "very slow and very inaccurate", was intensely industrious and intensely conscientious. By no means young and inclined to be rheumatic, he did really heroic work in the Inns of Court O.T.C. right through the first war. The military authorities rewarded him by making him an honorary lieutenant, and his Inn by making him a Bencher, to the general joy and approbation. That, however, was a good many years after I had left those chambers. He was the most delightful and friendly of men, with some oddly touching quality about him, and a gift for saying unexpected and disconcerting things. I once went to stay a night with him at his house at Worcester Park and when Mrs Walters opened the door to us he remarked, "This is my eighty pound house and this is my sixty pound wife—that is the amount of my wife's fortune." When work was slack I would creep stealthily upstairs to his room and, if I found him in a communicative mood, would try to lead him on to talk of his football days. This was not always easy; he had not as much as watched a University match for

years and professed to think very lightly of his youthful prowess. Now and then, however, one could hit on a successful opening so that a reminiscent gleam of battle came into his eye and he saw himself again sending the Preston forwards flying like so many ninepins. One of the few stories that could regularly be extracted from him was of the victory of the Corinthians over the Barbarians at their own Rugby. P. M. played full-back and a great shout of laughter arose when, under his own goal-posts with nobody near him, he made a mark, under the impression that this was the right and only thing to do. Then with one colossal punt he sent the ball over the Barbarians line.

Another in the chambers was Harold Cloughton Scott, who died young. Though in Chancery chambers he went on circuit, and during my time was junior to Ernest Wild (afterwards Recorder of the City of London) in the defence of William Gardiner in the Peasenhall murder trial. Twice was Gardiner tried for the murder of Rose Harsent, a frail village belle, and twice the jury disagreed. Murders being almost as interesting as football, this cast a glamour around Scott. Alas that he was rightly a paragon of discretion. One little admission he made, and that even now it would not be decent to repeat. Since those days, in fact only a year or two since, a kind lady took me in her car on a pilgrimage to Peasenhall, as pretty and engaging and un-murderous a village as one could wish to see, and I identified at least some of the crucial spots, such as the window in which poor Rose had put her light, as a signal to the unknown writer of a letter of assignation.

From Kenyon Parker I went back to the Temple to Cecil Walsh, or was the order reversed? I cannot now be positive. His chambers were in Essex Court and for a little while for some temporary reason were also in Paper Buildings, where was that great and formidable advocate Duke, afterwards Lord Merivale. I have never wavered in one opinion that rightly or wrongly I formed at the Bar, namely that if I had to face a cross-examiner I would rather face anyone

than Duke. With that really appalling seriousness, with the touch of West Country burr that still clung to his speech, with something of the puritan in his air and something scriptural in his choice of words, with his strength and squareness and solidity, he was terrifying. There were some, Rufus Isaacs for instance, more subtle and more brilliant, and others much louder and more tempestuous; again, there were even those who possessed greater range and variety, so that familiarity, which could never have bred contempt, might have made both his manner and his method less alarming. But to the juryman who only heard him once I cannot conceive anyone more tremendous whether in point of sledge-hammer blows or fervid eloquence. He did not appear to carry these alarming qualities into private life; I saw naturally but little of him, but he talked to me occasionally in a very friendly and un-Olympian way, and I remember the generosity with which he pointed out the skill of one or two of his adversaries, in particular Isaacs, as a lesson to the young.

For some two or three days I did see more of him, since he led Walsh in an entertaining case before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. This was an appeal from the Consistory Court, which had, not unnaturally as it seemed, condemned a clergyman on various charges of immorality, and, I think I have the phrase correctly, habitual and profane swearing. I had not heard the case in the Consistory Court, but the appeal did not seem a hopeful one, for the clergyman was unquestionably a very odd clergyman. There was about him a touch of the Reverend Bute Crawley, rector of Crawley-cum-Snailby, and he was more a country gentleman or a farmer than a parson. He was a huge old man, with enormous eyebrows that curled upwards at the ends so as to suggest horns and give him the aspect of a satyr. His parishioners had obviously been frightened of him, and no wonder. One little piece of the story related to a footpath across a meadow close to the church, over which he believed himself to have some right,

not to be lightly infringed. The evidence as I remember it was that he had rushed out of church after Sunday morning service and, still habited in his surplice, had stood on guard over the gate or stile leading to the debatable land, armed with a pitchfork. A crowd assembled, but they did not like the look of the pitchfork and the following conversation, stripped of superfluous adornment, was said to have taken place between the parties: "You're a fine parson to teach people to go to heaven." "Teach them to go to hell—that's good enough for them."

That was one sample of the language alleged, and the opposing side had had some sixty witnesses to swear to it in the court below, but they had been satisfied to call only a very few of them, deeming that part of the battle won. The more serious charge had been one of immorality, and on that there had been a lack of corroboration, since an important witness had vanished. The suggestion, implied if not proved, was that she had in some mysterious manner been spirited away. At any rate she had gone utterly. The Chancellor had been much shocked at the story, which was not an attractive one, and had found against our clergyman accordingly. He was, I gathered, a very proper and cloistered person and had been carried away by his feelings. Still there was the profane swearing which presented a very ugly obstacle.

The end of the appeal was an almost laughable victory for our side. The immorality was uncorroborated and strenuously denied and there was an end of that. The swearing was held to be most regrettable, as it obviously was, but the Court held that it had not been proved to be habitual. What must have been the feeling of the opposition who had left those fifty or so witnesses uncalled in the Consistory Court I do not know, but I should imagine they must have desired to kick themselves. At any rate we won, and our tremendous monument of a client, who had remained throughout as unwinking as one of the effigies in his church, was sent back in triumph to his parish. The learned law lords had

thought perhaps that the parishioners had put up with his unseemly language for a great many years and had only brought it up, in a manner that might almost be termed unsportsmanlike, as a reinforcement. The real charge had gone and what was a little swearing among friends?

In Duke's chambers was another distinguished West Countryman, Hawke, then a prosperous junior with much work on the Western Circuit, afterwards a Judge, with whom I later renewed a pleasant acquaintance at the Garrick Club. Walsh was on the Oxford Circuit and both from him and Hawke came occasional glimpses of criminal cases, which always had their theoretical attraction for me, though when I was called I never attempted, as I ought, to acquire any practical knowledge of them at Sessions. I still recall a long afternoon in the Inner Temple Library studying the not superficially engaging literature of criminal jurisprudence on behalf of another unfortunate parson who had misbehaved himself.

Once I was in that library I was hard to dislodge, not from any inherent industry but because when I had found, or thought I had found, what I had been sent to discover, there was an irresistible temptation to prolong my enquiries in another direction. The great Mr Adolphus, blessings on his name, had bequeathed to his Inn his unrivalled collections of old trials and broadsheets. There in a snug little kingdom up a winding iron staircase, where no one else was ever to be found, I used to pore over the great William Palmer of Rugeley and other such heroic figures. Today I am myself the possessor of the full report of his trial with many alluring illustrations, but Mr Adolphus's was still better and the pictures dealt more fully with Mr Palmer's private life. Now and again the outsides of the books offered hopes not fully realised by their perusal. There was one that I recall with a great thrill of memory, *Yantlett Creek*. I still think that in point of pure romance there never has been a more seductive title. It proved a disappointment, for there was not a trace of a murder in it; it dealt with some dreary

point of law, which I have wholly forgotten. However, in those enchanted shelves I made the acquaintance of one of the loves of my life, Elizabeth Canning, to whom I have ever been faithful. I had just met her and loved her at first sight in that admirable book *Paradoxes and Puzzles*, by John Paget, a contemporary and a sworn foe of Macaulay's. Now here was every word of that seductive trial. It is one of the crimes that I can never forgive the Germans that they bombed that little secret paradise and destroyed the priceless bequest of Mr Adolphus.

Walsh was a kindly and excellent master with a good practice, yet not so large but there was time for good talks and for tea at Groom's in Fleet Street. He was a golfer too, who had evolved a swing of a complexity such as I have never seen equalled, and we played together now and then at Raynes Park. The other occupant of the Chambers was Newton Crane, a charming American with the loveliest silver hair that ever was seen, who was in occasional demand as a witness as to American law. Odd things stick in the mind and I remember one little story he told me of his youth. He was, as I recollect it, going to be married and it was desired that he should insure his life. He himself having then little money to pay premiums, did not desire it and he took the simplest and most original method of avoiding it. Arriving for his medical examination he was suddenly inspired by the sight of the sky-scraping building before him. He rushed at full speed up innumerable flights of stairs and then, having partially recovered his breath, presented himself before the Doctors who promptly rejected him.

During these three long years I was steadily eating my way through my dinners at the Inner Temple. About that ceremony I had some vaguely romantic feelings founded on the account in *Pendennis*, but it hardly came up to expectations. The years wore themselves away, I was called and then, as I said earlier, Wallace asked me to come back to him and there I settled down in 3 Plowden Buildings, another victim since then to German bombs. Obviously it

was a comfort to be able to hold a brief if anyone would give you one, but obviously also, at any rate in my case, it was a very alarming comfort. On the very few occasions I had one of my own I remember much more clearly, than the modified thrill of getting it, the intense relief of getting it over. Yet the most agonising moment I ever endured came from somebody else's brief. I had wandered one day into the Court of Appeal and had not heard more than three minutes of the argument nor gleaned anything as to what it was about, when a friend, the junior on one side, asked me to hold his brief for a little while since he had to be elsewhere. That was all very well, as long as the leader was there, but then he too departed just as Montague Lush on the other side began to speak. He repeatedly defied his learned friend to contradict this, that or the other statement, and I cannot even now acquit him of knowing perfectly well that his learned friend was ignorant of the entire subject. The solicitor was growing restless under these challenges and wanted me to pick up the gauntlet, which I was palpably incapable of doing, having not even the most elementary knowledge of the facts. So I could only sit still, feeling exquisitely miserable and thinking, as I still think, that Lush's behaviour was unsportsmanlike. I hope the Court decided against him, but everything has vanished save those minutes, which felt like hours, of fury and humiliation.

I very seldom held a brief for Wallace and certainly not in any such agonising or dramatic manner. His cases in fact were not dramatic, being as a rule of an eminently solid character. His leader was often J. A. Hamilton, afterwards Lord Sumner, who impressed me by sheer force of intellect more than anyone else I ever heard at the Bar. We did not deal in *causes célèbres* in 3 Plowden Buildings. Singularly enough among the very few cases I ever had of my own was one which was for the moment celebrated, but my brief was only a watching one. This was at the West London Magistrate's Court and afterwards at the Old Bailey. It was called the Kennel Maid Case and the prisoner had sent herself

presents purporting to come from the great Mr Pierpont Morgan. He was supposed to recommend investments to her, and by this pretence she extracted from an unfortunate lady all the money she had in the world, some thousands of pounds. Mr Morgan said that he had never heard of the kennel maid and I, to my profound satisfaction, was not called on to say a word. I have ungratefully forgotten how that brief came my way.

Two or three trusting friends sent me briefs for golf's sake and so did my kind family solicitors who were clients of Wallace's, briefs concerned, as far as I remember, with dock gates and railway waggons. One of these I recall for a particular reason. Years afterwards, when I had long since sold my wig, I met my lay client who remembered, so he declared, my skilful and destructive cross-examination of the other side. This was an oddly deceptive trick of memory because I, seeing that the case was winning itself, had with a fine self-restraint omitted to cross-examine at all. However, I left him under that too flattering impression. I did join a circuit but made only my one necessary appearance there; I ought to have joined some form of Sessions and didn't. If I had been in more "criminal" chambers I should have had to do these things and might have liked them; but in the first place a theoretical taste for murder does not make the criminal lawyer, even as a love of tin soldiers does not make the military man; in the second it was now too late, I was too far sunk in despondent futility. The lucky chance of earning a little money by writing came to me and I embraced it passionately. The only sad thing about leaving the Temple was the necessity of telling Wallace of my intention. He had done so much for me, that I felt it to be a kind of treachery to him. He did not think that, I am sure, but he did feel it a treachery to the law that he loved so much.

Law was to him as a lovely game of pretending is to a small boy. I am convinced that when he had his first brief he had seen himself as Erskine or Cockburn and had trodden

the County Court floor as one treading on air. Now that he had plenty of briefs he had never wholly ceased to dramatise himself. If he was not too busy he would linger affectionately over a simple statement of claim, such as he could have dashed off in no time, looking up all sorts of authorities with which he was perfectly familiar. This was partly for the benefit of his pupils, for he was as conscientious a teacher as he was an admirable one, but also for his own enjoyment. He would read an old report as another man would read an old and much loved novel. And he knew his reports as a shepherd knows his sheep. If, he would say, you looked at Queen's Bench Reports for such and such a year, somewhere about page 382, you would find something to the purpose, and he was seldom more than a page or two out of his reckoning. Likewise he loved the little traditional phrases or formalities of his profession. To say, for instance, "As Your Lordship pleases" was a definite satisfaction to him. He once wrote to congratulate a member of his circuit on being made a Judge. He knew him hardly if at all, but it was the proper ceremony to be observed, and when the new Judge wrote back to him very politely as "Dear Mr Wallace" he was pained and shocked. One member of the Bar must address another simply by his surname. This was not far from being an insult.

I felt rather a beast when I walked out of Middle Temple Lane on to the Embankment for the last time, but I cannot deny that I was a happy beast. At last I was going to do something which I thought I might do tolerably well, something real for which I was going to be paid money. In the law my preoccupation had been to do what other people thought was not the wrong thing; now I was going to do what I thought the right thing. The difference is immense as I was to discover some ten years later when I said a far more grateful farewell to the British Army. One can never be any good at a job as long as one is for ever thinking about keeping to the rules. I often went back to chambers to see my friends and also to have sly peeps at dear Mr Adolphus's

peerless collection of broadsheets, but I hardly ever went inside the Law Courts.

One rather shattering experience of the law belonged to this period, though whether it was a little before or after I had sold my wig I am not certain. This was my appearance as a witness in the Chancery Division, before Mr Justice Kekewich. It was in a copyright squabble between two golfing books of reference, to one of which I had contributed. There were eminent Counsel on both sides. For us, the Plaintiffs, Mr Paul Ogden Lawrence, K.C., and Mr Frank Russell, afterwards Lord Russell of Killowen, whom I came to know well at the Garrick; for the defendants Mr (afterwards Lord Justice) Scrutton, K.C., and Mr F. H. (now Lord) Maugham. It is something to have been cross-examined by a future Lord Chancellor and the ordeal was not really a severe one, since I had said nothing of the least importance and was not worth shaking. But before my examination in chief had begun, I had been sufficiently shaken by being sworn, rather like Mr Winkle, in the wrong name. I did not, as he did, go home and bury my head in the sofa cushions and groan dismally, but it was a bad start. For that matter the end of the case was worse; we won but it was a wholly Pyrrhic victory.

And now after I had begun this chapter, the last, lightest bond between the law and me has been snapped. Since I have left Kent my name has been removed from the Commission, as is kindly stated, at my own request. It is sixty years since I began with Gaius and Justinian and now it is all over. I still like to talk a little mild law if I get the chance. At my club are many distinguished members of the Bar, and if I can induce them to tell me about their cases I do not hesitate to ask indiscreet questions. It is still with a perceptible thrill that I see myself described in documents as "Esquire, Barrister-at-Law".

WRITING ABOUT GAMES

IN September 1907 I came home from staying with my wife's family in Ireland and found a letter from *The Evening Standard* asking me to write the weekly golfing article called "Tee Shots" in place of Arthur Croome. He had gone to *The Morning Post* and had kindly recommended me as his successor. The remuneration was, I think, to be thirty shillings a week. This was the most exhilarating news amid the encircling gloom of the law, and I wrote my first article about Lord Dunraven's engaging little course at Adare, on which I had lately played. It had a ruined castle and an abbey as possibly attainable hazards, and I made the obvious quotation from Sir Lucius O'Trigger as to there being very snug lying in the Abbey. *Country Life* soon followed, with *The Times* a month or so after it, and likewise for a short while the *Sunday Times*. Here was richness indeed, if on a very modest scale, and sometime in 1908 I sold my wig and walked out of the Temple a free man.

That was forty-seven years ago and I am glad to say I am still writing my weekly article for *Country Life*. Indeed, except for wars and one occasion when a dilatory ship betrayed me, I have done so from that day to this. From *The Times*, as far as golf is concerned, I retired in May of 1953. How long I had been called "Golf Correspondent" I do not exactly know, but I had certainly reported the Open Championship at Prestwick for them in 1908, when I had seen, with eyes nearly starting out of my head, the great Braid play glancing shots off the black sleepers of the Cardinal bunker into the waters of the Pow Burn. Apart from reporting I began in a year or two to write a golfing article in Saturday's *Times*. I tried to do so at first at irregular intervals because Sir Bruce Richmond said he did not want

it to look as if it were pumped up, but the articles soon appeared regularly, and except during the first war did so until the time of the second war. After that newspapers shrank and there was no more room for such extensive frivolities. When I now look at some of the reports I wrote within the last few years and compare them with those written between wars I feel like the great Lord Clive and "stand astonished at my own moderation". Reports to the extent of whole columns used once to pour from my pen. I came to prefer something shorter, nor was this, I think pure laziness. At any rate when I read some of my friends and colleagues today and see them getting near the foot of the page I shy perceptibly. I doubt if there is any contest at any game or sport that cannot be well and truly described in something under a column.

Which is the more strenuous occupation, the writing of a general article or the reporting of a particular match? The first demands one essential, namely a subject, and though other people think there can never be any dearth of subjects they have not got to put salt on their tails. "You might write about putting" they remark in a burst of helpful inspiration and are surprised and even a little hurt that their suggestion is not received with more obvious gratitude. I suppose one gets a sort of second wind in this search for golfing topics; indeed I think that I must have got at least a third one by this time. The sterilising fear that one has said it all before must be as far as possible dismissed. Vanity hints that other people remember what one has written, but truth compels the admission that they seldom do. The general article, moreover, is written at leisure, in solitude and an arm-chair, and a report amid the clatter of typewriters or, worst of all in these hurried days, of telephonists. I used arrogantly to believe myself proof against noise and have written with almost complete concentration in the big room at St Andrews, chock-full of people all talking at once. But I admit that the sound of someone else describing, on the telephone, a match that one is trying to describe on

paper oneself, has a paralysing effect on what I am pleased to call my mind. His phrases may be of the very flattest and most banal, and yet it is hard not to incorporate them and then suffer tortures at once of conscience and disgust.

Once upon a time my reports were all sent off from the Post Office, and the unfortunate telegraphists had to wrestle as best they could with the spidery contortions of my handwriting on a topic with which they were probably ill-acquainted. I have heard terrific stories from friends in the Sporting Room in *The Times* of maddening researches to identify some obscure quotation of mine, which had become hopelessly mangled in transmission. I have no doubt I was a sore trial to them and they were, at least ostensibly, most forgiving. Nobody ever suffered from me so acutely as a French postmaster at Le Touquet before the first war. He first went through my manuscript looping all my l's and t's, which he found quite illegible, and then asked in utter despair, "What is zis 'ole?" I never saw the result in *The Times*, and indeed do not know if there was any.

Today, owing to the odious earliness of going to press, everything must be telephoned, but you cannot teach a stupid, obstinate, old dog new tricks. I was always provided with a helper to do this detestable part of the job for me. One old friend in particular, a very good golfer, Charles Macfarlane, was constantly my prop and stay. Under his care the most recondite references from *Pickwick* became foolproof, and I am for ever grateful to him.

Reporting could be hard work, especially if one was playing too. In 1921, at Hoylake, I reached the semi-final of the Amateur Championship and reported it for *The Times* and likewise for an American agency. To make the task severer it so happened that I came at the end of the draw, so that I was playing on some days till late in the evening. I had to emulate Mr Jingle when he wrote his poem on the revolution of July. "Fired a musket—fired with an idea—rushed into wine shop—wrote it down—back again—whiz bang." To be sure I had two kind friends from *The Times*,

Major Vincent and Sir Guy Campbell to give me an ever helpful hand; but even so it really was quite a day. Yet I did not get tired. One does not as long as one is winning. It is the getting beaten that does it. In later years broadcasting was sometimes added to these labours, but I think I had ceased to play and certainly to win by that time.

I hated giving up the daily reporting but time is a great reconciler and now after a day's watching, rather too static watching, I am sorry to say that a pleasing sensation of idleness creeps over me. I observe my colleagues retiring with obvious reluctance to the task of composition while I placidly absorb a pink gin or, haply at Rye in buttery repose, a plate of crumpets in front of the Dormy House fire. There is this to be said too that a Golf Correspondent's life has grown much more arduous than it used to be and much too full of golf. When I began, the events that must be seen were comparatively few, the two Championships, the *News of the World* tournament, the University Match, the St George's Cup at Sandwich perhaps; the St Andrews Autumn Medal, the Ladies' Championship if the reporter felt sufficiently gallant, and that was really all. There was no President's Putter, no Halford Hewitt and no Ryder Cup or Walker Cup, and the International Match (between England and Scotland only) was not a separate festival but preliminary to the Amateur Championship. Above all there was no long-drawn-out and, to my mind, rather dreary series of professional tournaments all decided by 72 holes of score play, often on courses of no vast interest. Today those who thoroughly and conscientiously report golf sit down, as soon as they get some free time in the late autumn, and plan the next year's campaign, beginning in spring and lasting with little respite right through the summer, till the last putt is holed in the Worplesdon Foursomes in October. They book their rooms, they almost look up their trains, and they are sometimes away from their homes for three weeks at a time. I am not saying that I endured all that, because I did not, but I ought to have, and but for a certain gift of passive

resistance should have done so. What Allan Robertson called "sic a bellyful o' gowf" can produce indigestion.

No doubt reporters of other games may also suffer from a surfeit, but their case is in one important respect quite different. Their game is brought to them; it unrolls itself like a piece of tapestry before their eyes while they sit still all day long in at any rate a measure of comfort. They need not swathe themselves in waterproof coverings and burrow their way into the storm, holding a variegated umbrella in the manner of a fixed bayonet. Most important of all perhaps, they need not be in two, to say nothing of half a dozen places at once, and so have to rely for the truth on constitutionally mendacious spectators. They exchange information with one another, and now that I am myself too stationary I bear grateful witness to the unwearying kindness of more mobile colleagues, who answer all my questions. But it is difficult to see anything with real vividness through any eyes but one's own, or to be vicariously thrilled. Wherefore if I were ever to advise someone commencing golf reporting, I should tell him to make up his mind which is the best match and resolutely stick to it. If it is not as interesting as he had hoped, it is his business to make it interesting. He will have seen it and that is more than half the battle.

I remember two occasions on which those mighty heroes, Wethered and Tolley, were to meet. With what a zest were all reporting pencils sharpened, and then behold it was no match at all; each won once by the length of the street. Even so, to have one Titan annihilating another is more dramatic than two pigmies going to the 19th hole. As that young reporter must try to make the match entertaining even if it is not, so it is his duty to find a turning-point. Nearly every match has one; it may come early or late, but come it will some time, and if it does not, why then the reporter must do the best he can without it and invent one.

A great deal naturally depends on how much space the writer has at his disposal, and if I venture to describe my own technique for what it is worth, I must premise that I

had plenty of room. In a general way I started out reasonably early walking with several couples, sometimes with only one of overwhelming interest. After lunch I yielded to what I have described as my particular form of idleness and got a good big bit done. For the rest of the day I stayed near home to see the finishes and then wrote my second and final instalment. If one proceeds on this plan one begins much as did an old-fashioned fairy story with "Once upon a time", that is to say, one briefly describes the weather and the wind and so comes to the matches more or less in chronological order. It is, I suppose, an amateur's way, but I was entirely devoted to it. The professional, on the other hand, waits in case some tremendous event happens at the end of the day. If it does, he begins by saying how through holing an eight-foot putt in the dusk on the home green the twenty-four-year-old curly-headed son of a Lieutenant-Colonel did—well, whatever he did. This may be the more conscientious and more sensational method, but I rather think it was I who towards the end of the day first became a free man consuming pink gin.

A scoring competition demands rather different treatment from match play. The reporter can hardly devote so much attention to a single couple as he can to a single paramount match. It is most rewarding and full of excitement to go round with the expected winner of the Open Championship during his last round, but he may not win after all, and meanwhile one has missed so much. I believe the apparently supine method of staying near the finish, watching the last putts and seeing the scores go up on the board, will produce a more dramatic and comprehensive description than will the most virtuous and energetic methods. The experienced watcher probably develops to some extent a sixth sense which takes him to the right green at the critical moment, but he needs luck as well and without it may be horribly sold. I have never believed in besieging the player with questions after his round. I would much rather trust as far as possible to my own impressions, though nowadays I have

had slightly to modify this austere doctrine. There is of course one rule which always holds good in match play, namely to ask the winner and not the loser. It will be hard to arrest the flow of his eloquence but at least he will not hate one. Once having lost at the 24th hole I was asked if I represented the Banking and Insurance Golf Club; so I know.

If I imagine myself again advising my beginner, I should tell him to add on a foot or so to his estimate of any short putt missed. Putts are much longer than they look to an onlooker standing some distance away. Moreover, that would be only one part of the sermon I should try to preach to him on the subject of charity. It is not a crime to play a bad shot and the player may yet be a good husband and father and a true Christian gentleman. A mistake in judgment is more criminal, but even that should be not too fiercely abused. Some allowance must be made for the stress and strain under which the player is suffering, and for that reason I prefer if possible to read an account of any game written by someone who has himself been out there in the middle and knows what it feels like. I always remember what Mr R. H. Macaulay, a very great athlete in his day, once said to me about the third ball of Cobden's over which some people alleged had been a half-volley, "After all it was a great thing to be able to bowl a straight ball at such a moment."

All of us who report golf have a catch phrase which we often repeat to one another: "He had only." An old friend in the same trade, now dead, had a habit of writing a sentence like this, "He had only to lay a full brasseley shot on the green and the match would be his, but instead up went his head", and so on to the final catastrophe. To lay a brasseley shot on the green, at all square and one to play, is not so simple as it sounds. I remember a very fat man at an Open Championship who told me that one of our heroes had only to do a 69 in the last round to tie with Sarazen. "Yes, only," I replied in my best attempt at a sarcastic tone. "What, don't

you think he'll do it?" he asked in dismay. That fat man would have made a great reporter.

I have already made my gentle complaint on behalf of the golf reporter that unlike his colleagues at other games he must be in two places at once, and sometimes the more energetic he is, the more luck seems against him. Even though buoyed up by a belief in one's own powers of invention, one can receive rude shocks and I still recall with horror the year 1922, in which Roger Wethered tied with Jock Hutchison for the Championship. I was out at the far end of the course at St Andrews, a cruel course with few short cuts, virtuously pursuing Hutchison, when there came a rumour that another American, Kerrigan, had done such a score as must, humanly speaking, make him a winner. I had never seen Kerrigan play a shot; I had meant to watch him and put it off and now it was too late. To watch a Championship for three long days and then barely to know the winner by sight would be a truly shameful thing. Fortunately rumour, as so often, lied, and Kerrigan had not won; but he was only two strokes behind the winner, an unpleasantly close-run thing. As it was I must honestly admit that I did not see Roger play a single stroke during all that last historic day. He had always been in one place when I had to be in another. I could invent him, but if he had actually won instead of tying I could never have forgiven myself for not being there to shout. Thank heaven a golfing reporter is not like the man who sits in a press box and must maintain an impartial silence; there never would have been so loud a shout as that!

The most maddening of players, from a reporter's point of view, are those who upset all calculations on the qualifying days of the Open Championship. At the very last moment one of them comes in with an unexpectedly good score, the guillotine descends and perhaps half a dozen luckless heads, previously deemed safe, roll simultaneously into the basket of the unqualified. It happened once at Troon that I had described how two mighty men from

America, Sarazen and Barnes, had escaped with the skin of their teeth, and I had then departed for home twenty miles away. In fact both had been eliminated at the last moment and my own head might have rolled in the basket; but fortunately there was always some trusty ally in the Sporting Room at *The Times* to pull one through. Sometimes I relied on that ally too grossly but never did he betray my trust. Once I was strolling past the home green at St Andrews in dress clothes, "my task accomplished and the long day done" when I was startled by a roar of cheering. An inconsiderate person called Willie Smith of Mexico had just equalled the record of the course. After a moment's hesitation I took the high line and went on to my dinner; the trusty ally put things right again. I have known other people on other papers less fortunate. However I must not, like Lord Byron, boast of a turpitude that was not really mine; I was on the whole a very conscientious reporter; but there were limits.

A day's watching can be Elysium on earth. <http://darwin-online.org.uk/> There is the labour of writing yet to come, but that is still afar off as one walks out on to the springy turf on a sunny, breezy morning, with the flags standing menacingly straight out from their sticks, portending lovely low shots hit into the wind's eye and grief for the poor slicer. How brisk and heartless are our sensations who have not got to play! How unpleasant in their insides must they be feeling who have got to face it! How beautifully fast the greens look and how the ball will slip and slide out of holing! We will walk out a few holes and then rest for a while on a bank out of the wind by the green of a short hole, by the Maiden perhaps at Sandwich or The Pulpit at Rye, or that wonderful gathering place of the holes, the 13th at Muirfield. We are not like too laborious tourists with a Baedeker, we make no cut-and-dried plan, but go where rumour leads us. Young, unknown A., we hear, is two up on the illustrious B. and making him tremble in his shoes. We like B. and do not want to see him beaten, but to see him hunted till he nearly drops would be highly agreeable and we rush away full of hope. Better still,

perhaps if B., having had a long lead, has now let nearly all the holes slip away "like snow off a dyke". These struggles for life do undeniably give a malicious pleasure.

Of course we must not care too much or the agony is intolerable. There is the Oxford and Cambridge match for instance. When Raymond Oppenheimer and I say "Good morning" to one another before the foursomes begin, with a jocose taking off of hats, life is not so bad, but once play begins, hatred and misery supervene. I positively dislike having to wish an amiable young gentleman from Oxford to miss a short putt, especially with his mother looking prayerfully on, but duty is duty. Once the enemy has won, the heart feels comparatively as light as a feather; more or less sincere congratulations spring to the lips; it is the seeing him do it by slow degrees that is the devil.

At least we who report golf have one advantage over all the other writers. We do our work in incomparably more interesting places. A cricket ground can be on a sunshiny day what the Rev. T. E. Brown might regrettably have called "a lovesome thing, God wot!" Canterbury or Worcester are prettier than Bramall Lane, though that has doubtless a darkling glamour of its own. Still cricket grounds are, when all is said, flat expanses of turf; so are football grounds, so are lawn tennis courts, whereas every golf course has an undulating beauty of its own which varies with every hole. And then there are such noble views to be had from so many of them. Think of the view from the Maiden, where we halted for a while on our hypothetical walk, looking over Pegwell Bay to the white cliffs beyond, with the larks singing their souls out. Think of that from the top of Gullane Hill, with the gulls calling and the Forth Bridge black in the distance. When I said this once before, I received a friendly letter from a writer who is either a renegade Scotsman or a very open-minded one, telling me that there was a far better view over downs and sea from the course at Seaford. It may well be so, but as an old great-uncle of mine used to say, "I can judge of a book without having

read it, I should hope". So with views; I shall stick to Gullane Hill.

I have at odd times and very amateurishly reported pastimes other than golf. There were two occasions at least on which there must have been a great shortage of manpower before one so crude could be employed on the Grand National and on one of the fights of the illustrious Jimmy Wilde. I knew plenty about Tom Cribb and the Game Chicken and the Gaslight Man but nothing of the science of boxing. Once or twice I reported Rugby matches, and here again my technical ignorance of what goes on in the heart of the scrummage is profound, though my enthusiasm is great. Once I think my patriotic frenzy got into my ink, making some amends for ignorance, and that was when Wales beat the All Blacks at Cardiff in the rubber match, the greatest contest at any game that I can ever hope to see.

For some years I wrote the account of the University Sports for *The Times*, but was relieved of my office, (not so much, I flatter myself, on the grounds of sheer incompetence as of too gross a partiality. There was one brief innings of W. G.'s (lbw b J. C. Shaw o) of which he wrote that for once he thought the umpire had been right, but I think on this occasion the Sporting Editor was right, but at the time the continued triumphs of the Rhodes Scholars at Oxford with their hammers and their weights had been hard to bear, and it was fun to see them rolled in the dust at last. I can still read with a quickening of the pulse my account of Atkinson lumbering away from the famous Taber in the half-mile. It was not so bad.

The football at Eton on St Andrew's Day I could and did accomplish for untold years with some kindly hints from the local experts. Even there offence was given in one year. The writer was thought, I cannot think why, to have shown a bias against the Oppidans. It is always a little hard to guess what people, who know nothing whatever about an occasion, will deem its interesting feature. On one St Andrew's Day I met a very young Old Etonian who had been sent down

to report the day's doings for a well-known newspaper and was anxious for some hints. In the final of the Lower Boy House Cup Miss Gladys Cooper's son was playing, with his mother looking on, and, what was more, he scored a rouge. We concluded that here was the perfect headline for the article. That was in the days before all headlines contained either or both of the convenient words "bid" and "probe". Still we thought it could be made to fit somehow and would enhance the writer's reputation. When I looked eagerly at the paper next morning it was not there. The account was capital but the headline (from the Wall Game) was "Fifteen Stone Viscount". I had never even thought of him.

Chapter Fourteen

ABERDOVEY AND BRYNTEGWEL

I FIND I must now go back for a little while to Merioneth. Pantlludw had been for the long summer holiday, but there was a short winter one at Aberdovey. I first stayed with the two Allcock brothers, A. E. and C. H. at Balkan Hill in 1899. They soon moved a little lower down the hill to Bryntegwel and there, except in the first war years, I went, I think, every winter till 1942. C. H. was a man of almost alarmingly accurate habits and the 28th of December was nearly always the date. It was one to be marked with a white stone.

In early days we all went by train, some from Euston and some from Paddington, with a change at Shrewsbury where we met A. E. and C. H. and behaved in a youthful and hearty manner, almost with what Mr Jeeves so much disapproved of, the yuletide spirit. I have already told of the delights of that journey and its only distinguishing feature in winter was the annual argument as to where exactly after Talerddig came the natural arch in the rock. It was a futile contest because C. H. was always sure he was right and we were all wrong, and in any case it was too dark to see the arch. However it was in the "old grouse in the gun-room" nature of this visit that the argument persisted.

As the years went on and the visitors possessed cars, most of us went by road. I stuck to the train for some years on purely sentimental and traditional grounds: then at last I accepted the kind invitation of an old friend, the late Clement Adie, a member of perhaps the most famous of Cambridge eights and an Eton master, to stay a night with him and make the journey in his car. That introduced me to the Cotswolds, to the glass of the genuine stunning ale at Broadway, to the lunch on a lovely Common which is



B.D. at Aberdovey

either Bringstye or Bromyard Common (I am sure to be wrong whichever I say) and to all the joys of a road that one came to know better and better. It must be made in the company of one who has the same kind of taste for useless but attractive pieces of knowledge, such as the name of the village which has a tree sprouting with little flags, and the precise neighbourhood of the New Inns (there were at least four of them) or the Aleppo Merchant. Every time I learnt some fresh and fascinating fact such as the turning to Daylesford, the home of Warren Hastings, or the exact spot where was a glimpse of Stokesay Castle. I am proud to say I discovered Drake's Broughton, but Adie could always beat me over Lidbury North. What bores we must have been! But as we only bored each other there was really no harm done.

For that matter I sometimes impiously wonder whether we were all bores at Bryntegwel. If so, then I am sure I was one of the worst, for I loved everyone there and every minute of my time. Perhaps if some stranger had been suddenly picked up by a magician and plumped down in the midst of us, he might have found the savour of the jokes a little esoteric, the tone of the conversation a little hard to catch. There are undeniably people who are afraid of schoolmasters. I believe I was the only one of the many who had stayed under that hospitable roof who was not and had never been a schoolmaster. Some of them had been eminent in the profession such as Burge, headmaster of Winchester and afterwards a Bishop, and Edward Lyttelton of Eton, though I never had the good fortune to be there with him. A. E. Allcock had himself been headmaster of Highgate; there were headmasters of private schools, such as Percy Christopherson; in fact there were pedagogues of almost every known variety. They had this in common, that they all played golf rather worse than I did and bridge rather better than I did; they all had a great affection for C. H. and for Aberdovey and a temperate liking for port wine. My tutor, by the way, though he had been invited, never came, and I

believe he was wise. A certain impatience of disposition would have been too much for him. He would have been bored.

Of that cheerful band that used to fill Bryntegwel every winter holidays, and some of them at Easter as well, there are now too few left. I think the two Seniors must be two illustrious persons, a dry-bob and a wet-bob, who came as masters to Eton during my last year as a boy: C. M. Wells and E. L. Churchill. T. F. Cattley is still at Eton. F. W. Dobbs cultivates his garden at Wentworth and there are doubtless one or two more, but we are a sadly diminished body. C. H. did not towards the end recruit his forces from the aspiring youth of forty or fifty; he stuck to the old ways, so that we died off gradually.

I suppose, though it seems almost incredible, that when I first went to stay with him he was himself only in the early or middle forties. He was immensely strong and quite untiring. One of my clearest visions of him is of his taking us all a walk on Sunday afternoon over the hills towards the Happy Valley and trying to walk us off our legs. He wears a black Sunday coat with its tails flying in the wind and on his head a minute cricket cap, either the blue and yellow of the Quidnuncs or the green with a Stafford knot for his native Staffordshire. We had all to go that walk even as the rest of our exercise on week-days was more or less compulsory. Breakfast at 8.45 and a quarter of an hour's walk down to the links. One round and then lunch, a cold and spartan meal cheered by Benedictine, and out again by one o'clock or soon after. We were then mobilised for a nine-hole foursome, which it was sometimes possible to escape on the plea of fatigue and of the long, steep uphill walk home again. As soon as we had had tea we were paraded, either for bridge or billiards, and it was in vain to say that one would be glad to sit out and read a book or write a letter. Discipline must be maintained; one must cut in or cut out. One was not safe even in the billiard-room. If no click of the balls was heard there was an instant visit of inspection.

Only at seven was there a short respite while we changed our clothes. As long as we did not dress, any garb was forgiven us. Another old friend, with whom I have often stayed, laid down a rule which sounds like one of the maxims of equity, "Once a flannel shirt, always a flannel shirt". C. H. would have approved of it highly.

Dinner was a good and leisurely meal. Nobody must smoke, and that rightly enough for the wine was good, until the cigarettes were officially sent round. When the port had begun to circulate, Marshall, the old Scots soldier servant, said to C. H. in a confidential undertone, "Coffee in about twenty minutes, sir", and in exactly twenty minutes we heard the coffee being carried into the next room. Then it was bridge or billiards again and about midnight we retired, not unthankfully, to bed. On Sunday we played billiards but not bridge; otherwise I can think of no exception to this agreeable and strenuous monotony.

Gradually with the years there came a certain relaxation; the bridge between tea and dinner was the first to go and so did the nine-hole foursome. Breakfast became a good deal later. C. H. himself hurt his arm and could not play golf and this produced a general slackening of discipline. Age and aches and pains told their tale. Once having arrived in the train and walked into a room full of people, I asked breezily, "Who's going to play with me tomorrow morning?" "We none of us play golf" was the chilling answer. The last rubber was not begun if there seemed any danger of its lasting into the next morning. One dreadful sign of advancing years was to be noted on New Year's Eve. Once upon a time we had always seen the New Year in, and had even been rather amused than otherwise by the small band of caddies that shouted through the keyhole "Happy New Year, Mr Allcock", and so on down the entire house-party to receive "pence in their unwashed palms". The youth of Aberdovey had divided into several freebooting bands and we could hear them rousing the burgesses in every direction. Now there went forth a decree that the gate of the drive

should be bolted and barred. It was comforting not to be disturbed, but some of the spring had gone out of life; the writing was on the wall.

It is difficult to remember what we talked about at dinner. It was not golf to any great extent, since we had each had our little say about our games at tea-time. Cricket was a favourite topic; C. H. had a precise memory by which to settle arguments (to say nothing of the volumes of Wisden in the next room) and a fund of amusing cricketing stories, which he knew that we knew and we knew that he knew that we knew, and were all the better for that. It is often written of someone by way of high praise that he never told the same story twice. In a company of old friends there is much more to be said for the man who tells the same story many times, waiting at the appointed places for the laughter, and expecting to be prompted if he threatens to leave out a minor but cherished incident. I am writing this page at the time of Test Matches in Australia and have been reflecting how once upon a time volunteers would have been called for, and never in vain, to plunge down the hill in the darkness to get the evening paper which had come in by the mail. That was a long time ago; since then we had all grown older and might have jibbed; the wireless had come to spoil us.

Wine was a regular topic since we had amongst us several men learned in vintages. Apples provided another, though that generally ended in a monologue by C. H., whose knowledge it was rather dangerous to provoke. a third was that of stocks and shares. Schoolmasters are sometimes thought by the worldly-wise to be as children in these matters, but my experience is that they bend their intellects to them with considerable success. Whatever the subject, C. H. was prepared if necessary to reinforce his views from the books of reference which he loved. It will be remembered how during the first world war a rumour spread like wild-fire across the country that Russian soldiers were coming to England from Archangel. It was very generally believed, even to the now on their boots. C. H. alone found in a recondite book

of reference that there was only a single line railway of goodness knows how many miles to Archangel and therefore the Russian soldiers were absurd. Perhaps nobody else in the world would have thought of that way of demonstrating the fact. I was not at Aberdovey at the time, having to be elsewhere, but I heard of it as soon as war was over as a characteristic triumph.

Books we seldom discussed, though the house was full of them, and of every single one of them C. H. knew the precise place in the shelf, and the name of the unprincipled scoundrel who had not replaced it there. I think the schoolmasters generally gave their powerful minds a little rest at Bryntegwel by reading old books, and I had several competitors for the Sherlock Holmes volumes. What with opening and decanting bottles and generally looking after his guests, C. H. had little time for reading when we were there, but when we had gone he shut himself up in a little prophet's chamber upstairs and read and read the Elizabethan dramatists as if his heart would break. Whether he did it from a stern sense of duty or because he enjoyed them I am unable to state. He was in some odd ways the most unexpected of men. By nature a mathematician—he had been a ninth wrangler and a Fellow of his College—he suddenly told us one day that he had when at Emmanuel won a prize for Latin verse. I can only think that the fitting of the words into the pattern of a hexameter must have appealed to the mathematical tidiness of his mind.

It did not, as far as I am any judge, make him a good bridge player, but he loved his rubber and the occasional want of a partner, when the house was not so full, led to an event which set all Aberdovey talking. Mrs P. was asked to dinner to play bridge. Bryntegwel had so long been regarded by the Aberdovey ladies as a kind of monastery perched impregnable on a Thibetan mountain, that the entry of one of their number into that fortress provoked a rather jealous mirth. Later on the rule was still further relaxed, and I have even dined there in ladies' company when there

was no pretence of bridge, nothing but pure gallantry. One of his rules, that of never going into anybody else's house, I think C. H. steadfastly maintained, but otherwise there was what Sir Leicester Dedlock would have called the obliteration of landmarks and the opening of floodgates. He was firm in his refusal to have a car, because he had once had an attack of cramp in one. So he climbed up and down his steep hill as long as he could and was finally marooned on the top of it. He died in 1947 at the age of ninety-two, having been devotedly looked after by Becca and Mary, once the little maids at whom Mrs Marshall used to scream in the back regions. His cellar lasted his time.

There is yet another Aberdovey to which a brief tribute must be paid, the Aberdovey of summer holidays when our children were growing up. We must have gone there several summers, probably at intervals, since I remember them there quite small, and also large enough to drive the car. The going to Aberdovey was, as I have pointed out, always in the nature of a ritual and this journey had a rite all its own. The car was loaded over night with luggage everywhere and bags of golf clubs strapped to the running boards. It started at peep of day with three children and Johnny the faithful spaniel who had long since made himself an immovable mass of obstinacy for fear he should be left behind. Exactly what time they departed I never knew, but they breakfasted at the Harcourt Arms at Nuneham. That is quite close to Oxford and a good long way from Downe. My wife and I went more sedately by train and the car had always got there long before us.

Aberdovey was almost solid with Ruck relations, Uncle Arthur to be seen at Esgair, my cousin Georgie Ruck at Pantlludw, and myriads of Atkins at Craig-y-don. There were old friends, too, everywhere and many tea-parties; a great many golf balls were lost in the rushes at the last hole and Johnny made a bustling pretence of finding them and never found one. The chief event one year was having the illustrious Miss Joyce Wethered to stay with us, and on the

morning she came out to play her first round there had never been such a crowd seen on the links since Braid and Taylor had played there in the previous century. When she failed to put her tee shot on the green at Cader, Aberdovey felt that it had not bowed the knee.

Looking back at it all it seems to me that Aberdovey was one of those places to which it was even better to travel hopefully than to arrive, and indeed I believe that is true of all the really beloved spots. It was heavenly there, but nothing can be quite so good as we expect it to be and the journey, whichever form it took, was best of all. And the leaving was correspondingly unhappy. In winter when the train started early, one crept down to an early breakfast in stockinged feet and left the other happy golfers who had not got to go, still snoring. That is almost the cruellest, as it is the most selfish thing about all departures, that other people are left behind to enjoy themselves. It was worse in summer when the train started later. The station is on the edge of the links, and there were those unfeeling golfers setting out on their first rounds. They would be putting on Cader green when our train reached the Junction. Already we had left Rex, the rival spaniel on the lodging-house steps, smiling tranquilly at us just as he would smile at the other lodgers who were coming in that evening. He could sit on those steps for the rest of his life, while we were swept far away. Sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs and chocolate would presently no doubt revive our spirits, but who could believe it in that moment of bitterness?

IN AMERICA

MY knowledge of America, such as it is, is an almost entirely golfing knowledge. That country has played such a leading part in the story of modern golf and we have been on such close and friendly terms with so many of its golfers that I must try to say something of the game there. Yet I cannot help feeling a little like Rip van Winkle, since it was in the autumn of 1922 that I last sailed from New York. However my two visits were at least in interesting, almost historic, years. In 1913 I saw Francis Ouimet gain his famous victory over Vardon and Ray at The Country Club. It may not actually have laid the foundation of the great American golfing empire; perhaps Walter Travis had done that at Sandwich in 1904, but it vastly extended its power and importance. In 1922 I travelled with the British side to the first Walker Cup match and by a—for me—lucky accident played in the match and was captain of our team in the field. Moreover, on both visits I stayed with that most remarkable man, Charles Blair Macdonald, who was a celebrated if not a universally popular figure in the history of American golf. He had tried to sow the seed of golf as he had learned it as a boy in what he always thought of as the good old days at St Andrews, and in doing so kept a tight and sometimes dictatorial hand on the reins of government. He had obvious faults, but in that tremendous energy and in his really passionate feeling for golf as he had first loved it, there was a quality akin to greatness.

Of the huge modern developments of American Golf since Charlie Macdonald's time—and I shiver with apprehension at the thought of what he would say of some of them—I only know now at second hand by what I read and am told by friends who have lately been there. The pot of

the great popularity goes boiling on; there are more and more golf courses; golf has taken an ever more prominent place as a school and college game and as a result the country produces each year a larger crop of really accomplished young players. As I write I have just seen a new, young American side annihilate us in the Walker Cup at St Andrews. They started better, finished better and putted better. They played magnificently, and yet I fancy there are many more young amateurs just about as good where these came from. The professionals have huge prizes to play for in innumerable tournaments, and apparently the offering of such rewards is profitable to those who are called "sponsors" Golf is "big business", and if that aspect of it does not attract me, who am I to criticise my neighbour?

What rather puzzles me in the accounts that all golfing travellers now bring home from America is the intense slowness of the play. Everybody had played four-ball matches when I was there, and I must own that, though by instinct and upbringing I like foursomes and dislike four balls, I had often enjoyed them in America. There was a keenness and zest about them as compared with the rather casual nature of the four-ball as often played at home, which had a definite appeal. The game, though everybody was holing out whether or not the match was affected, was played at a reasonably brisk and pleasant pace. Today I am assured by credible witnesses that it would take four hours and that that is the normal time for a round. If that is so, only by superhuman efforts in point of early rising can two rounds be played in a day.

When the American amateurs began to play well in the early years of the nineteenth century, they were in my experience inclined to play very slowly. I could not go on the Oxford and Cambridge Society's pilgrimage there in 1903, but those who did brought back strange stories of a certain Dr Fredericks of Oil City. He was said to take two elaborate practice swings before every shot he made. However, he found an opponent worthy of him in our Guy Ellis, a golfer

full of an impish humour; Guy took three practice swings to the doctor's two. They finished at Garden City in darkness with a lantern to mark the flag at the home hole, a one-shot hole over a pond, and Guy laid his tee shot dead to win the match.

There was nobody else, I gathered, quite in the class of the Oil City Champion, but there were others not very quick. The American golfers who came here realised that they were too slow by our standards and instantly made a united and praiseworthy effort to go quicker. They succeeded so well that they put us to shame. The splendid invaders that came here soon after the first war not only played better than we did, they played more quickly; they made some of us appear the dawdlers and the potterers. And now I cannot help thinking the boot is once more on the other leg, or perhaps both sets of players have relapsed into slowness together. I own that we have among our good players some terribly slow coaches, whose genuflexions on the green are unbearably tedious. The sluggards of both nations have this in common, that on their arrival on the putting green they do not at once apply themselves to the line of the putt but, like the boy in Calverley's poem,

*"Smile and look politely round
To catch a casual suggestion,
But make no effort to propound
Any solution of the question."*

However, this is a topic that rouses me to fury. It is far pleasanter to imagine myself setting out for New York in the good ship *Baltic* in the early autumn of 1913.

Of course it was intensely interesting to be there and the most interesting were the things that would be commonplace to Americans. G. K. Chesterton has well said that "it is for the sake of the streets and shops and the coats and the hats that we should go abroad . . . the strange things are cosmopolitan, the common things are national and peculiar." It was all new and entertaining, beginning with the kind

Irish policeman's confirmation of my friend's notion of the way to Garden City. "Whoever told you that gave you the right dope." Today the sight of a golf course covered with players in white flannels or in knickerbockers and shirt-sleeves would not strike one, but it did then. True, I had seen poor Chick Evans in our Amateur Championship at Prestwick struggle round in a coat in deference to our national prejudice and only take it off on the 19th green when it was too late, but a whole field in shirt-sleeves had for a minute or two a strange, exotic air. So for that matter had a Firemen's Band marching along the edge of the course in full panoply beating drums and blowing trumpets, wholly oblivious of the golfers. So had the little bursts of clapping that came from different parts of the course, for our crowds at home were not then so liberal in the matter of applause as they have become today. These things have all the most trivial sound, but the sum of them and others equally slight went to make up the excitement of a foreign festival.

Whoever had won or whatever had happened I must have been interested, but it so happened that I could hardly have seen a more remarkable Amateur Championship. Assume a man who dares not drive with a wooden club for fear of a disastrous hook, and is suffering from the most dread of all golfing diseases, that of socketing with his mashie. What chance of winning a Championship would anybody give to one so afflicted? Yet Jerry Travers, thus stricken, did win and, after qualifying only with the skin of his teeth, won comfortably. His putting of course was consistently magnificent; it had to be, but it was his example of fighting, with a calm, cold, unruffled ferocity, that was more remarkable still. Between every round he struggled with that recalcitrant mashie. Whenever he got a short lead out would come his wooden club, the lead would disappear and back he would go doggedly to his driving iron. He had a great match against Francis Ouimet, then a comparatively obscure young State champion, though within a fortnight the whole golfing world was to ring with him. It was a

measure of Travers's respect for this young adversary that only twice in the course of the first eighteen holes, and not once in the second, did he venture on that treacherous driver. Granted Garden City is not a long course, granted that some of his opponents played straight into his hands by themselves taking irons from the tee, granted that his holing out day after day was enough to break any enemy's heart, this was in many ways the most astonishing feat I ever saw on a golf course; it was "the high and heroic state of man".

Yet still more astonishing was the golf that I watched a fortnight later at Brookline. Time slips away; 1913 may seem to the modern golfer a long time ago, but this Open Championship was so memorable that I feel as if I were insulting the reader by describing it even briefly. Vardon and Ray, among the leaders of our professionals at home, were making a victorious tour of America and were generally expected to win. Their scores were hardly worthy of them and when they had finished they were extremely vulnerable and had left the door wide open for their pursuers. One by one those pursuers fell down and there only remained Francis Ouimet, nineteen years old and but lately emerged from the schoolboy. He too seemed to have thrown away his chance but came again with a supreme finish. I can still see the faces of the crowd, mouths wide open, distorted in joyous shouts, as Francis holed a long downhill putt on the 17th green.

So the almost unknown young amateur tied with the two famous professionals; the tie was played off over eighteen holes and Francis first cracked and then smashed them both. I am not going to tell the story again at any length. The gloomy sky, the rain dripping from the sodden trees, the pools of water, the players armed with towels, the crowds, the umbrellas and the megaphones—I can see and hear them all. I can still feel my patriotism weakening until with only one hole to go, and Francis having a winning lead, I find myself praying that no frightful disaster may rob him at the last.

Looking back I think one of the extraordinary things

about the Championship was that Ray and Vardon ever managed to tie for first place. Until the day of the tie they were not playing well. Of that I have no doubt at all. The conditions were unpleasant and difficult, but though they fought their way home resolutely in the end they had thrown away strokes most prodigally. Playing the sort of golf they did in the first four rounds they would have had no chance of winning a Championship at home. To say so much is not to take away one little tiny scrap of Francis's glory when it came to playing off the tie. If the two Englishmen did not then play their best it was because Francis did not let them: he outplayed them and they broke before his overwhelming golf.

I have been reviving my memories of the final round by reading the account of it in Mr Herbert Warren Wind's monumental book, *The Story of American Golf*, and trying to remember my own feelings. I had started with a reasonable confidence in our two players, but I became distinctly uneasy at the fifth hole. This was a good long two-shotter, with a wood to the right of the green and Francis sliced his second shot into it out of bounds. It was his first mistake; it might be a tragically serious one and the beginning of the end. Instead it turned out something like a moral victory, for with his second ball he hit a splendid shot to the green and got his five after all and neither of the other two could get a four. It was at once an escape and a triumph. But it was at the tenth, a short hole, that I really began to have a horrid premonition of defeat. All three reached the green, but Francis got down in two putts and the others could not; for the first time he was one up on them both. One stroke ahead with eight holes still to play was but a tiny lead, but Francis had played so well and looked so obviously the least worried of the three that terror took me by the throat. There comes rather a gap in my memory until the 17th when Ray has cracked and Vardon, still a stroke behind, has tried to cut a corner and been bunkered. And then at that supreme moment, just as he had done the evening before, Francis holed a long downhill putt for a three. The crowd went mad

with joy and rightly, for it was the death-blow, nor after that would I have had it otherwise.

Apart from these two Championships and a short stay in Chicago, I had two very pleasant little visits to Mr Macdonald's house at the National Golf Links, near Southampton on Long Island. I arrived there at the most romantic possible hour. The short American twilight was fast approaching, the sun was setting beyond Peconic Bay in a strip of flame. Everything was lonely and peaceful, so different from Garden City, and we drove along a rough, sandy road between huckleberry bushes. Here seen in this fading light was a links, obviously the right thing, living up to all that had been said and written about it.

In a perfectly strict sense it is, I suppose, inaccurate to use that term "links", for though by the sea the turf is not our links turf, but rather that of our best inland courses, such as Sunningdale. But if ever a course had the true links feeling and flavour this is it, and the spirit of seaside golf seems to brood over it. The story of its making is sufficiently well known, though it has often been subjected to picturesque exaggeration. It was said that Mr Macdonald had made eighteen exact copies of the eighteen best holes in Britain. It is true that he paid several visits to our courses in order to gain ideas and not only ideas but sketches and measurements of some of our holes; it is likewise true that there are certain more or less definite copies, the Sahara at Sandwich, the Alps at Prestwick, the Redan at North Berwick, the eleventh and seventeenth at St Andrews. They are all good copies and in the matter of small details they probably represent improvements on the originals, but the texture and pace of the turf cannot be copied nor can the *genius loci* be imported. Fine as these holes are, I think better still are some of those in which the architect allowed his imagination to be wholly unfettered so as to take full advantage of the natural undulations of the ground. Even one or two of the apparently deliberate imitations came to him almost ready-made from nature's mould.

There is an entertaining account of the making of the course in Mr Macdonald's own book, having the title of *Scotland's Gift, Golf*, and bearing testimony to his unflinching gratitude and loyalty to St Andrews, where he had learned the game as a boy. After various reconnaissances elsewhere, he and his son-in-law, Mr H. J. Whigham, of the Prestwick golfing family, discovered a stretch of swampy country, tangled with huckleberry bushes. They could not walk over it but spent several days riding on ponies, studying contours and looking for the undulations that would adapt themselves to classical models from overseas. Fortune was kind and their vision was shrewd. They found an Alps, they found the perfect Redan, entirely natural; then they lighted on a spot where they could place their eleventh hole from St Andrews, with the almost profane improvement, as they thought it, that a topped ball could not run to the green but would be caught in a water jump.

So the land was bought and the work begun. In 1904 Mr Macdonald had got seventy founder members to subscribe a thousand dollars apiece. Some of them perhaps fancied this ideal course of his was a "pipe dream", but they were ready to lose their money out of friendship for him, and there had never been any lack of rich men at the National. In 1909 it was so far ready that there was an opening competition, and four years later, when I first saw it, it was a joy to play on. It was also a strain to play on for without being abnormally long, nothing like so long indeed as Championship courses are now apt to be, it was yet a long driver's course and an iron player's course and a putter's course. It demanded everything and never for a moment gave the player any respite. Mr Macdonald had come to the conclusion that for a hole to be a good hole it must provoke argument. "When," he wrote, "a controversy between 'cracks' is hotly contested throughout years as to whether this or that hazard is fair or properly placed, that is the kind of hazard you want and it has real merit. When there is a unanimous opinion that such and such a hazard is perfect, one

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usually finds it commonplace." He liked the kind of hole or hazard that people are apt to call "unfair", and as to notions of "equity" he could not abide them. A man must take his luck.

Mr Macdonald never tired of insisting, as some of his more unruly subjects may have thought to a tiresome extent, on what he called the true spirit of golf as he had known it at St Andrews in the early seventies, when young Tommy Morris was king. It was not the least remarkable thing about him that, holding views very different from those of so many American golfers, he and a band of his own friends in the Links Club in New York managed to rule an ever-growing empire of those who knew nothing of the elder golf and were, especially in the West, decidedly rebellious. Those whom he called the bolshevik and the iconoclast were his deadly enemies.

In 1901 a certain Mr Robertson was President of the United States Golf Association, and in a presidential address he declared that the game in Britain was too much restricted by precedent and tradition. "Do not let us", he said, "be afraid of innovations simply because they are innovations. Nothing can come to America and stay very long without being Americanised in character and I hope this game will be no exception to this rule. I should like to see American Golf." Here in Mr Macdonald's ears was open blasphemy. He knew that the new President had not had his own youthful advantages, but still after a long tour of British courses he had hoped for better things from him. Walter Travis had also gone on that tour and he did not like Walter Travis at all. Sure enough he did see and have to endure "Americanised" golf. He preached foursomes and his subjects would play four balls. He said "the scoring habit of American golfers is a pernicious habit; much to be deplored, and if persisted in will result in the destruction of the eternal conception of the game in its highest sense." Yet American golfers went on counting and talking of their scores. He managed to keep stymies in American Championships, but no American ever played stymies in a game.



Chick Evans, C. B. Macdonald, Jess Sweetser

Still he held on and remained a great power in the game he had done so much to introduce. Many people no doubt were grateful to him for all he had done for golf and were devoted to him personally, but many were not. I think a good many of those who did not like him were afraid of him, for he was a formidable person, dominating and sometimes domineering; scarcely to be persuaded that he was ever wrong; big and strong and of an untiring energy that swept obstacles out of his way. Yet he was also kind and friendly and hospitable as it well becomes me to say. He was indeed a curious mixture of qualities, shrewd and yet an idealist; having a streak of hardness and yet an incurable sentimentalist; a very acute observer of golf but given to rather a windy rhetoric about it; in some ways, I suppose, selfish and yet refusing to touch a penny for anything he did for golf.

I have always thought that with all his tempestuous ways he must yet have been a very astute politician. We have all known some people who appear vehement and outrageous but never lose a sense of exactly how far they can wisely dare. I think Mr Macdonald must have been one of these, with a genius for the victorious compromise; but whatever else he was, he was a man of tremendous character, lovable, exasperating, unforgettable and a true friend to golf as it ought to be played. And it is worth remarking that though, if he were alive, he would inevitably disapprove of some "Americanised" developments of golf, he has yet bequeathed more than a little of his mantle to those who have succeeded him in the U.S.G.A. They stand as far as possible in the old ways and are great defenders of the old traditions.

I saw Mr and Mrs Macdonald again in 1922 and was again most kindly put up by them for the Walker Cup match at the National. It so happened that the Amateur Championship that year was played at The Country Club so that I did not break a great deal of new ground. We had great fun and were, I think, a happy team. Of late years I have heard a good deal of the gifts required for captaining an international team, and especially of the difficulties of

some of our captains in America who were, I gather, kept so busy in keeping their men in good humour that they could not find time to play themselves. That seems, if true, rather deplorable, and I am very sure that Robert Harris did not find his task of captaincy an exhausting one in 1922, nor did I, when for a very short while I succeeded him. In fact I remain rather an infidel about captaincy. To be sure we all knew each other very well and that makes a difference.

The score of the Walker Cup match is in all the books and I will not enlarge upon it except to say this: that I think our team deserved more credit than it received. True, we won only one foursome and three singles, but that is better than any of our successors in America have done, and what a team our opponents had! All the eight of them had either then won, or later did win, the American Amateur Championship, several more than once and Bobby Jones five times. Two of them won the British Amateur Championship. Three of them won the American Open, Bobby again many times, and one of them, of course Bobby, won the British Open three times. Even without Bobby's prodigious contribution, the record of that team is very unlikely to be equalled again or even approached.

The National is not, or was not then, an easily accessible spot and the number of spectators was not large. As far as I remember Bill Fownes and I had a gallery of two at just one hole. They were two charming young ladies, and when they saw us both carry a cross bunker with our very best drives, they burst with ecstatic applause. Doubtless we both seemed to them to have one foot in the grave. I had to make an open-air speech to assembled America when the Cup was presented; we had an admirable dinner afterwards; the celebrated Mr Dooley, whose real name was Dunne, pursued his straw hat down the steps of the club-house and the hat had all the best of the race; finally, we embarked next morning on two hospitable steam yachts that took us to New London, whence we went by train to Boston and so to my old friend The Country Club. I give it studiously its proper

title and do not add Brookline, for it was the very first country club in all America from which a mighty progeny has since descended.

It had rained there in Ouimet's year, or at least I thought it had until I saw the rain this time on the days of the qualifying competition. The pools in 1913 were nothing to the pools now. A series of rivulets ran across the last green. I still have in my mind's eye a picture of Chick Evans jumping about on that green, trying to find a dry bit of grass across which to putt. Yet despite these hideous conditions the scores were magnificent. The players went out with very few clothes on, plenty of towels and cotton gloves, and played through the deluge as if it did not exist. Jesse Guilford, the Boston Siege Gun (a name worthy of the best traditions of the old prize ring), was round in 70; Chick Evans and Bobby Jones 71 and 72. The golf was incredibly good. Three of our side survived this qualifying torture and one of them, Cyril Tolley, remained till the third round, when he just lost to a very good player, "Rudie" Knepper. So British hopes, never very high, were quickly snuffed out. Jess Sweetser, playing murderous golf, emerged from the hardest part of the draw without a scratch, and beat Chick Evans comfortably, though not easily, in the final. His great achievement was the beating of Bobby Jones by 8 and 7. It would be absurd to say that the second hole settled it, but it had at least something to do with it. Sweetser played the odd and holed his approach for two. Bobby's ball stopped about three inches short in the like. Those were the days before Bobby had "broken through"; he was at the mature age of twenty and some of his frantic admirers had begun to say that he never would win. So a blow of this kind seemed sent by the old malignant fate. Poor Bobby! There was only one more lean year to live through and then he began to make up for lost time with a vengeance.

We saw two of the great courses of America, Pine Valley and Lido. Pine Valley is of course still famous, but Lido, I gather, has long since fallen from its old estate, and Mr

Macdonald, its creator, was very sad the last time he saw it. Everybody has heard of Pine Valley, its lovely white sand, its fir trees, its lake and what the hymn calls the "eternity of woe" awaiting the bad shot. There is no doubt that liability can be almost unlimited. Persevering persons determined to hole out have produced unbelievable scores as the result of a single more or less venial error. It is, in the jargon of the architects, an eminently penal course, full of a gorgeous menace. It is lying in wait for you all the time and will get you sooner or later. Its supporters know its reputation for savagery, and Mr John Arthur Brown, who is its uncrowned king, says simply, "We like it that way."

At Pine Valley I did the first seven holes in a score that any champion might have envied, and failed to hole out at all at the eighth. In spite of this formative experience I thought the Lido the harder course; indeed I thought it the hardest course I had ever played on. Mr Macdonald intended, in a purely technical sense, to make it his crowning achievement though he never could have loved it as he did his own child, the National, and it had none of the National's surrounding charm. Long Beach near-by did not strike me as a seductive spot, and the mosquitoes who had frequented the course when it was a swamp, could not understand why they should not still be welcome there.

I had a sort of avuncular interest, if I may so term it, in the Lido because I had helped to run in *Country Life* a competition for the best design for a two-shot hole for prizes given by Mr Macdonald. Horace Hutchinson and Herbert Fowler were my fellow judges. We unanimously gave the first prize to a very well-known architect, Dr Mackenzie, and his winning design was more or less exactly reproduced as the home hole at the Lido. We also sent sixteen of the other designs to Mr Macdonald, and he used parts of them. To those golfers at home who are not used to thinking in such gigantic figures, perhaps the most interesting thing about this wonderful course, and a wonderfully fine course it was, was the magnitude and the cost of the undertaking.

The site had originally been a flat stretch of marshland and swamp with a considerable lake in the middle. After various preliminary operations, the land was covered with 2,000,000 cubic yards of sand, which were sucked by dredges from the bottom of the neighbouring channel, and then the sand was spread, like so much golden jam, at such depths as to produce the right undulations and hills and hummocks. Over the sand again was spread five miles of meadow bog for the top soil, and, almost incidentally, a lagoon was built to make an island for the fairway to one hole, with gates to let the water in and out of the channel. The whole cost of the golf course, including that of the land, was about \$800,000. Sad to say, high tides washed away one hole and then the course fell into the hands of those who were more interested in real estate than in golf. It was a cruel disappointment to its creator to see this gradual deterioration of his work. He believed that his fourth hole was the finest two-shot hole in the whole world of golf and here is a rather bitterly amusing circumstance; he had founded it on the old sixteenth hole at Littlestone in Kent, which has long since been "improved" out of existence. This seems an opportunity for some ironical philosopher.

This second visit of mine to America was made during the days of Prohibition, but I cannot say that it made any difference to the generosity of our entertainment. Not at least in New York and at the National. In Massachusetts there was rather more difficulty, and one night at The Country Club I was woken up by a gentleman bearing a name honoured in American politics. He was full of apologies but he had left a bottle of whisky under my pillow. And so he had, though I had not discovered it, and we parted with mutual satisfaction. Prohibition and "Mr Gallagher and Mr Sheehan" were the two plagues ravaging America during that last visit of mine. I have only to whistle that now almost forgotten tune and all manner of little scenes of more than thirty years ago come back to me with a poignant freshness.

SOME PEEPS OF MEMORY

CHARLES LAMB declared that he was disposed to say grace on twenty other occasions besides that of his dinner, and one that he cited was setting out upon a pleasant walk. I should like similarly to say grace for a few pleasant places that I have known. Some of them have been less so than others, and indeed one of them I am profoundly thankful to think I can never by any conceivable possibility see again. But they have all been kind to me at one time or another, some of them when I badly wanted kindness, and all of them have left attractive pictures in my mind's eye, little peeps of memory which I like to cherish. The places that have played the larger parts in my life, such as Downe and Aberdovey, I have written of in other chapters. This chapter is for some of the minor ones.

First of all, in point of gratitude I must put the little village of Winson in the Coln Valley near Cirencester, which was so friendly and beloved a city of refuge to my wife and me for nearly two years in the second war. We left it in 1942 and I did not see it again for twelve years. Yet when I came back I had an intense feeling of home-coming and a typically home-coming fear lest anything should have been changed. I was almost pained to see that in the very last lap, on the road between Ablington and Winson, a stately clamp of potatoes, which had marked the regular turning-point in one of our short walks, had, not unnaturally perhaps, disappeared.

I had fallen in love with the Cotswolds some years before I ever saw Winson or dreamed I should take cover there, and it was love at first sight. It came on me when I first drove with my friend Clement Adie, from his house at Wentworth to Aberdovey. Soon after Woodstock, when we

came to a long, grey wall, he said to me, "Now we're in the Cotswolds", and we used to say it to each other at the same spot ever afterwards when we made the journey. When we reached Moreton-in-Marsh I was in a feverish state and at Bourton-on-the-Hill, with its manor-house at the foot of the hill and the stone cottages with their bright little gardens climbing up it, I was bereft of words. Even Broadway could do no more for me. The very signposts were full of an unspeakable romance, "To Sezincote" at the top of the hill at Bourton and "To Blockley" for miles and miles before we reached the top of Broadway hill; there never was a village so anxious to announce itself. So when we came to Winson in war-time, the grey beauty of the Cotswolds was not new to me, but it was only now that it became as the beauty of a friend's face. It was wonderfully peaceful at Winson except for a short while when a German airman also discovered its peaceful charm, and thought no doubt that it was the perfect place in which to gain undisturbed an iron cross. He made himself a mild nuisance for several nights and then vanished. It cannot be denied that after the constant battering of our own Kent—Downe is too near Biggin Hill—it was restful to feel tolerably safe. However, the country was rightly taking no risks, and when I went one day to Malmesbury Abbey I found in the porch a book inscribed "This is ——— Abbey." If the invading infantry should come there, at least they should find no clue to their way.

Winson is peaceful still, genuine country if ever there was such a thing, though Bibury not far away has become, I fear, a "beauty spot", lovely and quiet on week-days, but haunted by trippers and coaches at the week-end. Winson has got a church with a fine yew tree and a little tinkling bell unworthy of it, and the dearest little village green the size of a pocket handkerchief. It has two or three pleasant houses, two rows of cottages, a post-office and no pub. It has a cricket eleven that still play in braces, as did Alfred Mynn and Fuller Pilch, braces embroidered with a pattern of roses, and the loveliest caps, red and white in quarters. It has also

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the river Coln, famous among anglers, running through it, but I, alas, am no fisherman. The only fishing I ever saw was for crayfish, at night by the dim light of lanterns. It was thrillingly like the salmon-spearing scene in *Guy Mannering*, but the trouble of shelling the crayfish seemed to me inadequately rewarded.

We had a car but, of course, very little petrol. As much as was allowed us was needed to get into Cirencester for shopping. So much of the heavenly country round remained unknown to us. We did visit in an opulent moment the Roman Villa at Chedworth and thought how wise some Roman gentleman had been to set up his house overlooking this tranquil valley. Likewise we saw Compton Casey, fascinating and a little sinister, with its screen of dark trees; but Ciren—it is vain to call it Cisseter nowadays—was our longest expedition. It is the ideal country town with a most noble church of golden stone, admirable shops that have a good conceit of themselves, and elderly country gentlemen in knickerbockers *adscripti glebae*, who could be found nowhere but in just such a lovely town. It is the only town of my acquaintance where I am content to let other people do their shopping while I look not too impatiently about me.

I have a particular feeling for Winson because it was one of the last places in which I played golf. Soon after the war ended I became so stiff and lame that the game and I gradually gave each other up, but at Winson I practised almost every afternoon with demoniac energy. Not on a course, for there was none, but in all sorts of kindly fields that did not resent my presence. More and more of them surrendered to the plough as the war went on; and incidentally I grew so rustic that I could lean over a gate and watch the plough for minutes and minutes together, even as I had seen the storks following the plough in Macedonia. However, there were always some free fields left and one in particular that I loved, on Ablington Downs, high above Winson, looking down on its grey roofs and the rippling Coln below. There was a field with a stone wall in it to remind me of Prestwick

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and another with a burn that might pass for St Andrews; there was even one that had a little patch of sand in it, though I never knew how it got there. Even as Friar Tuck was a hedge-priest, I was a hedge-golfer. The golf balls I lost may some day be disinterred as witnesses of an ancient and unknown civilisation that was there long before the Romans came.

Besides the sound of the plough, Winson had all the true rustic ones, the sharpening of scythes and the mooing of cows going to their pasture all too early in the morning; the tripling trot of Mousy, Mr Perry the farmer's pony, and the cheerful hammering from the carpenter's shop of Mr Field across the village green, who used to repair the most enchanting old wagons. When I came back it was sad to hear that Mousy had gone to the place of all good ponies, but Mr Field was still in his shop and, by the way, there was one change, a juvenile tree had been planted on the green to mark the Coronation. I said that I used to lean on a gate at Winson, and so I did sometimes, but I never wholly acquired that art which is a truly rustic one; I was too urban to learn. Men in gaiters and rain-coats could do it for hours with unwinking eyes. If it is a rustic art it is also a friendly one, leading to agreeable, rotatory conversation, and of all the good things about Winson perhaps the best and most heart-warming was the friendliness. If it was only the little boy that said "Good morning" as you passed him on the road, here was as apt a school for natural, friendly good manners as can be imagined.

I am, I am afraid, an "escapist"; I cordially dislike books about the war and in any case my own service in the first war was so entirely obscure as not to be worth mentioning. Yet two of my places have, like Winson, a little war flavour, and one of them is the little town of Burscough in Lancashire. As my train takes me from Wigan to Southport, whither I go on my golfing occasions, I always look out of the window for Burscough Station but it is past me in too swift a flash. At Aldershot, where I began my Ordnance

service Burscough was regarded as the back of beyond; to be sent there was to be exiled to Siberia. I am not ungrateful to it. All things are relative and some parts of soldiering, if I may so term it, are much less detestable than others. Nothing could superficially be more unlike Winson, and yet Burscough had some of its good qualities. It was peaceful and rural, set in a very old bit of England, largely Catholic England, where Blundells, Scarisbricks and Formbys had long held sway. In place of the Coln it had a canal, and canal boats covered with fascinating designs, that deserve and have, I daresay, received study from learned archaeologists. It had kind people who occasionally asked me to dinner, a really delightful golf course at Ormskirk and, far most important of all, I was allowed to take a house at Aughton near by, where my wife and children could live; a pleasant house with a fat and friendly dog left in charge, and, in the garden, the remains of Cromwell's trenches from which he had attacked Lathom House.

I have visions, now grown dim, of a really pretty little country, corners with woods and a stream and Parbold Hill in the distance. The people on the Canal boats had somehow a touch of Lavengro about them. The work was gently boring. My first enthusiasm such as it was had spent itself at Aldershot, and here war seemed agreeably distant. Barrack and hospital stores of which I was supposed to be in charge were not nearly so dull or so incomprehensible as the "files, bastard, half round" and suchlike horrors which fell to my share in Salonica. Chairs Windsor, Chairs Bentwood, best of all Chairs Ecclesiastical, belonged to me. "Oh, there you are, my gentleman," exclaimed one of my two admirable foremen, and making a dash up a quaking pile of furniture seated himself episcopally in a Chair Ecclesiastical on its precarious summit. Books Library, One hundred, and Boards Chopping, Married Soldiers, were likewise part of my nominal kingdom, but I must not lose myself in a dream of that strange language in which the cart invariably precedes the horse.

I doubt if there can ever have been a more monumentally inefficient Ordnance Officer than I was, but I was always manfully upheld and pulled out of scrapes by those under my command. So we jogged along happily enough at Burscough; I was almost resigned to staying there for the duration of the war when I was sent suddenly to Macedonia. I don't think I wanted to "lie concealed throughout the war" like the Duke of Plaza Toro. "Stayed at Burscough" would be a poor answer to "What did you do in the great war, Daddy?" But it is a good thing that the choice on these occasions does not rest with oneself. To Macedonia I went and my third peep comes from that country.

It is not, as any old reader of mine (if such there be) might think, my golf course near Dudular on the Vardar Marshes. That golf course was in its time the one cheerful spot in my existence, but I came to hate the rest too much. I am thinking rather of a little camp near Janes, where was the Headquarters of the 12th Corps. I had been sick at the base, able to carry on, but still sick with boredom and wretchedness. I had gone down to just nine stone in my winter uniform and biggest boots and could sometimes wish that I had now a little of that complaint. I really was a poor thing and so was sent to be Railhead Ordnance Officer at Janes. The change from those accursed files, so well described by their name, was a blessed one. The place was by comparison with the base so pretty and engaging, the food in the small mess was so much better, that I regained a stone or so in no time.

The name of our particular village, save that it began "Hagi" I cannot now spell, nor does it matter. Here I am on a fine, sunny spring day, standing, probably with an iron in my hand, in front of my dug-out, excavated from a little hillside. It had been wonderfully snug in winter, but now perhaps is a little oppressive. A small snake has lately emerged from between two boards on the wall over my bed, a rather disquieting circumstance. I should have killed it with this very iron, but was afraid of breaking the shaft and so spared it. I am thinking of moving into a tent. Mean-

while in front of my dug-out is a strip of short, crisp turf, covered with a carpet of spring flowers of entrancing colours. Their names are unknown to me, but they recall to my utterly unbotanical mind the little red and yellow friends of my youth on chalky Orchiss Bank at Downe.

On the left of this strip of turf, which is one of our few putting greens, is a river-bed, wide and rocky but now almost dry. The tiniest trickle of water runs along its main channel. A heavy storm of rain can turn it into a torrent, but that is rare. At present we can walk to the middle of it from one boulder to another and have even made a teeing ground there. Beyond it stands our village, at present empty, since the inhabitants had been removed from it by order. In front of its brown, mud walls are quince trees in a glory of white blossom and behind the village in the distance is a range of mountains, the Bela Sicas.

Every chimney of the cottages is crowned by a stork standing with immense dignity on one leg. We had been watching for some time for the storks to come back to the nests that awaited them, and by bad fortune I did not see their arrival since I had to go a day's journey to the base. When I came back there they were on their chimneys and I had missed the one interesting event in a drab existence. Yet the worst fortune was really the storks'. Two nights after their return there came a late fall of snow, soft and thick and silent, which put half the telephone wires in the Corps out of business. The poor birds had come too soon and looked unutterably puzzled and resentful. However, the snow has gone again almost as quickly as it came, and this is one of the cloudless Macedonian days "sent from beyond the skies". This is relative happiness.

I had wonderfully little to do. A train came in the morning and I saw it unloaded and various people came and drew their stores. The same thing happened, as far as I remember, in the evening, and that was all. What did I do for the rest of the day? A little writing sometimes, a little gentle golf, a little sleep in the heat of the day when all the war snoozed

with one accord. At one time two of us used to wander through the empty houses in the village feeling guilty and intrusive. It reminded me of *The Wrecker* and Loudon Dodd and Nares wandering about the deserted Flying Scud, with the half-finished breakfast and the marmalade for the Captain still on the cabin table. Then the villagers came home unknown to us and we quite innocently surprised a woman at her toilet one day and that amusement was no more. One of the inhabitants, a little Turkish boy, with a red sash wound round his fat little stomach, comes into some of my later pictures; he is staring across the river-bed at me playing chip shots and wondering what I am about.

Perhaps the one thing about Macedonia which was without alloy was the moonlight. The big stretches of bare grey-green country, all silvered over by the moon, were beautiful beyond words. Yet the more beautiful it was, the more one came in time to loathe it. Once on a night of veiled moonlight a nightingale came and sang in a tree close to my dug-out and that was unbearable. Those who served in Macedonia have unions and dinners and even a magazine, still kept bravely alive with local jokes. I can only suppose they liked it, and I do keep a little tiny corner of my heart for a spring day at Janes.

And now home from the quince blossoms of far Macedonia to the pear, plum and apple blossom of Worcestershire. I must say a word for Droitwich, a friend of fifteen years' standing, where I annually plunge myself in brine baths in the belief that they palliate (I have long put "cure" in inverted commas) my arthritic aches. There is so far a war flavour about it; that I first went there in war-time after being bombed out of my seven senses at Bath, but it is in fact one of the quietest places under the sun. Indeed I am afraid that what I mean for praise of it may seem disparagement to those demanding more excitement from life. I can only say that it has for me some wonderfully soothing and restful quality. I cannot assert that I do positively nothing there, because I always manage a certain amount of work,

but in a general way one lives the life of a happy slug and feels wonderfully refreshed by it.

I remember very well the day of my first arrival; a hot sleepy day it was, on which I had to walk to my hotel because, as I was told apologetically, all the cabs, a rather slender company, had gone to a wedding. So I meandered along the little street of red brick, wondering how on earth I should fill up three whole weeks there. There was no need for anxiety; the first day or two may go a little slowly, and after that the beautifully monotonous days pass like a flash, till, before one can believe it, one is regretfully saying one's good-byes and engaging one's room against next year.

The morning can be reasonable abbreviated by a not too early breakfast, and one has hardly read the paper before it is time to loaf down to the baths. The actual bath does not take long. Too soon an hour-glass points out to one that ten minutes, that is to say two-thirds of this heaven at once so lazy and so buoyant, are over. It becomes one's duty as a good Christian and a good patient to ring a bell. Perhaps a minute may pass and then comes George in his white coat and lets in a stream of lovely fresh hot water. There one lies, held down by battens of wood, looking at the gently quivering patterns that the sunlight and the water make upon the wall and, "thinking of nothing at all", like Mr Dibdin's jolly young waterman. Too soon the inexorable sands have run out again, but there remains another idle pleasure, that of the hot pack. Nor is that all, for in point of resting after the bath the doctors are positively ferocious. There is none of your pretending to repose in an arm-chair; the patient must lie honestly upon his bed for two at least moderately conscientious hours. If he can do that and refrain from agreeably swinish slumber, he is wasting his opportunities and failing in his duty.

It will be seen then that a bath can fully occupy every minute of a morning. I am talking of a "reclining" bath which is the most entirely restful and of course entirely private. There are others who prefer the large swimming

bath where the water is equally buoyant and one may float as gently about as any water lily. Periodically Droitwich is stirred by the news that West Bromwich Albion or some other famous Midland team are coming to soothe their bruised limbs in the swimming bath, as part of their preparation for a cup tie. However, I remain a convinced and obdurate recliner. There is much to be done even against kind, fierce doctors by mulish resolution.

The doctors forbid one, rightly no doubt, to have a bath every day, and it may be asked what one does on the other days. If Droitwich itself does not scintillate with excitement, it is surrounded with all manner of engaging places and the kind friend, with whom I always try to go (this is a place where a defensive alliance has its merits) brings his car with him and we go mildly exploring. Ombersley with its black-and-white architecture; Bewdley with its row of houses on the river side looking as if they came straight from a picture by Vermeer; Stratford, where we make a virtuous expedition to see a Shakespeare play; Malvern and, best of all I think, Tewkesbury; with its pretty curving street, its noble Abbey and its inn where dear Mr Pickwick dined on his drive to Birmingham with "some more bottled ale, some more Madeira and some Port beside"—here is richness. Nor does that by any means exhaust the list, for there are beautiful old houses to be seen with hiding holes for priests and, of course, there is Worcester with its Cathedral, some quarter of an hour distant. If only it was full summer-time there would be cricket to watch, but I am always just too early for it. Cricket, that so insidiously compels one to watch just one more over, would perfectly suit this blessed state of idleness. I am a little early as a rule for the very best of the fruit blossom, which can be incomparably gorgeous.

What else does one do in this agreeably sleepy hollow? I do one thing which reflects rather shamefully on my existence for the rest of the year; I read new books. The reason for this incredible behaviour is that my hotel has an admirable library, periodically replenished, on which I browse

Every time on leaving I make the most solemn vows not to relapse into my old bad habits, but when I get home *Pickwick* and *Pendennis* and all my other old friends are there to meet me with smiling, yet slightly reproachful countenances, and laziness resumes its sway. In a sense Droitwich seems to me my only link with modern civilisation.

I am now wondering what I shall read there this year, for the time of going draws near and I am being overtaken with a kind of tranquil excitement at the thought. My "cure" nearly always comes between two spells of golf, which emphasise its quality of restful contrast. Yes, I shall soon be winging my drowsy flight there and, knowing the ropes as I now do, shall be ordering my faithful cab in advance, in case there are any more weddings. There is here something that reminds one of going back to school, when one used to rush round hilariously saying "How do you do" to the stationary pillars of society. In the lounge at tea-time I may encounter some fellow veterans of other bathing campaigns. There may also be one or two happy beings who live there altogether, to whom the rest of us are but as passing shadows, whose luggage is constantly in the hall, whose cabs are arriving and departing, while they themselves go on for ever, enviable, eternal loungers. They will come down to dinner one day and will not even notice that we have departed and that some newcomers have got our table; their own tables in the snug little corner by the window are permanent and sacred. And yet who knows? No one can read the secrets of the human heart and it may be that sometimes they grow tired of it. At any rate it is always pleasant to see them again; *de Droitwich je suis le fervent*.

It will be seen that I like places where the same things are apt placidly to happen over and over again. And so now to another of them, a very beloved one this time with a strong golfing flavour, Rye and its Dormy House. Here there is no change; it is a symbol of eternity itself. It was at the end of the nineteenth century that a friend asked me to stay for a week-end at the Dormy House. It happened at that

moment that, as I have already told, a kind uncle had given me a tip of splendid proportions, and I have been grateful to him ever since. For those who do not know the beautiful little town huddled on the top of its dry cliff from which the sea has receded, I should add that the Dormy House is not on the links which are some two miles away. It is a charming old house in the town close to the Land Gate. According to the time of my arrival I can prophesy with some precision whom I shall find there. If it is a slack time of day and I go upstairs to the smoking-room with its divinely comfortable arm-chairs, that are nowadays so exhausting to get out of, I may find one or two, probably residents in Rye, in a comatose condition. Whether I have been away a week or a year it is unlikely that they will pay any attention to me, and if I insist on saying how do you do I shall feel rather too crude and hearty a person. Yet that is really one of the beauties of the Dormy House; one is accepted as a permanent institution not to be noticed.

If it is the hour of tea I shall find one or two other members eating crumpets by the billiard-room fire, sitting perhaps in the little seats inside the fireplace where one can look up into the black yawning depths of the great chimney. Presently another two or three will drop in, golfers from the links, rosy and blown about by the winds of heaven, or bankers and lawyers sober-suited from their offices, the day's work done. Then a challenge will be issued and one of the eternal rites, a game of "slosh" will be played, not in too serious a spirit. The gong for dinner will suddenly surprise us and Mrs Elliott, the kind matriarch who rules us all for our good, will come in and round us up in no uncertain terms. We shall hurry shamefacedly into the dining-room and a very good dinner we shall have under the eyes of a rather indelicate young lady swinging a golf club in a state of nature, who has stood on the chimney-piece so long that nobody can remember when she came or who gave her to us.

Then next morning after breakfast (*two* eggs and bacon)

we go out to the links, and now I find I must correct myself. I said there was no change. There have been in fact several changes. Once we had to walk down the hill to the puffing billy of a Decauville train. It took us and our caddies to the little station on the way to the famous Sea Hole which one of our benefactors, Clement Archer, invented, so that we used to call it Archerfield. The station is long decayed, but I never see it without seeing the train and its load of golfers waiting patiently for Dacre Vincent, once our beloved secretary, a secretary wholly *sui generis*, advancing with studiously unhurried footsteps, knowing that no train would be guilty of the blasphemy of leaving him behind. Some young golfer over-running the eleventh green with his approach or topping his drive to the twelfth may still find his ball on the little derelict shingly line and muse on prehistoric golf.

Now we all go out by car or by bus, and here again is change, for where are all the toll gates, one genuine and one or two fraudulent, that demanded pence? They have been swept away, and even the shape of the road with its weavings and windings has been deplorably straightened. Nor is this all, for the course itself has been much changed, and I must honestly admit for the better. We used to start from the "Billy", then a public-house and now the club's property, and skirt the road for the first three holes, as far as the row of Coast Guards cottages. Then some fiend in human shape, as we then deemed him, discovered the great spaces of Camber Beach, the nearest beach for thousands of trippers. They descended upon it in the summer months, so that the road held one unending procession of cars and, though murder was in the golfer's heart, he dare not drive. Yet it has all turned out for the best and the new holes over the central range of hills and nearer the sea are better golf than ever the old ones were. The club-house has been changed too—by a bomb—and doubtless the present one is better than our old rather ramshackle friend. There is one institution at least that remains. "Buttered eggs, Helen," I exclaim when I sit down to lunch. Alas! there is now no Helen to

bring them, and there are also other good things to eat, but those who order them have no knowledge of the past or reverence for it. "Helen, thy buttered eggs are to me"—did not Edgar Allan Poe begin a poem with those words? If not, it was something very like them.

All the golf clubs that people love very much have a character and flavour of their own and Rye certainly has, as pleasant and homely as the flavour of its buttered eggs. It is a truly great golf course, and for many good and blessed reasons it can never be a Championship course. We keep it very cosily to ourselves. And when I say "we" I mean not only the members of Rye but, of course in a lesser degree, the members of the Oxford and Cambridge Golfing Society. From early days Rye had a friendship with the Society. Harry Colt, one of the Society's founders, laid it out and Monty (R. H. de Montmorency) had a cottage there. Dear Parson Tindall was a stalwart supporter of both institutions. In course of time Rye generously invited the Society to consider the links as their home course, and I hope both institutions have benefited. The President's Putter has been played there, except in the war years, since 1920, and the University Match has lately been played there for the fifth consecutive year. There is a snug little nook in the Club-house which is dedicated, quite informally, to the Society, with a memorial to its members who fell in the war, with some of our old photographs and books, with Horace Hutchinson's driver and Andy Stuart's wooden putter and the President's Putter itself from which dangle the balls, each encased with a silver band, with which the winners have played.

I must not linger too long on this heavenly course, lest I be late for dinner and Mrs Elliott be after me. It is one of the places of which it may be said that nothing becomes it like the leaving of it, for there are few lovelier views than Rye perched on its hill-top like a fairy citadel in the sunset.

Chapter Seventeen

THE LAZY THOUGHTS OF A LAZY READER

THE other day I remarked that I really ought to join a library as I never seemed to read any new books. The answer was, "I didn't know you wanted to." No doubt I don't want to read nearly as many as I ought. Reading old books is, I suppose, a weakness, but surely rather an amiable one. There must be something natural about it since children want the same book read to them over and over again, and having maddeningly accurate memories, correct the reader if he makes the slightest deviation from the text. It may be that in many ways I have never fully grown up and that this is one of them, for it is a rich sensual satisfaction to me to murmur to myself the rest of the sentence which is coming over the page and to find I have got it precisely right. In one of my father's letters I see that at the age of four I sat on his knee and "had the same story over and over." This he found very restful, but six weeks later alas! "B. has developed a taste for new stories, which is rather trying". At least I have got over it by this time and can say with Hazlitt (was there ever a better opening sentence?) "I hate to read new books".

Presumably that great man must not be taken too literally and meant only that he liked reading old ones much better than new ones. And there is at least this to be said, that thus we know we are going to enjoy ourselves. There are those who allege that they never read a book twice, since there are so many books in the world to read and they cannot afford the time. They can only be answered in the words of Dick Swiveller when the Marchioness said she had once had a sip of beer. "Here's a state of things! She *never* tasted it—it can't be tasted in a sip." To read no more than once a book of any real consideration is hardly more than to sip it. Its

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merits only begin to sink in at the second or third reading. A virtue over-pampered can become a vice and I am afraid it has done so in my case; I have lazily allowed the world to stop short too long ago as far as books are concerned, and my first instinct is not to read any new book recommended to me. At least the advice must be tendered with infinite tact and delicacy lest my hackles go up. When I read it I often enjoy it very much indeed. When small I often enjoyed a children's party, but that did not make me one bit the less sulky and recalcitrant when I was bidden to go to the next one. So it is now with books, and very bad it is no doubt, but can there be anything in life more enchanting than Dickens in an arm-chair before the fire? It represents the intensest luxury of a humble hedonist. It is snugness in the highest degree. That is why Dickens, the supreme master of snugness, makes the ideal reading for this self-indulgent occasion. The interpolated stories in *Pickwick* are for the most part a blot on the book, but in one of them there is a very great moment, when Tom Smart sits in the little shingled inn near the Marlborough Downs, drinking hot punch before the crackling fire. It is easy to understand why that is so cheering; it is the contrast of the defiant warmth within and the furious gale without; easy to understand, impossible for anybody but Dickens to produce. But there is another little passage of his that I love even better and read even oftener, and I cannot tell why; it is no more than a sentence describing the landlord of the Jolly Sandboys (in *The Old Curiosity Shop*), standing at the door, and looking lazily at the rain. There is nothing to say except that magic is uncontrollable stuff, that it will come breaking in, and that nobody, least of all perhaps the magician himself, knows how or when it is going to do it.

I cannot help adding to these perhaps shameful admissions, that a little trifling, almost imaginary indisposition enhances the pleasure. Clearly the reader must not feel too sorry for himself, but he should have induced other people to feel a little sorry for him, so that they, at least metaphorically,

tuck him up in front of the fire and thrust the beloved volume into his hand, telling him whatever he does not to do any work. At the very moment of writing I have taken it into my head that I may possibly have got a cold there. I have so far resisted the temptation, but the atmospherics of *Pickwick* are strong upon me and I may not be able to hold out much longer. Of course if my advisers go one step further and tell me to go to bed, I shall feel wholly justified, for no man of any principle ever read a new book in bed. A friend of my father's at Cambridge used to talk of ginger beer drunk out of a bottle as symbolic of the highest bliss; I think *Pickwick* in bed is mine.

I do not know when this habit of going back and back to the old love first began to sap my manhood, but it was very early in life. *Treasure Island* was, as I said before, my oldest love. When I was ten my father notes that it was still top of the list; so I had certainly read it more than once by then. At the same date, there is a passage which seems to show a certain moral deterioration since; "B. is tremendously excited over *Old Mortality* which he has the good taste to prefer to *Ivanhoe*". My taste is still good enough to tell me that *Old Mortality* is the finer work, but which of the two do I read, when I want to snuggle down in that arm-chair for a little rest? Truth compels me to say that *Ivanhoe* has it, not indeed the whole book, much of which I never read; but of Locksley cleaving the wand and the Black Knight and the Clerk of Copmanhurst carousing in the hermit's cell I never tire. Indeed I think the holy clerk's gradual admissions of his unclerical doings in the forest and the production of the venison pasty left for him by his good friend the Keeper, have a quite Shakespearian quality. Because a poor, idle, good-for-nothing reader re-reads one book more than another, it does not follow that his eyes are so blurred that it appears to him the greater of the two. It is simply that there is something in it that appeals to a particular mood. *Wuthering Heights* is a very great book, but not one to take to bed for just those few happy minutes before the lines of print begin

to run into one another and one lets the book drop on the floor, as the night composes itself with a long sigh. I know a small boy, who went to a school in Yorkshire, where an injudicious master tried to steep him too early in the Haworth gloom. His reaction was to exclaim passionately, "I hate the bronts", and in the circumstances he was perfectly right.

After *Treasure Island* my earliest recollection of a great book, since read innumerable times, is of *David Copperfield*. I imagine that it was at the age of eleven that I crept under the dining-room table to weep over the death of Dora and Jip. The death of an animal, in particular a dog, almost exceeds the limits of fair play on the author's part, and it was probably Jip that I then found most heart-breaking. Poor Dora I can hardly read even now. She was an exasperating little noodle but a very dear one. Even her maddening qualities are endearing, and I will maintain that in point of youthful love-making there was never any more true, sensitive and charming than that of Dora and David in the greenhouse with poor Jip being made to smell the geraniums. I feel now as if I had read *David Copperfield* in bed every night of my five years at Eton, but that is no doubt a delusion. Still I did read it very often. Only those who have read it often know who were Mr Passnidge and Mrs Fibbitson; I am proud to think I have long been one of them.

When *Pickwick* superseded *Copperfield* it is now impossible to say. My father had read me the review at Chatham and the cricket match at Dingley Dell quite early in life, but I don't think I followed up that introduction for some time. It is a far harder book to know well, from an examination point of view, than *Copperfield*; there are such countless minor characters all of whom the candidate ought to know, such as Mrs Mudberry and Mrs Bunkin, of course with their respective occupations. Even the exact order of the *Pickwickian* journeys can be puzzling, save to the very clear-headed, of which I am not one. After a certain point I believe memory rebels; one can know a book as well as

heaven allows one but no further, and no amount of reading, however productive of happiness, can make a natural pass-man into a winner of first-class honours. The lack of accurate visual memory brings him down; I continue to practise but I know that my handicap is now fixed, I am as near scratch as I ever can be.

It must have been about the same time as that of my introduction to *David Copperfield* that I got my first two prizes at the Perse School at Cambridge. The first chosen for me, I can only suppose, on account of my unfortunate name, was Arabella Buckley's *Fairyland of Science*, and I have never read it from that day to this. The second more than made up for it, for it was *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, and I have been reading it ever since. If I had to meet a challenge and as challenged party I had choice of weapons, this is certainly one of the books I would choose. I might be beaten but I should go down fighting. A little while ago I was most kindly invited to stay a night in the School-house and saw Rugby with an inexpressible thrill; also with a certain agreeable titillation of my vanity because I found I knew the book better than anyone else I encountered there, better even than the Captain of the house, who lived in Flashman's study and suffered severely from the raids of American tourists; they were told by mendacious guides that it was Tom Brown's study.

There are one or two causes for which, given the requisite energy, I should like to lead a crusade. One is to make more people read Tom Brown. If they read it as boys and have forgotten it then they should read it again as grown-ups. The author is at times admittedly infuriating; he was, I have little doubt, in many ways a tiresome man. My eldest uncle, who was at Rugby some hundred years ago, said that the boys then regarded poor Mr Hughes as a bore, crediting him with the belief that he had bought the place. A contemporary of my own who was there forty years later held precisely the same view. And yet he wrote something very like a great book, and perhaps the greatest thing in it, to my

mind, comes before Tom actually gets to Rugby. Was anything ever written so full of the romance of a homely journey as the account of the drive on the Tallyho coach from the Peacock at Islington? The coldness and the coach lamps in the dark and the rattling of the harness, the coming of the sunrise, the whiff of tobacco from the men in smock frocks, the hounds jogging along to the meet, all the early life of the roads has something magical about it, and when breakfast comes at last there never can be again such kidneys, such pigeon pie or such muffins. There is about it a Pickwickian quality and that of the highest.

The book has plenty of faults, heaven knows. The interpolations beginning, "My dear boys, old and young" delay the action with no compensating virtue. Much the same may be said of the preaching, but after all the poor man was quite desperately genuine, he wrote the book in order to preach to boys, and if he had not preached we should never have had the book and so been sadly the poorer. When a book has such elements of greatness as this one, we are rather ungrateful and rather presumptuous too, if we pick too many holes in it; we ought to take the rough with the smooth and be thankful for so much that is racy and spirited and full of life and colour.

Tom Brown was certainly not read to me; I am sure my family could never have endured Little Arthur. Equally I am sure that I first knew Scott from reading aloud, an excellent method if the reader is a bold, experienced skipper with an eye for country. The Darwin family had a traditional order in which Scott should be taken by the young; first *The Talisman*, then *Quentin Durward*, followed by *Ivanhoe* and *Old Mortality*. I do not know the underlying principle, but I suppose *The Talisman* was thought to be simple and straightforward. After an interval of *The Abbot* and *The Monastery*, I read *Guy Mannering* to myself. That was a great occasion and it has remained head of the list, perhaps of all my lists, ever since. Scottish people are apt to put *Heart of Midlothian* ahead of it, and an Englishman can

understand why without agreeing with them. It is a noble book, but douce Davy Deans and perhaps even Jeannie herself are just a little too Scottish for the Englishman fully to appreciate. Still at any rate one poor Englishman adores Dandie Dinmont, and goodness knows he is Scottish enough. But it is Meg Merrilies that can reduce me at any moment to excited tears, and I will say no more. So, to a lesser degree can Nanty Ewart, and on his account and for Wandering Willie's Tale, I would put *Red Gauntlet* second, in spite of the prodigious dullness of some of the early letters. I suppose Scott was not afraid of being dull and liked to develop his story in a slow, majestic, processional way, but it is hard to see why he had a passion for letters. Why did Julia Mannering have to write to Matilda Marchmont and Harry Bertram to "My dear Delasserre"? It is a most laborious technique.

I have been trying to remember whether *David Copperfield* spurred me on to a real plunge into Dickens; I think not, and that there was an interval. I owe my father and step-mother gratitude for Miss Austen and more particularly for George Eliot. About the time when I was growing up there was a renewed passion for Miss Austen, for I heard of a couple who had five sets of her novels, in a pretty little green edition, as wedding presents. Moreover, in some classical examination for which I sat, we were set for Latin prose the famous passage beginning "Mrs Bennet rang the bell and Miss Elizabeth was summoned to the library". We were told, in a footnote, to say that Mrs Bennet clapped her hands, and apart from that my mind is a blank. I began Miss Austen with *Pride and Prejudice* and still read it oftenest. I began George Eliot with *Silas Marner* and the same is true there. The talk about red cows and ghosts in the *Rainbow* at Raveloe seems to me quite perfect and can beat any of Thomas Hardy's rustics, good though they are. Perhaps the having first innings settled it, but *Middlemarch*, which came later, made a tremendous match of it. I read it once in a Bulgarian light railway, with a verminous Russian

soldier at the other end of the truck, when it was a great comfort in abstracting the mind from worldly affairs.

To much the same period of my reading I suppose belong Thackeray and Stevenson. It is hard to believe now, but I know it to be a fact, that I made several efforts at *Vanity Fair* and retired abashed and beaten before getting into it. *Pendennis* seemed to begin with a greater swing and, though there can be no two opinions which is the greater book, it is *Pendennis* that I read oftenest. Perhaps the fact of living in the Temple and wanting in a futile undecided sort of way to leave the law for the newspapers, had something originally to do with it. "Look at her, Pen, the great engine, she never sleeps"—Warrington's speech as they look at Fleet Street brilliantly alight, with the news pouring in, must have lured many a young man into that street of adventure. It seems to me that one of Thackeray's crowning achievements is to make one so fond of Rawdon Crawley and Major Pendennis. One was very like a sharper and the other stooped near to blackmail, and yet they are both in their way terribly touching. It is as great a triumph in a different way as that of Dickens in making Mr Toots delightful. He was superficially everything that we should wish to avoid, and yet we adore him; he was worthy even to marry Miss Susan Nipper.

Mr Toots reminds me that when I was old enough to know better I had never read *Dombey & Son* and my Aunt Etty gave it me, insisting that I should. I did, but it has never been one of my favourites. Mr Toots and Mr Feeder and Susan Nipper cannot carry that whole long book on their backs, and as to Edith Dombey and Mr Carker with the teeth, for that matter as to Little Paul—but I must refrain from overt blasphemy. For the same reason that the modern reader does not like Little Paul, he does not like Little Nell. He finds it very hard to understand how Landor said that the house in which Dickens first thought of her should be bought and burnt lest anyone else should desecrate it; how O'Connell threw the book out of the window in a

flood of tears when he found she was dead; how Jeffrey was discovered in a lachrymose condition and apologised for being "a great goose". I had always thought that since one could not despise these great men who used their pink pocket handkerchiefs so freely, one could only wonder helplessly at the astonishing change of taste. The other day, however, I met a distinguished authoress who gave me, I believe, the right explanation, certainly a very acute one. This was that before Little Nell people had not fully realised how much the poor could suffer or indeed that they could suffer at all.

I have never been converted to Little Nell but I am deeply grateful to her. It was in a misguided attempt to appreciate her that I really came to know Mr Dick Swiveller. Whether or not it is an important merit in one of Dickens's great grotesques, Dick Swiveller is much more credible than most of them. Compare his noble periods with the equally noble ones of Mr Micawber. There is this difference between them that Mr Micawber talked and wrote in his natural language, which was glorious but quite incredibly glorious; Mr Swiveller was deliberately parodying what he conceived to be the language of literary persons because, as Chesterton remarks, "He has a lonely literary pleasure in exaggerative language". We have all known people who talk deliberately and facetiously in journalese, though they do not do it nearly so well as Dick Swiveller. I am not sure that it really matters whether some of Dickens's creatures are "possible"; but it is perhaps not uninteresting. Dick's relations with the poor little Marchioness are entirely possible and afford one of the best examples of how heart-breaking Dickens can be, when he does not try too hard.

One's likings for books rise and fall as do one's likings for people, and I find that I now read *The Old Curiosity Shop* more and *Great Expectations* less than I used to. Once upon a time my order (leaving *Pickwick* on one side) was *David Copperfield* first, *Great Expectations* second, and Sir Henry Dickens cheered me by saying that that was his father's own

order. Today *Our Mutual Friend* has taken a great bound forward in my affections, possibly through my falling late but deeply in love with Miss Bella Wilfer. If Ellen Ternan was responsible, as is alleged, for the change in the type of Dickens's heroines, from the angelic to the agreeably minxish, we ought to be grateful to her. Dickens to my mind is never so touching as in the relationship between fathers and children and Bella making her poor down-trodden little Pa take her out to dinner at Greenwich is perfect, only rivalled if at all by Mr Wemmick and his aged parent in *Great Expectations*. And if it comes to that, I know few scenes nearer tears than that of Sam offering homely consolation to his father on the death of Mrs Weller; not the less so because it ends with Mr Stiggins's head triumphantly immersed in the water-butt—"le beau rire avec les larmes aux yeux".

Now that is enough, perhaps too much about Dickens. One of my oldest friends by this time, though it seemed to me once an almost modern revelation, is *Lavengro*. I think I had heard it talked about at home and taken it into my perverse head that I should not like it. At any rate it was quite new to me when my wife persuaded me to read it. I began tentatively and reluctantly, and it was touch and go till Borrow meets Jasper in the lane. "What a Sapengro, lor!"—from that moment I was taken in and done for once and for all. Does anyone feel a love for Borrow himself? I at any rate do not; I often find him quite insupportable, but was there ever such an enchanter? I should not, I am convinced, have liked him; I do not think I should have liked the Romanies, for all my own minim of Welsh gipsy blood, but such paltry little feelings cannot stand against that mighty sweep of genius. It is all the more obviously witchcraft, because in many ways and by commonplace critical standards he does not seem to write well. His apostrophes are clumsy and tiresome. Some of his greatest scenes such as that at Marshland Shales, the old trotter, are marred by deplorable fustian about not doffing his hat to earl or

baron. He uses dreadful words such as "individual" and calls horses "the equine race", but in his particular kind of spell there is nobody who can stand against him, except Sir Walter.

"We can say nothing about what makes these scenes, except that the wind bloweth where it listeth, and that here the wind blows strong." What Chesterton said of Scott may be applied to Borrow. Everybody will have his own favourite scene in *Lavengro* or *Romany Rye*, Ursula under the hedge, or John Thurtell driving through the rain-gushes or the last farewell to Isopel Berners. But there is one that no anthologist has chosen as far as I know, better, even far better, than the fight with the Flaming Tinman in the dingle; it is the fight in the dark lane between the Bow Street Runner and the Romany Chal, the end of which Borrow, with his impish love of a sell, never tells us. "And what did the other fellow do, who came with the Chal," said I, "I sat still on my horse, brother." You may read the scene a hundred times, and I have just read it through yet again quite unable to resist it, and when you come to those words, a definite physical stab of pleasure shoots through you. It does not matter in the least that there is now no surprise, that you know who the fellow was; the pleasure is rather heightened by the knowledge. It is a piece of deliberate artifice on the author's part, but it is surely none the worse for that. Nobody ever picks out that fight in the lane, but in point of Borrow's peculiar magic it seems to me the best of all.

It is part of its artistic interest that it is told not by the author himself but by Jasper, and that is characteristic of some of the very best descriptions of fighting and of sport in general. The Druid put his magnificent account of Cribb and Molineaux at Thistleton Gap into the mouth of old Dick Christian, the rough-rider of the Quorn. Doubtless Dick Christian told him about it, but the art of translation was the Druid's. The same is largely true of John Nyren and his Hambledon cricketers. The old gentleman talked his fine talk, but we shall never know how much we owe to Cowden Clarke who listened to him.

In this matter of fights, when did I first read Hazlitt and the battle between Bill Neat and the Gaslight Man? I think comparatively late in life, though I have been making up for lost time ever since. It always seems to me the perfect model for the essay-writer to copy, *if* he is good enough, and alas, nobody is. The lovely, unhurried, almost inconsequent way in which the author puts up now and then at little irrelevant stopping-places in his narrative, his fury when he believes he has missed his coach, his delight in the sporting garment that his friend lends him, the conversation in the inn kitchen with the yokel who talks like Cobbett, it is only a very skilful and confident writer who would dare to take so long on the road before reaching the place of battle. Did he think out all those wanderings beforehand with deliberate art, or did he just sit joyfully down and write straight ahead? I do not know, but nobody else can do it like him. I came late to Hazlitt and late too to Charles Lamb, who produces quite a different effect on me. I admire Hazlitt beyond everything, but I love Charles Lamb. Hazlitt has everything in his power except tears, but I can hardly read *The Superannuated Man* or *Mackery End* without making, like the great Lord Jeffrey over *Little Nell*, a goose of myself.

Now by another jump I come to the most modern of my desultory loves, the late Mr William Roughead's entrancing books on the crimes of his native Scotland. I had always had a feeling for murders. When very young I had instigated my nurse to ask if I might be taken to the Chamber of Horrors, while I lay concealed to hear the answer which was a resolute "no". A little later I found in my father's study an old copy of the *Annual Register* full of delightful things, and after a while it inexplicably vanished. These were discouraging circumstances, but at least no one could prevent me from reading Stephen's *History of the Criminal Law* when I was working for the Law Tripos at Cambridge. It is rather an ironic circumstance that so distinguished a lawyer should now be chiefly remembered by a lay world

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for a criminal trial which he did not conduct very well, that of Mrs Maybrick. It was not the main body of his book that I enjoyed so much as the supplementary chapters at the end with details of some English and French murder trials, and in particular that of William Palmer, the incomparable poisoner of Rugeley.

"No more horrible villain than Palmer ever stood in the dock." How admirable is that sentence! One could whisper it over and over again to oneself, and then there was the description of Jeremiah Smith, the low rascally little attorney, who knew—of course he knew—with the sweat pouring off his face and the papers crackling in his hands as he faced the cross-examination of Cockburn. As I go north from Euston I always pay a silent tribute as I pass Rugeley station and think shame to myself that I have never made a pilgrimage there. I have been to the Raven at Shrewsbury where Palmer began poisoning his victim and that handsome, sinister lady, Mrs Brooks, who "attended race meetings", saw him in the passage with a glass in his hand, measuring a dose. She was a lucky lady, for he knew she had seen him and she was allowed to live. But I have never been to the Talbot Arms at Rugeley where the last scene was acted. I think were I to walk in Rugeley even today I should feel just such an uncomfortable shiver as Palmer's contemporaries must have felt a hundred years ago, when death was mysteriously stalking through the streets. Who's turn would it be next? His wife had died, his brother had died, now his best friend was dead, to say nothing of some other rather curious and unexplained deaths. They must have known that there was something fatal about that jovial, rosy, convivial doctor. There had been that detective, too, asking odd questions. They must have known, but nobody dared say a word until the latest victim's resolute old step-father appeared on the scene.

However, Palmer is carrying me away, as he always does. He is not one of Mr Roughead's murderers, more is the pity, for he could not have touched him without adorning

LAZY THOUGHTS OF A LAZY READER

him. He did touch on the Bravo case and a certain obscure but interesting mystery of poison at Great Burdon, but as a rule he stuck to Scotland, and among his evil doctors, Dr Pritchard and Dr William Smith are the leaders. I cannot now remember who first made me read him, but from that day I was his slave. I went so far as to write him a "fan" letter, on some pretext of an advertisement as to Adlamont, and I am very glad I did, for I thus had the great pleasure of knowing him. I spent one delicious afternoon at his Edinburgh home, looking at his "criminal" possessions. A beautiful aumry made by Deacon Brodie I remember, and a tobacco pouch tanned from the skin of Burke of the great firm of Burke and Hare. There were likewise one or two murderous door keys which he had, I think, snapped up in the manner of Autolycus, and one treasure, which his son most kindly gave me after his death, too precious to specify.

I believe Mr Roughead's love of murder was exclusively romantic. He was the kindest and most sensitive of men and would have shrunk from killing a fly, to say nothing of a mouse. Yet his feeling for a good murder was intense. He loved the scene in the Court and the contest of wits; he liked to picture the mind of the prisoner, who alone under that blank, defiant exterior knew what had really happened. He liked the sidelights thrown on the habits of people, on what they wore and what they said. The "red light", to use his own phrase, illuminated the meanest and most sordid of streets as it fell upon them. He had a positive relish, almost a humorous relish, for everything to do with the case. He knew certain books very well, and some of them happened to be the books that I knew. He also had my possibly excessive habit of quoting from them, so that I greatly enjoyed the pleasing similitudes that came into his head from Dickens or *The New Arabian Nights*. In one of the cases in a book of his there had been some mysterious lights seen in the churchyard where, I think, the victim was buried. I told him they reminded me of the lights caused by Mr Pickwick's dark lantern which so puzzled the scientific

gentleman in the lane at Clifton—"they were not meteors; they were too low, they were not glow-worms; they were too high." He was really distressed that he had not thought of it; why on earth, he wondered, had he not thought of it?

That was in one of his older cases and I must say I like my murders reasonably up to date. Henry James, with whom Mr Roughead struck up a pleasant friendship, said that he could "more or less swallow a couple of centuries", but beyond that "the testimony to manners and morals is rather blurred for me by the whole barbarism". I am all for the nineteenth century though there are exceptions, such as the story of dear Elizabeth Canning, which is not of a murder at all. Scotland, and in particular Glasgow, is rich in distinguished murders and Mr Roughead took full advantage of them. The case in which he was most closely concerned was that of Oscar Slater, since having heard the original case he gave evidence on the Appeal. That was one of his best; so was Ardlamont, of which he heard every word. So was the trial of Donald Merrett for shooting his mother. If only Mr Roughead had been alive to see his prophecy come true! "We may hear of him again" he had written, and he would have soberly rejoiced to find his forecast about that unspeakable young ruffian borne out in the feats and ultimate death of Mr Chesney.

Yet if I have to choose it shall be from his trials of women rather than men. In *Knaves' Looking Glass*, which I take to be the best of all his books, there is to be found "Mrs Donald's Crime". I would not recommend it to anyone who does not like strong meat, and for that reason no doubt it was wisely omitted from *Classic Crimes*, the ultimate collection made from his different books. But its admirable analysis of the medical evidence; the picture of a fatal train of circumstances raising an unsuspected demon in what had been thought, and might always have been thought, a perfectly dull, respectable breast; the account of the night-long search in that grim tenement building in Aberdeen—these things seem to me to show his real power.

Whether he would have agreed with this view himself I do not know. I think he would rather have chosen his two beloved Jessies, Jessie McLachlan and Jessie McPherson, and that unpleasant reprobate "Auld Fleming". H. B. Irving, a great connoisseur of such matters, had thought it the best of all murders and Mr Roughead had conducted him to see the kitchen in which it had happened, the pair posing as inspectors of some sort since the maids in the house did not know on what storied ground they cooked and ate their dinners. He also took H. B. to see the court where the bank messenger Begbie had been murdered in Walter Scott's day by an unknown assailant. One of them took the part of Begbie and the other of the unknown rushing out on him from behind a dark corner. I have no doubt they both enjoyed themselves immensely.

Besides these engaging adventures Mr Roughead had edited with a lawyer's punctilious accuracy some of the leading Scottish trials, but he liked best in his own words to "cut loose". He was a Writer to the Signet, but neither had nor sought to have any perceptible business. Yet he had an office where he wrote. In his house he had a charming library lined with books, which looked to me the perfect and most inspiring study, but the idea of doing his work there never, I gather, entered his head. I doubt if he ever had a really large number of readers, though he had a band of devoted admirers who waited eagerly for his next book. I remember that when anyone asked me what book I should like as a Christmas present the new Roughead was one of my first suggestions. People seem to me very foolish. They are always ready to read sham murders, but from the real, absorbing thing they turn coldly away. Admittedly many are dull and squalid, but when they are good, they are very, very good.

Certainly Mr Roughead's were, and one of the very pleasantest honours that I have ever enjoyed was that he dedicated *Classic Crimes* to me. I wish I had seen him more often, for he was the most delightful company. It must have appealed to his sense of humour to be on the board of a

Crematorium, an institution on which many an ambitious young poisoner must have often cast longing eyes. I had almost forgotten two more things for which I am most grateful to him. Somebody else had told me who was supposed really to have killed Miss Gilchrist, of whose murder Oscar Slater was convicted. I approached the subject in the most diplomatic possible manner, giving only the first letter of the name. Yes, said Mr Roughead, that was the man. I likewise asked him to tell me what Mr Tottenham had really said to Dr Littlejohn after Monson's trial and he told me. I can only hug these priceless pieces of knowledge to myself, not perhaps without a sparkle of malice. Does not some bloodthirsty reader wish I would tell him?

Darwin Online (<http://darwin-online.org.uk/>)

Chapter Eighteen

FINIS

IT is time to stop, and I cannot help feeling that this has turned out too light-minded a book. "At seventy-seven", Dr Johnson remarked, "it is time to be in earnest"; I am now a year older than that and yet not as earnest as I ought to be. A Fellow of Trinity, of whom I was very fond, said to me as an undergraduate that in a few years I ought to be a very different sort of person from what I was then, and the devil of it is that I am not even now by any means as different as he would have wished. I doubt if I have ever fully realised how different the world is now from the time when I used to sit in that kind friend's rooms in the Great Court.

I can honestly say that I am in earnest about one thing; I am grateful for still having something to do. It is an odd confession perhaps for one who when he was quite young longed ardently to do nothing, or nothing but play with a ball. To have work that can be done at home, that at worst can give a jog-trot, pot-boiling serenity of occupation and at best an exquisite little thrill of pleasure, here seems to me a cause for profound thankfulness.

"It had not yet come to Kipps to acknowledge any man as his better in his heart of hearts. When one does that the game is played, and one grows old indeed." That is a rather depressing remark of Mr H. G. Wells. If it is true, then surely the game must be up for nearly all of us, and we are all hopelessly old. Perhaps it is not quite true. I should have thought that most of us come to acknowledge fairly early in life that there are among our contemporaries and friends a good many who are our betters. Sometimes we attribute their superiority to luck, but in honester moments we know that in ability, energy, ambition and, perhaps most important of all, in courage, they are better than we are. It does

not seem to me a very bitter or contemptible throwing up of the sponge to admit so much.

I remember when it was bitter; that was when I first came to London and was experimenting in a futile way with one branch of the law after another, and saw at the same time my contemporaries settling down to their professions and earning at least part of their living. But once by good luck I had found my little niche, I was not in the least troubled by the fact that other people did other more useful and much more distinguished things and, incidentally, were paid more money for doing them. Nor, whether this is complacency or humility, have I ever been so since. To do the one thing you really like and can do moderately well, to do it among all manner of pleasant people and in green and pleasant places, seems to me, for one who has no illusions about touching the stars, a not unenviable lot. I have loved golf, I have liked writing, and I have had a life which combined the two. Jealousy is a horrid, aching torture of the mind and almost of the body, and I have been lucky enough or torpid enough to feel it as little as may be.

To do nothing but watch golf and write about it would have been poor, dry work; but that I have managed to avoid. Watching games in moderation is wonderfully good fun. Somewhere in Mr Neville Cardus's works there is recorded a conversation between him and another writer on cricket. They are on one of those loveliest of English grounds, Canterbury perhaps or Worcester on a sunshiny day, and one says to the other, "And to think that people pay us for doing this!" Those who have never done such a thing have sometimes rather jaundiced views of those who do. Some years ago on a Sunday morning I was listening by chance to the "Critics" on the wireless. Suddenly there spoke a gentleman who had clearly conceived a distaste for poor me, whom he had never seen. He spoke of me with a fine loathing as one who watched games in great comfort and luxury (I don't know why) and in particular did so in a grey tall hat. There at least I was guiltless, for it is a thing I have never possessed.

I present him with an alternative picture of myself in a seedy mackintosh, grey flannel trousers down at heel, and rather an antique cap pulled well down over the nose.

I do not wish that the main employment of my life had been other than it has, but I do wish that I had done and taken an interest in many other things. Not that I have ever wanted to carry a fiery cross. Far from it. I think poor Mr Jellyby's advice to his daughter, "Never have a mission", is for most people eminently sound. But there are lots of pleasant and entertaining things for which there would have been plenty of time, if I had had at once the enterprise and the humility to learn a new game. There was fishing for instance in the river Dovey, almost at the drive gates of Pantlludw, but I was far too anxious to catch my train to Aberdovey and the links. Since then I have spent a morning by the Itchen watching a friend fish in that famous stream and have thought that here was a true Eden life, at once contemplative and exciting and in perfect surroundings. And that would have been another charming subject to write about. It was a mistake not to try to learn; it was another mistake not to care about my own really quite attractive garden.

Then there is that large domain called "abroad". I have been too much like a schoolboy in several ways and lamentably like the one in Du Maurier's picture, who says, "Bother abroad, I've been there." One or two enchanted moments from that vague country come back to me, in particular the first morning that my wife and I arrived in the South of France, at Costebelle, and sat in a garden full of sunlight and drowsy scents and murmurs. It was a moment so heavenly that it could never be quite recaptured, and yet I am afraid that to have enjoyed it in so orthodox a paradise as the Riviera, confirms the view of the gentleman who portrayed me in a grey tall hat. No doubt I ought to have done it, let us say, among incredibly dirty and picturesque gipsies in some wild region of Spain; but alas, despite my descent from those romanes of Llanbryn-mair, that is not in me.

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Now I have become more and more abjectly stay-at-home. An enjoying but humble traveller, my demands do not go much beyond a drive to the Cotswolds or a long day journey to Edinburgh in the corner of a first-class carriage, with perhaps "Leuchars, change for St Andrews" as its culminating glory.

The game is indeed played for me but not quite in the sense of my original quotation. It is only my particular game of golf, since Nature forsook me. We must all come to it, one day or another, and to those who have not come to it yet I may proffer this homely piece of consolation, that it is not so bad as it sounds. For one thing you do not know when you have played your last round. You are not like the retiring cricketer who, having finished his farewell innings at Lord's, casts one last lingering look at the pitch and is swallowed up in the blackness of the pavilion for ever. No, it just happens that you play a last round on a course at the end of your visit, and somehow after an interval you feel too stiff and too slow and never begin again. A few short pitches over the flower-beds perhaps or a putt or two on the lawn; but as to putting, if you ever do put the ball in the hole you cannot stoop to pick it up again. And so it is that the sun of golf sets quite gradually, and you scarcely know when it has disappeared over the horizon and only an after-glow remains.

I am not now even certain that I have played my last shot, for some demon may yet enter into me, but I think I have. It was some two summers ago, at the ninth hole at Aldeburgh, that I went out with a kind friend, a lady golfer of eminence, and retired to such a distance from the green as I thought I could compass with my very best shot with my No. 4 iron. I hit three balls and with the last "It's in" we shrieked in unison. It was not in, but it had quivered over the edge of the tin and ended two or three inches away. That would have been a good ending and I should never have been tempted to mend it. As it is, who knows?

At any rate there is now no doubt at all about the last



The Captain driving himself in at St. Andrews, 1934

entire round, and with that knowledge there does descend a certain peace. It is soothing to reflect that you need never be cross any more, never suffer on the green from that dread disease familiarly called the "staggers", nor see the ball shoot away towards cover point off the socket of the mashie. No fatal shot, no insanelly bad piece of judgment will haunt your pillow, while your undeserving conqueror goes on from round to round, goes on to the semi-final where you ought to have been. The committee will never again wantonly insult you by putting up your handicap, and you will not be kicked out of a team in favour of one whose sole recommendation is that he once won a Bogey Competition at Piglingbury Park. You will never go out practising in the dusk on the eve of a match because you know you will not be able to sleep a wink with that slice still un-cured.

Again you can be bold, even outrageous in your criticisms. Once you had to observe a certain reticence about that contemptible fellow X, since you might draw him in a tournament and he might, absurdly enough, beat you. That fear is no more. Yet in fact, though old gentlemen in the clubhouse have rather the reputation that once attached to purple-faced generals in a London Club window, my feeling is that the retired golfer becomes gentler rather than fiercer. For my own part I often find it hard to believe that I could ever hit the ball at all, and incline to admire very commonplace players. "Good heavens," I once exclaimed at Walton Heath, "fancy halving that hole in seven," and dear James Braid, who had a fiendishly good memory, whispered in my ear, "Do you remember when you halved that hole in seven?" That was when I could still play a little. Today nothing under a half in nine would evoke my scorn, even my surprise. In spite of this increasing fear of being hypercritical and my quite genuine kindness of heart, I rather think some University golfers would rather I did not look at them. On the other hand, I know one who declares he always holes a long putt if he sees me in the crowd, and he, I am glad to say, comes from Cambridge.

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It has certainly been one of the pleasantest things about my line of life that it has brought me in contact with so many generations of undergraduate golfers and given me, I hope, so many friends much younger than myself. Young company is most refreshing to elderly people, as long as those elders know when to vanish tactfully away. If they have not mastered that art—and one can only hope and pray in one's own case—they inevitably become bores. At the moment my ears have scarcely recovered from the screams of the young gentlemen after the dinner of the two teams at Rye, but I did not pursue them into the billiard-room, I went soberly and gratefully to bed.

Tiresome people, who write letters to the newspapers, find quite irresistible the question whether the youth of today has better or worse manners than its predecessors. I shall not discuss it. They seem to have delightful ones; at any rate they are invariably kind and charming to me. When they bashfully cross the Rubicon and call me by my Christian name, I feel in reverse, the same little spasm of joy that I did years ago when a famous cricketer told me to call him not "Mr Webbe", but "Webbie". I think they are on the whole more grown-up than I was at their age, and that is natural and no doubt all to the good. We now live in such a dreadfully grown-up world.

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