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SPORT IN ENGLAND

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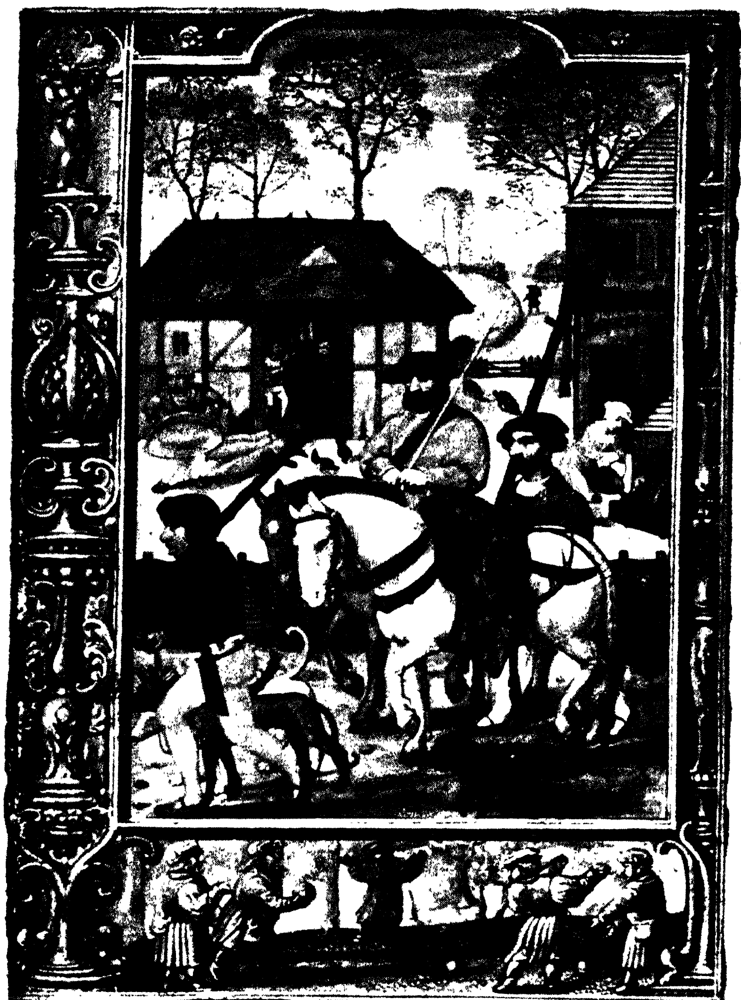
ENGLISH COUNTRY CRAFTS
ENGLISH TOWN CRAFTS
A BREATH OF ENGLAND
WHEATSHEAF AND WILLOW
ETC.

For Children

IN NATURE'S WORKSHOP



SPORT IN THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Returning from the chase; bowls.
British Museum

SPORT IN ENGLAND

A HISTORY OF TWO THOUSAND YEARS OF GAMES AND PASTIMES

By

NORMAN WYMER

With Thirty-one Plates in Half-tone

GEORGE G. HARRAP & CO. LTD

LONDON SYDNEY TORONTO BOMBAY

TO

MY MOTHER

WHO FIRST SUGGESTED THAT I SHOULD WRITE IT

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

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PREFACE

THIS book is not intended to be an exhaustive history of every individual sport played in England, but, rather, a survey of the development of the pastimes of the people over a period of some two thousand years.

Many of our games were never invented, in the true sense of the word, but evolved quite naturally according to the whims of individuals and to the peculiar local conditions in which they lived. Such ball-games as fives, real tennis, lawn tennis, and rackets, for instance, can be traced back, however remotely, to the Middle Ages, when the villagers used to amuse themselves by beating a ball against the walls of the churches, or when the noblemen played in the courtyards of their castles. And the ball itself can be taken back still further to show how it was first a symbol in the days of pagan worship.

Swimming, rowing, and many other pastimes connected with the water were not in the first place sports, but were methods employed by primitive man to cross swamps. The bole of a tree was the first boat he knew, and the various forms of craft of our own time are the result of centuries of experiment at finding improvements upon his crude types.

So also men went hunting, hawking, and shooting with the aim of obtaining food. Archery came to the fore as a defence measure, and boxing and fencing date back to the time when robbers lurked in the alleyways of the towns and men challenged one another to duels.

Of the hundreds of pastimes that evolved in such ways as these the majority have long since died out, leaving only the written word by which we may remember them. Some have managed to cling to life in the form of local customs, and the remainder have been given a new coat in the centuries so that we may enjoy them to this day.

Nearly every age has brought forth its quota of new sports, or seen the rise of an existing one to still greater popularity. The Middle Ages saw the hunting of the stag emerge as the first of our national sports, while the Stuart dynasty brought racing to the fore as the 'sport of kings.' The Georgians, great devotees of the prize-ring and the cock-pit, gave us cricket, and in their time the fox

came into his own in the hunting-field, while the Victorians raised the cruel and bitter street football to an altogether higher plane in the Rugby and Association games and gave us as well Wimbledon lawn tennis and golf.

Since the British sporting tradition, still the finest in the world, was, in the days before professionalism gained such a hold, linked inexorably with the everyday life and work of the people, I have treated the subject period by period, in the form of a social history. I have dealt only briefly with the present, and instead have concentrated on the past, taking my history only down to the formation of the controlling body of each sport. Those who wish for technical information and for details of records and achievements in our own time should turn to the many excellent modern books on the individual sports. I have included only such rules as are necessary to show the evolution of any particular sport.

Some may criticize the fact that I have not dealt at greater length with golf. The reason is simply that despite its present popularity golf, though an ancient Scottish pursuit, has gained its following in England only comparatively recently, and, in any case, has changed in main essentials but little through the ages.

I wish to thank those who have generously provided me with material for the illustrations in this book, and Mr C. E. Hare and Country Life, Ltd, for allowing me to draw freely on Mr Hare's *The Language of Sport*, for some of the material in Chapter III.

I should like also to express my gratitude to my publishers, who put at my disposal several hundred books and magazines for the purpose of research.

N. W.

EASTERGATE,
NR. CHICHESTER

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CHAPTER I

An Ancient Tradition

WHEN, some thousands of years ago in the Old Stone Age, men found that they had to kill wild animals in order to eat, that they must devise a method of crossing water, and that some system of transport and communications was imperative, sport appeared in its embryonic form in England.

Thus he who first set off in those distant ages to penetrate the dense forests, and then succeeded in killing a beast with his bone or flint implement—or perhaps simply with a boulder—unwittingly became England's first huntsman. While he who started hurling stones at the beast—first by hand and then with the aid of a rough catapult made of a stick and thong—was an archer in the making. It may even have been through his frantic endeavours to find the most satisfactory way of overpowering one of these animals in the event of attack that man first became a wrestler; quite possibly he went so far as to practise his methods on his family, with the deliberate intention of developing a technique. Similarly, the man who, faced with that stretch of water to cross, straddled the fallen trunk of a tree and tried to propel himself by means of his hands and feet was an oarsman of a kind, just as the less fortunate one who, discovering no such tree-trunk, risked his life by wading straight into the water, only to find that as soon as he was out of his depth he could, happily, keep himself afloat and mobile merely by lashing out with his arms in a particular way, became our first swimmer.

Of such times, however, we have, of course, no records; we must content ourselves with circumstantial evidence and with occasional archæological discoveries. It is not until much later that we begin to meet the people themselves at play. Nevertheless even before we meet them—even before the days of Christianity—we do come upon little pieces of evidence to prove that already they had been disporting themselves in a whole host of ways. Accompanied by their dogs, they would hunt bears and beavers, red deer, wild boars, wolves, and many other dangerous animals

in the forests. They would ride along the rough trackways, fish in the lakes and streams, row and swim in the rivers. Furthermore, it appears almost certain that they held wrestling contests and cock-fights in the fields, and that they delighted to dance to the accompaniment of music—a strange music, made by beating a stick against a split animal-hide stretched across a framework of branches to form a kind of drum.

Probably their first attempts at fishing were undertaken with the cupped hands serving as the only trap. When that proved too irksome and not very productive they took to harpooning the fish with their flint-headed spears. Later, as they became still less primitive, they looked for further improvements, until before long they were using nets, and were drawing these along between two wickerwork boats, craft not unlike the coracles used by the salmon fishermen on the Welsh rivers to-day.

And so it was with rowing. As the fallen tree-trunk had an unpleasant habit of turning turtle, and the water itself was often cold to the feet, these early 'sportsmen' had devised the idea, first of hollowing out the trunk to provide seating-room, and then of binding together the ends of branches and covering the whole of this rough framework with the hide of some animal which they had already eaten, while at the same time roughly fashioning further branches to serve as oars. In course of time they had, moreover, learned to take advantage of the natural elements, and began to hoist improvised sails of membranes to allow the wind to speed their travel and lighten their work. It was in such craft, then, that they could now make their way down the rivers, and through their latest experiment were proving themselves not only reasonably good oarsmen, but also yachtsmen of a kind.

At the start of the Christian era the people of England could be found engaged in archery, skating, running, wrestling, throwing the javelin, boxing, dancing, and, indeed, in many other sports besides. Owing to the need to find some easier, less dangerous, and speedier method of crossing solid ice than simply by walking, or slithering, over it, in those cruel winters when the rivers were often frozen for weeks on end, skating was greatly in evidence, and for this the brisket-bones of oxen would be attached to the feet.

Although many other forms of exercise were being practised in England at this time, no one, as yet, exerted himself merely for pleasure: all these things were a stern necessity—an aid to existence—rather than a pleasant manner of passing the leisure hours.

TRAP-BALL
Fourteenth century.
"Picture Post" Library

WRESTLING
Thirteenth century.
By courtesy of the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge

BALL-PLAY
Eleventh century.
British Museum

FOURTEENTH-CENTURY FOOTBALL
From a Gloucester misericorde.
"Picture Post" Library

STREET FOOTBALL
A game once played with a cow's bladder and still surviving as a traditional custom in a few parts.
"Picture Post" Library

Sport came to England of necessity: without it our primitive ancestors could not have survived, any more than if certain of their number had not at once turned craftsmen.

As time went on and England, disunited and the constant prey of invaders, found herself in ever-increasing need of able-bodied men to defend her, certain forms of exercise began to flourish in our island as a means of training and hardening our young manhood. Indeed, by the time of the Roman Conquest sport—although crude in its make-up and even yet not regarded as sport—had become a firmly established feature of our everyday life.

Under the Romans, then, sport took on a new lease of life, for already they had developed in their own country many pastimes quite unknown to us, and, furthermore, had learned to derive a certain amount of enjoyment from some of them. Naturally they were not slow in trying to instil that same spirit into the people of England and in teaching them their games.

One of their first acts was to build extensive amphitheatres at such places as Dorchester and Silchester, at each of which the gladiators—slaves who might expect emancipation if they reached old age—held their contests. Bedecked in all their splendour, their visored helmets crested with yellow plumes, and carrying superbly decorated shields before their gaudy-coloured tunics, their horses equally well protected by lavish trappings, they would first parade and fight with blunt-edged wooden spears, daggers, and nets, by way of a trial round. Then, exchanging their harmless weapons for others with sharp edges and very vulnerable, they proceeded to engage in deadly combat, the contest ending only when one opponent was killed outright, mortally wounded, or completely entrapped in the net. This was no place for any but the brave. If a man appeared to lack enthusiasm for the 'sport' he would be whipped into the fight, while even if he was wounded other than critically there was no guarantee that he would even then be left in peace. It was for the spectators to decide. If they considered that he had fought with courage he would most probably be released; if they thought otherwise a dagger would be driven through him as he lay, and his body carried off on a bier, which was always kept conveniently at hand on such occasions.

In such way the Romans made the English sports arena the training-ground for military pursuits, and doubtless the spectators at any rate revelled in it. For here was pageantry with all the excitement of combat, and to them this *was* sport. Perhaps, too,

the Romans indulged in boxing matches in these amphitheatres, for pugilism was already known in Rome.[1]

Fortunately not all sport was so bloodthirsty in Roman times, nor, indeed, did it any longer necessarily fulfil a utilitarian object. The spirit of contest—friendly on occasion, but more often otherwise—was uppermost, and the Romans were always pleased to test their skill against other men. Whether or not the natives of this island took readily to such pursuits is difficult to say, but it seems that they must eventually have followed the Romans' lead effectively, as by the end of the four hundred years or so of their occupation the people of England were indulging in many sports and pastimes long common in Rome, and, in many cases, unknown elsewhere.

On the well-planned roads that they had lost no time in building all over England the Roman legionaries delighted to hold their chariot-races, while in their amphitheatres they would stage saddle-horse matches. As far back as the third century Wetherby, in Yorkshire, was a centre for such matches, and it is probable that the famous Roodee at Chester became a venue of equal standing. Yet, important as these events may have appeared to those taking part, they were nevertheless still impromptu affairs, held as tests of skill or to settle a bet—if only a word-of-mouth bet—as to the relative superiority of the riders' horses. At this period, as in Saxon times, every man who in the course of his normal duty was required to sit a horse revealed an undoubted pride in his ability to handle it to the best advantage. So that one thing is certain: both riders would have been giving of their best in a race that was definitely a *genuine* test, which, unhappily, is by no means always the case in these days.

Strangely enough, hunting appears to have made but little progress under the Romans. Joseph Strutt tells us[2] that it was an established maxim "to invest the right of such things as had no master with those who were the first possessors. Wild beasts, birds, and fishes became the property of those who first could take them." Thus it was not really until the arrival of the Saxons that hunting in the modern sense even began to be recognized, when, with typical German aggressiveness, the overlords, to satisfy their own desires, robbed the country folk of their natural rights. Such rights, however, were not to remain for long their sole prerogative: soon

[1] 'Pugil' is a Latin word, though the 'cestus' had a Greek origin.

[2] *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England.*

they were appropriated by the King himself, who saw fit to grant special hunting privileges to his chosen few—to such men whom he considered it wiser to hold as friends than as enemies. It was in this spirit that hunting began to flourish as a fashionable pastime of the Saxon nobility, practised both on foot and on horseback.

While hunting was still pursued mainly as a quest for food, the coursing of hares was also established. Sometimes those taking part would send out a party of hare-finders—scouts who would report back to them upon the number of hares sitting and upon their location—before setting off themselves; sometimes they would go straight into the fray without any previous 'reconnaissance.'

The Rev. W. B. Daniel gives us an idea[1] of their tactics when the latter was the method chosen. The company, he tells us, would be drawn up in a straight line, no matter whether they were mounted or on foot, whereupon they would proceed in a direct line to a given point, on reaching which they wheeled round in a semicircle and made their way back again to the starting-point, thereby covering fresh ground on their return. One man, it appears, was appointed to take command of the sport, and if a considerable number of dogs was being worked he would give orders for certain of them to be slipped at the appropriate time, "according as the hare took to the right or left." Such tactics remained in practice until nearly the end of the eighteenth century, although quite early on the killing of the hare seems to have been of only secondary importance. These sportsmen, according to Daniel, derived their pleasure from testing the respective speeds of their greyhounds, and, indeed, many were even pleased when the hare escaped.

To return to hunting. Although it had taken a firm hold, this pursuit was still far from universally popular even among the nobility. While Ethelred prohibited it on Sundays, Archbishop Theodore forbade the clergy, on penalty, from indulging in it at *any* time. Canute, it is said—although some have expressed doubt about this—carried matters a stage further. If, admittedly, he was generous-minded enough to allow a freeman to hunt on his own land if he wished, he was never slow to see that punishment was meted out if that freeman should be so rash as to encroach on any of the royal forests—if only by accident—and hunt a stag until he panted. The penalty for such an offence was the divestment of his liberties, for what they were worth, for one year. If, however, a villein were to commit such an outrage, assuming that it was his

[1] *Rural Sports* (London, 1801).

first offence—or, at least, the first time that he had been discovered in the act, for many did risk the penalties—the law decreed that his right hand must be severed above the wrist; if it was his second offence it meant the death-penalty. Similarly, a bondsman might be outlawed.

Although some were averse to hunting for its own sake, such harsh penalties were prompted to a great extent by a completely different sentiment—greed. Since hunting was now fashionable, kings, princes, and, indeed, the nobility in general were at pains to keep the sport as their exclusive preserve. Already hunting formed part of a nobleman's education, and royalty were the leaders of fashion. Edward the Confessor, according to William of Malmesbury, was an enthusiastic huntsman, while from the Bayeux Tapestry we know that Harold was often accompanied by his hawk.

And what of the hawks? In these early times, when shot-guns were unknown, these birds of prey were highly prized, and the nobility devoted considerable time to training these creatures to catch other birds. Wherever they went, on horseback or on foot, there would their hawks go too, each bird perched on the right hand of its owner. Indeed, some, it is recorded, were loath to be parted from them even when going into battle, since such close contact was deemed to be the best way of enabling a bird to get to know its master.

When hawking was first recognized in England it is impossible to say. Some writers have declared, without any apparent authenticity, that it came to us with the Romans. Be that as it may, there seems little doubt that it was popular in Saxon times. Strutt records that about the middle of the eighth century Boniface, Archbishop of Mons—who, incidentally, was a native of England—presented Ethelbert, King of Kent, with one hawk and two falcons, while according to the same authority Alfred the Great showed early proficiency at the sport. The granting of a charter to the Abbey of Abingdon forbidding hawkers from trespassing on the monastery lands seems proof in itself of the high place hawking must already have held in the lives of the people.

The sportsmen of those days appear to have set out, accompanied by their dogs, on foot or on horseback, and to have worked in parties. As soon as the dogs had 'flushed' the birds the hawk would be released, when, provided it had been well trained, it would seize its prey in mid-air and carry it back to its master. The

training of the hawks was now a highly skilled work, forming "one of the essentials in the education of a young man of rank." Yet, popular as hawking had undoubtedly become in Saxon times, its popularity was as nothing compared with that which it was to gain in the Middle Ages.

To return to the Romans. Although they practised many forms of sport in crude and rough style as a training for war, they also managed to derive a great deal of enjoyment from some of their pursuits. Probably it was they who introduced the ball into England, thereby completely revolutionizing our play, for, in their own land they had enjoyed a number of forms of 'ball-play' long before they invaded ours.

The use of the ball itself is as obscure as it is ancient, originating most likely from some Eastern pagan festival. Mr H. J. Massingham has recalled that at certain Egyptian festivals it was customary for the priests to toss a ball from one to the other, "and this ball was no plaything, but a symbol of the mummified head of Osiris." Indeed, it seems a likely explanation that the ball emerged in the first place as nothing more nor less than an emblem, for in the Middle Ages we still come upon instances of parsons in English churches following a similar practice as part of the Easter festival.

One writer[1] goes so far as to declare that such ball-play took place in Roman times. Quoting Fosboah as the source of his information, he says:

> An inflated ball, not of the size to be grasped by one hand only, being given out at Easter, the Dene and his representatives began an antiphone suited to Easter Day; then, taking the ball in his left hand, he commenced a dance suited to the antiphone, the others dancing round hand in hand; at intervals the ball was bandied or kicked to each of the choristers. The dancing, kicking and antiphone being concluded, the choir went to take refreshment.

A popular form of Roman ball-play consisted of inflating a leather ball, known as a 'follis,' and punching it either into the air or else to a companion by means of the fist or palm of the hand. Whether there were any rules is doubtful. More likely the purpose was simply to see how long they could keep it in the air without letting it fall to the ground, though possibly some regarded it as a pleasant alternative to the human target, an object which they could hit as hard as they pleased without fear of the blow being returned!

[1] *Baily's Magazine of Sports*, April 1868.

Not all their ball-games were so simple or so apparently aimless. Considerably more strenuous was the variety known as 'harpastum,' and if, as seems likely, they introduced this during their occupation, then it is to the Romans that credit must go for first sowing the seeds of Rugby football in England.

Quoting an ancient writer, the Rev. F. Marshall gives us[1] a very brief description of harpastum. The players, it seems, formed two sides, and the game was started by throwing the ball into the air from a central line separating the teams. Immediately the ball was in the air the competitors would make a wild dash for it, when, by fair means or foul—more likely foul, since in those days it mattered not if you killed a man so long as you achieved your aim—they would endeavour to run with the ball and 'touch down' on a line behind their opponents.

A more complete picture of the sport can, perhaps, be seen in the ancient game of hurling, once played widely in Cornwall, and quite possibly a survival of harpastum itself. In such districts any number of players would compete, and a wooden ball, coated with silver and engraved with armorial bearings, would be used instead of the commonplace leather one. In one or two areas hurling still takes place, and more often than not the contest starts at midday and—unless one of the players is successful in reaching his goal beforehand—ends only with the failing light or when all finally submit to physical exhaustion. The goal as a rule comprises some country house, perhaps as much as five miles from the starting-point. At one time a number of mounted players sometimes took part, but that practice died out long ago, since the horsemen could so easily be dismounted. At any rate, the object of each side, as always, is to catch up with the man with the ball, seize it from him—by fair means only—and then make back with it in the opposite direction towards the appointed goal. But only one man at a time may set upon an opponent.

As we have seen, the game may last for hours, but at the end there will be merriment and drink in plenty, the latter being provided, as a rule, by the squire to whose house the ball is eventually delivered. And who will deny that it has been well earned?

The principles of hurling, even as it survives in Cornwall to-day, or those of its equivalent, camp-ball, as practised in some of the eastern counties, differ little from those of harpastum, and

[1] *Football: the Rugby Union Game* (Cassell, 1925).

certainly the origin of each game is lost in antiquity, both antedating the Norman Conquest.

But, whether or not the Romans did, in fact, introduce harpastum into this country, it is certain that some form of football was being played in the cities of Chester and Derby at least within a very short time of the Romans' departure. However, beyond the fact that at both these cities the game was played through the streets and was extremely rough-and-ready, and dangerous to competitors and pedestrians alike, there is no evidence to show us how it was played. Probably it was nothing more nor less than a glorified version of harpastum, except that here the players appear to have learned to use their feet as well as their hands, while there is a popular belief that the first ball used at Chester was the head of a Dane. The inhabitants, early historians assure us, had captured this unfortunate individual when a band of Danes was marching upon their city, and had at once proceeded to celebrate their victory by cutting off his head and kicking it about the streets in signal contempt for the would-be invaders.

This so-called 'match' was not to remain an isolated affair, however. Soon a leather ball had taken the place of the Dane's head, and it became customary for the local shoemakers to meet every Shrove Tuesday and, in the presence of the Mayor of Chester, deliver to the drapers at the Hall of the Roodee one football, made of leather and valued at not less than 3*s.* 4*d.* And this ball was to be played—though how is not stated—from there to the Common Hall.

Thus did both Rugby and Association football appear in embryo well before the arrival of William the Conqueror. And if harpastum gave birth to football, hurling, and camp-ball, so, in turn, hurling, as later played in Ireland, developed into hockey, as we shall see in another chapter.

Many were the forms of ball-play practised by the Romans. Of the majority no trace remains to prove that they were ever introduced into our country or that such as were even survived the departure of the legionaries. Strutt, however, writing at the turn of the eighteenth century, thought that he saw a distinct similarity between the Roman game of 'paganica' and the golf then being played in certain districts in the North of England. A humble version of modern golf, paganica, he tells us, was essentially a rustic game, played more often by the poor than by the well-to-do. Selecting some tree or other equally suitable target to serve as their

goal, the country folk would wander leisurely over the fields hitting a small leather ball stuffed with feathers in the direction of their objective, their idea being simply to see who could hit it in the least number of shots. Their club, most likely, was nothing better than a curved stick cut from the hedgerow. Since Strutt saw such a resemblance to paganica in the game which the Northerners played, it is quite possible that the Romans did introduce their game into rural England. Still, the game that Strutt witnessed could hardly have been more than a local survival, for golf proper came to us, not from Rome, but from Scotland, and at a much later date.

There is another matter for which the Romans may well be given credit. The chances are that they also popularized swimming in England, for the Roman baths had long been famous, while, according to Shakespeare, Julius Cæsar himself was a great swimmer.

If the Romans made sport a pleasant affair the Saxons imbued a completely opposite spirit. Under them bodily exercise tended once more to become a means to an end. Children in their adolescence would be taught to run, hunt, hawk, leap, and indulge in all manner of pastimes as part of their curricula. They had, moreover, to play hard, and, since it was the toughest exercise of all, wrestling grew to be regarded as of paramount importance in the upbringing of the sons of noblemen. For, to the Saxon mind, strength meant everything, and he who could not wrestle well was counted as naught.

Just as to-day there are styles peculiar to Devon and Cornwall, to Cumberland and Westmorland, and to one or two other districts, so at that time many localized forms of wrestling had already become quite well established. This was only to be expected in an age when transport was so lamentable that the inhabitants of one village were foreigners to their neighbours, and when many tribes had been spreading their different influences in the various localities for centuries past. Two things the wrestlers of those times appear to have had in common, however. All seem to have obtained their hold by means of the open hand and to have aimed at gripping the coat or tunic of an adversary, rather than the body: in those days, of course, clothes were worn by wrestlers. Also the winner—no matter what the district—knew that, provided he had fought well, he could look forward at the end to an award of either a cock or a ram, assuming, that is to say, that he was in a fit state

to receive it, which was by no means certain in such times, when men would often wrestle against each other until one was dead and the other all but, if not completely, insensible.

That was sport. But then, as we have seen, the outlook towards sport was changing back again. In Saxon times it became compulsory, on penalty of death, for every boy in his later teens to indulge in a number of different forms of exercise, and a man would be judged as much by his physical strength as by the amount of cash in his pocket. Physical fitness was essential for each individual who went to make up the Saxon hordes. To the Saxon way of thinking strength could be acquired only through sport. In other words, sport grew to be regarded in much the same light as is 'P.T.' to-day, with the exception that we now refrain from killing a man who refuses to take part in such exercises!

Like the Romans before them, both the Saxons and Danes practised many forms of sport in England. There is the well-worn story of how Edgar the Peaceable took the helm and with eight other kings rowed in a barge along the river Dee from his palace at West Chester to the Church of St John and back again. If this story is true it proves that the Saxons must have numbered rowing among their primary training sports, and certainly there is no doubt that both they and the Danes began to attach increasing importance to the practice of archery for military purposes.

It may well be that it was the Saxons who first developed archery in England. Viscount Dillon points out[1] that it is from their words 'boga' and 'arewa' that we have acquired the words 'bow' and 'arrow,' while Virgil assures us that Alfred numbered archers among his army. Then, too, the Bayeux Tapestry strengthens the belief that the long-bow may already have been in use in England before the arrival of the Normans. Even so, it is unlikely that in Saxon England the bow and arrow were employed in more than haphazard fashion for hunting wild animals, rather as the Stone Age men had hunted with flint-headed spears shot from bows fashioned from the hedgerow. It was probably not until Norman times that archery became important as a means of national defence.

Still, if sport lost its more pleasant atmosphere with the departure of the Romans, both Saxons and Danes, like the Romans, played no small part in laying the foundation-stone of the great British sporting tradition. If the Romans introduced a number of

[1] *Archery* (Badminton Library).

new games and showed us how to derive a certain pleasure from our pursuits, the Saxons saw to it that all forms of exercise were practised hard and well.

Thus when at last the Normans landed in England they found a people already well versed in many kinds of play, a people who had trained themselves in a hard field, but who, nevertheless, had once known how to enjoy themselves under the Romans, and who, at least since the days of Alfred, had begun to enjoy themselves again. For it is to Alfred that main credit is given for starting the country fairs, and these, although religious in intent, meant games —*party* games, we would probably consider them—dancing, and general merriment at the end of a long day, when the various religious ceremonies had been performed and when the merchants had completed their business. From earliest times the villagers had held fairs of a kind as part of their pagan festivals. But whereas in the first place they had performed strange dances in reverence to their gods, now they were beginning to frolic and dance more in the spirit of merry-makers.

Under the Normans, then, sport in England started on its great progress—a progress that was to culminate in England's becoming the greatest sporting arena in the world.

CHAPTER II

Sport in the Middle Ages

WITH the landing of the Normans the face of England changed. The tournament was soon to be brought from France; the village fair was to become more of a sports arena; the spirit of Chaucer's Merrie England was on its way.

This was the age of chivalry, and the tournament—although banned in England until the reign of Stephen on account of its manifold dangers—was designed as much to enable the nobleman to display his knightly accomplishments before his womenfolk as to provide him with a suitable form of military training. The tourneys and jousts were the most important features, as it was here that he could display his gallantry to the best advantage.

In a tourney any number of knights might enter the arena; in a joust the contest would be confined to two. The tournament was an elaborate and colourful occasion, often lasting several days and attracting the nobility of the Continent in numbers. If in the reign of Richard I it was restricted to only a few selected districts such as Cheape and Smithfield, in London, and to Salisbury and Wilton, Warwick and Kenilworth, Stamford, Brackley, and Tickhill, yet it was promoted on every occasion where pageantry was deemed justified, and was rendered the more glorious by the fact that only those of the highest birth were allowed to compete. Nor did the knights lack anything in the knowledge of the best ways of creating an 'atmosphere.' Perhaps they were inspired by the thought of the large number of beautifully dressed women who would pack the stands, especially erected around the arena for the occasion. For these women played no small part in the proceedings: not only would they, by lawful right, mete out the punishments to the less courageous, but it was they who would select the champions at the end of the day. After a stately banquet, at which the wine flowed freely, followed by dancing and general merriment, the heralds would hand them lists of the knights competing on either side, so that together they could make their choice. And when all had agreed upon one name from each list the prizes

would be handed to the winners by "two young virgins of quality" from among them.

Quoting from one of the Harleian manuscripts, Strutt gives us a picture of the scene. After a general proclamation had been made announcing that a "superb achievement at arms and a grand and noble tournament" was to be held two named barons would take up positions at their respective pavilions two days before the tournament was due to commence. There, after setting up his banner in front of his parade, each would wait patiently, so that those wishing to fight with him might set their banners alongside. In the evening each baron and his followers would expose their helmets in the window of their pavilion and hold a parade—a parade which we can only liken unto the show of horses in the paddock at a modern race-meeting. The sole object, it seems, was to satisfy the curiosity of the sightseers, and not until they had, in fact, done so was either team expected "to depart to make merry, dance, and live well." Even then the preparations were by no means over. Next morning they would be back again by ten o'clock, when the Lord of the Parade and the Governor—who seem to have acted rather in the nature of tournament secretaries—would issue any special instructions and announce the prizes to be won. These prizes appear to have differed somewhat for each side, for the document tells us that "he who shall best resist the strokes of his adversary, and return them with most adroitness," on the one side was to receive "a very rich sword," whereas the best performer on the other could look for "an helmet equally valuable."

Because a man underwent all these preliminaries it did not necessarily follow that his entry would finally be accepted. By ten o'clock on the morning of the tournament the arms, banners, and helmets had to be exposed afresh, after which each baron was required to nail the blazon of his arms to the roof of his pavilion, whereupon any knight not already present was deemed disqualified.

The formalities over, the king-at-arms and heralds would pay two visits to each pavilion in turn—the first to urge the champions to get ready, calling them "to achievement, to achievement," and the second to bid them "come forth, knights and esquires, come forth." Thus, amid pomp and ceremony and to the accompaniment of the piping of the minstrels, the barons would lead their followers into the arena. When they had taken up their positions of honour in front of their parades, and each gallant champion

was at his appointed place inside the large railed-in pen, his banner by his side, two cords would be stretched between the competitors, leaving a convenient lane for the passage of the heralds and other officials. These cords acted as starting-tapes, and not until the last of the various officials had retired to the end of the lane would the ropes be cut and the fight be joined.

Unlike the sports of the Roman amphitheatre, this was no killing affair. The champions were armed with pointless, blunt-edged swords and with maces suspended from the saddles of their horses, and each knight had the right to take with him one page—the number was later increased to three—to look after his needs during the combat, one who fulfilled much the same rôle as a 'second' at a duel, handing him his sword or mace whenever the knight required to change from one to the other, or attending to his armour should he get into difficulties. It was all very gentlemanly—at least in intention if not always in execution. The fight might be hard and fierce, yet the weapons were comparatively harmless, and the most that anyone appears to have wished for was that he should show good horsemanship, withstand the onslaught of his adversary with courage, and, given good fortune, succeed in unhorsing him. To display courage and dexterity and to defeat your opponent decisively, but without *intentionally* hurting him, was the maxim in this new age of chivalry. Yet it was not uncommon for the champions to be thrown and trampled to death under the feet of the horses. In one tournament in 1240, for instance, we hear of no fewer than sixty knights meeting misfortune, some of them being choked by the dust. But this was purely accidental.

Precautions were taken against the possibility of a man making the occasion an excuse for settling a private feud. Not only was each knight entering the arena required to vow that he was competing purely for the pleasure and advantages of the sport, but, moreover, umpires, or 'speakers,' were elected whose duty it was to ensure that the show was conducted throughout in that spirit. Anyone wilfully breaking the rules was liable to have his horse confiscated and himself be sentenced to imprisonment for anything up to three years, according to his rank and social position. And these speakers had the power to bring any tourney to an end if they considered that its continuance was conducive to ill-feeling.

All those entering a tournament had first to pay a tax levied by the Crown, the contributions varying according to the rank of the combatant. An earl, for instance, might be expected to find

twenty marks, a baron ten, a landed knight four, and a landless knight two. In addition all were bound to keep the peace and to refrain from causing damage to the royal forests.

A tourney was not confined solely to the knights. Just as the sport is popularly supposed to have been started in the first place by a number of Trojan youths as a childish pastime, so we learn from Fitzstephen, chaplain to St Thomas à Becket, that every Sunday in Lent, immediately after dinner, it became customary

> for great crowds of young Londoners, mounted on war-horses, well trained, to perform the necessary turnings and evolutions, to ride into the fields in distinct bands, armed with shields and headless lances, where they exhibited the representation of battles and went through a variety of warlike exercises.

The tactics adopted by these youths were not, however, quite the same, for

> the youth, being divided into opposite companies, encountered one another; in one place they fled and others pursued without being able to overtake them; in another place one of the bands overtook and overturned the other.

Perhaps on account of their youthfulness they were unable to withstand the sudden onslaughts; at any rate, they seem to have made it more of a chasing affair.

But if the tourneys were the more spectacular the jousts were none the less popular, and many a knight welcomed such occasions as providing a suitable opportunity of focusing attention on himself through the eyes of his lady fair. Rid of all the confusion of the tourney and with only himself and his opponent in the arena, he could now indeed reveal his true valour and prove himself worthy of her heart. For it was for her, and for her alone—or so he would have her believe—that he fought, and this was his chance of proving that he was well able to defend her rights and her honour, come what may. When he went into the fray he would most likely wear on his right arm a handkerchief or garter, or perhaps even the sleeve of one of her dresses, which she had given him as a token and proof of her confidence at that last meeting, when she had wished him God-speed.

Such symbols were all very well, but what if he lost? Certainly it was no light-hearted business, for sometimes sharp-edged weapons would be employed in place of the blunted lances. At times like these the knight would wear full war armour, and don a special

tilting-helm and a rather stouter shield, the latter especially designed to allow the blows to glance off. Since these jousts became an altogether more serious affair, sometimes lasting several days, the choice of weapons became a matter of no small moment. No one knight was made responsible for the choice, for, even though each fought singly in the arena, there were others to be considered. Though he who issued the challenge would state the number of days the jousts were to last, he nevertheless relied on his friends to rally to his support and joust in their turn after him. Similarly with the knight who accepted the challenge.

Thus the jousts really comprised a series of contests, first between the knights themselves, and afterwards between each of their approved supporters. Then, again, since he who was not unhorsed enjoyed the right to a second turn at the end of the programme, many might make not one but several appearances in the arena. And although prizes would be awarded by the Queen of Beauty to each of the successful combatants, the final result would be adjudged on a kind of points system based on the performances of all. Naturally, then, all had a right to decide upon the type of weapon to be used, and this was done by each tapping, in turn, one of a number of shields with the point of his sword, each shield representing a different weapon.

When all these formalities had been completed a hush would fall upon the crowd—a hush of excitement, mingled, no doubt, with a touch of anguish and fear on the part of some of the ladies—as the knights rode forth at each other, one at a time, from the two ends of the arena. There would be no stopping or faltering now—no hesitation. This was a battle for the honour of a lady, and each would disregard his personal safety as he rode straight at the other and proceeded to brandish his lance this way and that, striking now at the head, now at the body, in his feverish attempt to make his opponent lose his seat while maintaining his own. One good blow at the helmet was, more often than not, sufficient, for this was calculated to cause even the most experienced horseman to reel backward and lose his balance. And even if he failed to deliver a good, straight blow he would probably succeed in breaking his opponent's sword, which, if, admittedly, not so spectacular or convincing, was nevertheless the next best thing. The joust was, indeed, every bit as much a test of swordsmanship and riding as of gallantry.

Not all the riders stuck to orthodox methods, however: already

they had learned the art of 'jockeying.' So that by the middle of the fifteenth century we hear of the introduction of a modified form of jousting—running at the tilt—aimed at preventing such unfair practices. By stretching a rope, draped with cloth and known as the 'toile,' across the lists—the enclosed space where the contest took place—it was decided to separate the opposing combatants and compel them to fight across the barrier, the technique now adopted being for two knights to ride towards each other down its length until they met somewhere near the centre, when the fight would begin. Later the toile gave place to a more solid wooden wall.

Naturally this resulted in a different technique. No longer able to deliver those telling direct blows, the jouster had to content himself with angled shots and with simply breaking the spear. Indeed, it was even necessary for him to ride with his lance carried at an angle across the horse's neck. Yet, if never so spectacular as the earlier style, this new version of jousting was considerably less dangerous, and consequently soon enjoyed an extensive following. It became so popular, in fact, that in 1466 we read of John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, framing a set of rules for running at the tilt, and devising a definite system of points scoring. Henceforth, for instance, if a man broke a spear between the saddle and the fastening of the helmet to the breast he was to score one point, whereas if he broke it on the saddle he would lose a point; similarly, if he broke the spear in such a way as to unhorse or unarm his opponent so that he was unable to run the next course he might count on three points. But here, again, if he was unfortunate enough to strike the tilt twice he would forfeit a like number of points. We learn, too,[1] that no prize was to be given to a man who struck his opponent when his back was turned; who struck the tilt three times; or who lost his helmet twice, unless this had been occasioned solely by the behaviour of his mount.

As we have seen, the tourneys and jousts were only for men of high birth, barred to any below the rank of esquire. To compensate for this tilting at the quintain—which might be practised either on foot or on horseback—provided a more general form of amusement, where all, from kings and princes down to the lowliest peasant, could compete. Not that they would ever compete together. There were all sorts and conditions of quintain-play, and we find the competitors banding together in an atmosphere of

[1] *Encyclopædia of Sport.*

extravagant luxury or humble poverty according to their station in life. In other words, the more lowly were always careful to keep their place.

The quintain itself comprised, first, a tree-trunk; later, a staff surmounted in a shield; later still, a wooden image—perhaps of a Turk or a Saracen—mounted on a pivot to render it mobile. Tilting at this strange robot can have been no easy business. Strutt, who believed quintain-play to have been older than either the tourneys or the jousts, tells us that the horseman had to direct his lance with great adroitness, and aim to make his stroke "upon the forehead between the eyes or upon the nose." Should he fail to strike his target fair and square he might well become the laughing-stock of the spectators, for the robot was constructed in a way that caused it when inefficiently struck to swing round and hit back by means of a wooden sabre fixed into the right limb. This particular type of quintain was, however, a somewhat costly affair, and could thus be used only by the wealthier classes; yet the idea of striking at something that could return the blow so appealed to the imagination that the lower orders of society were not slow to devise cheaper ideas of their own. Perhaps they would arrange the post in such a way as to allow a bag of sand to descend upon the competitors if they missed their blows; perhaps they would elect to tilt at a water-butt, so placed as to give an equally embarrassing reply. Some might even get a friend to sit on a three-legged stool and act as a human quintain, in which case the tilter would aim to knock the quintain off his seat, while he, in turn, would endeavour to make the tilter lose his balance by parrying his blows with his shield.

As in the jousts, the winners would be chosen on a points system. There was, however, a difference. This was not a match between man and robot, but simply an open contest to see who could score the most points by his skill in attacking the same target. Thus a blow on the top of the nose and between the eyes might count for three, while a similar shot delivered below the eyes would only score two—and so on. On the other hand, a thrust against the shield, if it succeeded in swinging the quintain round, might justly be deemed to have been well defended, and so disqualify the rider for the rest of the day.

Quintain-play had one advantage over the jousts: it could take place on water as well as on land. Fitzstephen tells us that the Londoners practised a peculiar variety in boats on the Thames.

A shielded mast was set up in the river, while the tilter, standing in the prow, was carried at full speed by the tide towards it. While his object was simply to strike the shield with such force as to break his lance, taking care at the same time to retain his balance under the force of the impact, this was by no means as easy as it might sound. If he struck it fair and square all would be well; if not, into the water he went, there to be picked up in all humility by some boat, kept conveniently at hand on such occasions. We can picture the excitement of the spectators. There was nothing slow about boat-tilting: a successful shot was usually a pleasant sight, while there was always the prospect of a good many dippings to brighten the proceedings if they should tend to weary.

If the tournament dominated the medieval scene from the spectators' point of view, it was not necessarily the most important sport of the times. Archery, if by no means universally popular, was now held in highest esteem by the upper classes. For the bow and arrow, so long the strong arm of the French, was to prove the even stronger arm of the English under this new Norman influence, with the result that archery, both a pleasurable pastime and an excellent means of training men for war, gained a following quite unprecedented.

It was largely compulsion that brought this about. Quite soon after the Conquest we read of laws being introduced compelling rich and poor alike to hold their regular practice shoots. And, as time goes on, these laws become steadily more stringent. We read in a Statute of Winchester of Edward I's extending the compulsory training to include all boys from the age of seven; in other statutes, of Edward III's carrying matters a stage further by banning all other forms of play on penalty of death, lest they might interfere with archery; and, later still, of Edward IV's compelling every Englishman to keep a bow of his own height, and every township to erect butts at which the inhabitants must shoot on all feast-days or render themselves liable to a fine.

England was to become one vast arena for the practice of archery, and in nearly every town and village the menfolk would meet after church on Sunday to shoot their bows and arrows, as ordained by law. To their way of thinking they were shooting in defence of their church, and to them that was probably of greater significance than the thought that they might, at the same time, be undergoing military training for the defence of their country.

For they were now a deeply religious people, even if their religion was still founded largely on superstition and a fear of the unknown. Nor did the lords of the manors disillusion them; it mattered not why they practised so long as they did practise.

Thus archery continued to develop for several centuries. In course of time, though, we detect a new spirit creeping into the sport. Just as the wars with the French had proved keen, so, too, there had gradually developed a rivalry between the archers of our various counties. With every district intent on producing the finest bowmen, we come upon instances of one county challenging another and holding competitions to decide the merits of its team. The Cornish archers might be capable of penetrating armour at close on five hundred yards. Yet was Cornwall the champion county? The men of Cheshire were hardly less skilled, and certainly were never slow to take up or issue a challenge.

This competitive spirit was by no means confined to the districts as a whole. Fathers began to display the greatest interest in teaching their sons the art and in helping them to become bowmen worthy of their native towns or villages. Nor, for that matter, was the competition confined to the archers themselves: the craftsmen who made the weapons were also at pains to see that theirs were always the best. The yew-trees, from which the bows were fashioned, became as important to them as did the oaks to the shipwrights of Elizabeth's time. Such trees, however, soon proved to be poisonous to cattle, and could be grown only in areas where they would be harmless, a factor that may well have led to the planting of so many yews in our country churchyards, even though the best bows were made from foreign yews. Timber for archery was widely cultivated in England, and was imported in ever-increasing quantities from abroad. Merchants trading with foreign countries were compelled to bring back in their ships so many bow-staves for every ton of their merchandise.

No less important were the arrows, which were fitted with goose or peacock feathers, previously treated with some copper mixture to bring out the colours and render the arrows more weatherproof, the steel-pointed heads being stamped with the name of the maker. So the English bows and arrows, like the men who used them, became the finest in the world well before Tudor times, when archery, on the wane as a means of military training, was to achieve perhaps its greatest glory as a sport.

Yet archery was never entirely a training sport. As early as the

fourteenth century we find women shooting arrows at deer and other animals in somewhat lackadaisical fashion, with everything made as simple as possible for them. On special stands, erected in an enclosure railed in for their benefit, they would remain while the beaters drove the animals to within easy range, when, to the accompaniment of soft music from the minstrels, they would take up their bows and shoot at the cornered beasts. Such was the introduction of women into the sphere of sport!

No amount of harsh laws could prevent other sports from taking their rightful place with archery in the lives of the people. As Dr G. G. Coulton pointed out,[1] nearly all our present-day games were practised in a simple form in these times, despite the fact that the competitors had to overcome what to-day we would consider well-nigh insuperable handicaps. The ground was rough; there was a complete lack of organization; there were no written rules and no recognized system of umpiring. Indeed, it was by no means uncommon for the most peaceful game to blossom forth into an uproarious free fight—a fight where perhaps even murder might not be considered unworthy of the occasion—before the proceedings could eventually be called to a halt. Thus it is not surprising that the Church was quick to seize upon this excuse to decry sport for its own sake. The clergy would condemn it from the pulpit, and even introduce prohibitive laws of their own; yet many of the clerics themselves would be participating freely, although secretly.

Behind all this roughness, and despite the laws of King and Church, however, sport in England was steadily becoming, in the Middle Ages, more and more of a recreation—a pleasant way of passing the time, though sometimes a painful one—in which all, from kings and noblemen down, through the yeomen, to the lowliest peasant, would delight to take part. If some forms of play were only for the chosen few, there were others available for the poor man. So that quite early in the Middle Ages we find the people of England engaged in hand-ball, bowling, fives, tennis, football, and billiards; we find them wrestling and boxing in terrifying style; baiting bears and cock-fighting; we find them rowing and fishing, skating, or carrying out other pastimes on the ice. We hear of Edward II, as a boy, being taught 'creag' by his tutor, and discover that a crude form of cricket was now played under this name, a curved stick known as a 'cryc' doing service as a bat and

[1] *Medieval Panorama* (Cambridge University Press, 1938).

a tree-stump or other convenient obstacle as the wicket. And on the village greens, or at the fairs, we find the people running, jumping, and throwing weights, or dancing and generally making merry.

This was indeed Merrie England! Similar to the inter-county archery contests, we come upon village football and wrestling matches, carried out with all the enthusiasm of a modern cup-tie. We find the people, too, riding their specially imported steeds in three-horse races in Smithfield Market, and we hear the shout echoing through the market as the way is cleared for them—a shout that, perhaps, is equalled only by the excited screaming of the jockeys themselves.

Fitzstephen, who tells us that these races took place on the green meads above the Fleet river, gives us a picture of the scene at the time of Henry II:

> When a race is to be run . . . a shout is immediately raised, and the common horses are ordered to withdraw out of the way. Three jockeys, or sometimes only two, as the match is made, prepare themselves for the contest; such as being used to ride know how to manage their horses with judgment; the grand point is to prevent a competitor from getting before them. The horses on their part are not without emulation; they tremble and are impatient, and are continually in motion: at last, the signal once given, they strike, devour the course, hurrying along with unremitting velocity. The jockeys, inspired with the thoughts of applause and the hopes of victory, clap spurs to their willing horses, brandish their whips, and cheer them with their cries.

Easter and Whitsun were the 'seasons' for racing in these times, and matches between the gentry were as popular as those between the common folk. Even princes were not above an occasional race: Richard II, when Prince of Wales, once rode in a match against the Earl of Arundel on Newmarket Heath, later buying his opponent's horse for a considerable sum of money. It was not etiquette, however, for a gentleman to ride a mare, for this was considered the easiest horse to handle, and a gentleman—especially a knight—must display his skill and valour to the utmost on every possible occasion.

Meanwhile we are constantly bumping up against the nobility as they set off on their hunting, hawking, and coursing expeditions.

In the little churchyards—probably to the north side, where only the stillborns and hanged men were buried, so that it did not

really matter what happened—the villagers had soon discovered a new game. Hand-ball, they called it, to distinguish it, we presume, from the rougher kind of play known as football. There was nothing unduly exciting about their game, it seems. Perhaps their object was merely to see how long they could keep the ball in play against the church wall without letting it bounce; perhaps they had no particular idea in mind, but were content simply to go on hitting the ball until such time as they became weary of the proceedings and decided to stop. Since they had no written rules, they probably acted more or less as the spirit moved them. No doubt, though, they made improvements here and there as one or other of the players thought out some means of making the proceedings more lively, and thus it was that many varieties of hand-ball began to take shape in different parts of the country. Mr Armitage[1] has expressed the belief that all these games came to be known generally as 'fives,' possibly on account of there being four fingers and one thumb to the hand, which, indeed, seems a more likely explanation than that put forward by so many earlier writers that the name originated through there being five players a side.

Not for long did the villagers content themselves with merely a flat wall. Sometimes they might be found playing in the angle of two walls; sometimes they would decide to do away with a wall altogether, in which case they would stand at a distance apart and hit the ball backward and forward to one another, possibly over some obstacle set midway between them. As these new varieties gradually took shape and gained in popularity, so further improvements were introduced. Since the ball was lifeless and often difficult to hit effectively with the bare hand, some form of implement, or racket, was devised.

Mr Armitage gives an interesting theory as to how this development of the racket may have been inspired, when once it was appreciated that better results could be obtained with the fingers and thumb bound together to act as a single unit. Holding that the glove was the first step towards the racket and that this was used to enable the player to make a better and stronger stroke rather than to provide protection for the hand, it is his conviction that the glove in turn gave way to a binding of skins and cords. In this way the player naturally formed a bat of his own hand, and it may well be that Mr Armitage is correct in saying that "it is possible

[1] J. Armitage, *A History of Ball Games and Rugby Fives* (Lonsdale Library, 1934).

that the first racket was simply a piece of stick inserted into the glove or binding which had formerly been used to cover the man's hand." Certainly the old prints reveal short-handled bats.

So, with the introduction of some form of implement in the early Middle Ages, we find the many forms of hand-ball dividing into two camps—those that remained essentially hand-play and those that were to develop into racket games. Of the majority no trace remains to show us how they were played. Yet those villagers who first started hitting a ball against the church wall were, in effect, the real founders of fives as an individual game, even though it remained for the scholars of Eton and Rugby of later times to hand it on to us in its present more aristocratic form. Similarly, those who, tiring of hitting the ball backward and forward to each other with the palm of the hand, began to substitute a racket, gave us tennis, and, through later centuries of evolution, rackets, squash-rackets, and lawn tennis.

We must not suppose, however, that these games were brought about without outside influence. England was continually at war with France, and France too had many forms of hand-ball, or *jeu de paume*. Tennis was one of her favourites. Who brought this variety to England, or who gave it the name, or why, we do not know. There have been many suggestions, but all lacking in factual basis. Some believe that the French noblemen were accustomed to shout "Tenez" when about to serve, and that the word 'tennis' is simply the Englishman's lamentable attempt at French pronunciation. Whatever the origin, already by the fourteenth century, and possibly even by the thirteenth, we find tennis firmly established in England as the great ball-game of the upper and middle classes, and, a century later, we read of its being banned to labourers, servants, and apprentices.

Indeed, tennis became almost fashionable. The humble folk might continue to hit the ball to and fro in the open fields, or perhaps on the roads, but now the monks and ecclesiastics were also to be found playing this new version in the cloisters of their monasteries and churches between nones and vespers, as had long been the custom of the French. The barons and others of the nobility too would hold contests in the courtyards of their great castles, occasionally playing with their bare hands, but more often adopting the racket.

Of their methods of play it is difficult to gain any very clear picture. It is, in fact, doubtful if they had one themselves!

Possibly they had some system of chases and boundaries, and certainly they would have made the greatest possible use of the many architectural features of such buildings as went to make up their court. For here, indeed, were *natural* hazards, and when, in Tudor times, we meet the game in its more established form we find similar hazards deliberately reproduced in the specially constructed courts.

But while those who dwelt in castles or in cloistered buildings—and in those days quite ordinary houses sometimes boasted cloisters—were perfecting their tennis, others had been equally busy on a rather less strenuous game—bowls. Here two players, each with a ball, would stand a certain distance apart. After they had placed cones on the ground by their feet each would take turns at aiming to knock down the other's cone by rolling his ball along the ground towards it. In time the two cones gave place to a single ball of rather smaller dimensions—the 'jack' of modern bowls—at which each would aim alternately. Nor was this the easygoing affair it might appear, for the ground was rough, and it required skill in plenty to judge the effect of the many pits and hillocks.

By the fourteenth century, then, we find people of all classes playing a game that has altered but little through the ages. They also boasted a more complicated variety of bowls in which they knelt on the ground and aimed to drive the ball, by means of a mace, through a series of arches and on towards a post beyond. Perhaps it was the inclement weather; perhaps it was the tiring posture that this game demanded; quite likely it was a combination of both; at any rate, we hear comparatively little of this form, but find two other quite distinct games emerging from this one common origin. Out of doors we soon see the country folk discarding the back-breaking mace and substituting a kind of club or mallet with which they could drive the ball with equal effect, but with far less tiring consequences. Indoors we notice an even more complete revolution taking place, as we watch the gentry taking their bowls from the rough ground outside on to smooth-faced tables, especially erected for the purpose, in the halls of their massive homes. They called this new game 'shovel-board,' and substituted weights for balls. Strutt explains that these tables were sometimes more than ten yards long, with a number of lines marked at varying distances across one end. The players, he tells us, stood at the end opposite to these markings and took it in turns

to shove four flat weights of metal, the object being to land them beyond the farthest line without, however, striking them so hard as to drive them beyond the edge of the table, into a trough, when they would be counted out. Scoring was reckoned according to the positions in which each piece of metal rested.

For a time shovel-board captured the imagination, but as the medieval merged into the Tudor a more elegant and altogether more complex form of table-play was to take its place, possibly as a direct offshoot. Billiards was on its way, with the result that shovel-board, once the rage, was soon to be relegated to the level of the public-house, decried as an evil pastime enjoyed only by idle fellows always ready to gamble away what little money they had. Or so the nobility declared, once they no longer had any use for the game themselves!

Among the numerous ball-games now practised football became one of the most general, and, as at Chester, matches began to be played between villages as a traditional Shrove Tuesday custom. In such villages it was usual for the inhabitants to spend the morning calling from house to house to collect 'wind money' with which to pay for the grand supper to be held at the 'local' at the end of the day. At midday the ball would be placed at some convenient spot, such as the village green, for the great kick-off, whereupon all would run riot. Each district, it seems, had its own idea as to how the game should best be played, and, in the absence of recognized rules, this usually amounted to every one doing exactly as he felt inclined. As in the Cornish hurling game, the goals would often be miles apart, and the competitors played as vigorously through the village streets as in the open country. Nothing was allowed to prove an obstacle, neither building nor person. Indeed, the wise took care to barricade their windows and doors in advance, and to stay inside their houses.

Nor was the game confined to the country districts: football became fashionable in the streets of London, and in many other cities as well. So serious was the havoc caused here that soon we read of frequent deaths at play, and find laws being imposed by Edward II and other medieval kings banning football, on pain of imprisonment, as a danger to the public and a menace to archery. By now football had become more or less the national pastime of the common people, and the womenfolk, hardly less enthusiastic than the men, held matches of their own.

We come, too, upon wrestling and boxing contests in many parts

of the country. We notice the rivalry becoming ever more keen between the various London divisions; between the Devonians and the Cornish; between the Lakeland towns and villages; between the various East Anglian counties. Moreover, we find the differences in style more marked than in Saxon times. Whereas the wrestlers of one county might rely in large measure on 'hugging' tactics, those of another would kick and trip and stop at almost nothing that might help them to achieve their end. Yet wrestling was still a 'princely' sport, attracting enormous crowds to the various feast-day 'trials of strength.' The annual feast of St Bartholomew, held every August, was an occasion of particular importance. According to Stow, several days would then be given over to these wrestling contests, and in London—if not in other parts as well—they would be staged with typical medieval pageantry, with the mayor, aldermen, yeomen, serjeants, and others all riding on horseback in full splendour and carrying their chains of office.

But if wrestling and boxing were good to watch it was by no means every one who felt like submitting his body to be hurled or punched about in this rough way. Thus we find cock-fighting and the baiting of animals gaining increasing favour, for here was all the thrill of the bout without any of the pain.

Fitzstephen tells us that in the winter season it became the fashion to devote the morning of every holiday to staging fights between boars, to baiting bulls and bears by means of dogs, and to cock-fighting. Indeed, cock-fighting and 'throwing at cocks' became as much a traditional Shrove Tuesday custom as did the football-matches. At such times schoolboys would bring their cocks to their masters, who would then set them as targets for all to pelt with stones, laughing excitedly and clapping their hands with joy as they set about their bestial revelries. And the masters derived as much enjoyment as their scholars and pupils. As for cock-fighting proper, already there were trainers and 'setters-to,' and, even if the sport had not yet risen to the heights it was to achieve in the Tudor and Restoration periods, the nobility, no less than the common folk, took an obvious pride in their birds and staged contests in many parts of the country.

Not even the Church, as yet, revolted against such acts of cruelty. In the reign of Henry IV the Prior of Tutbury was actually responsible for inaugurating a bull-running contest there, regarding it as a suitable way of entertaining the minstrels who

attended matins on the Feast of the Assumption. These minstrels, it seems, were, more or less, retainers of the Manor of Tutbury, and had been brought together into a kind of body, complete with their own 'governor,' for the purpose of providing music for the vast concourse of people so constantly enjoying the hospitality of the Lancaster family, who were lords of the manor.

It was an unusual situation: cruelty and godliness went hand-in-hand at Tutbury. An unknown writer of considerably later date, describing the event in his time, shows the weird mixture of both teaching and outlook that must have persisted at Tutbury from the Middle Ages down almost to the end of the eighteenth century:

> The minstrels met in a body at the house of the bailiff, where they were joined by the steward of the manor, from whence they marched two and two for church, the king of the minstrels paraded between the steward and the bailiff, with music playing before them, each of the four under officers carrying a white wand, immediately following, and then the rest of the company in regular order of procession. Being seated properly in the kirk, prayers were read, and a sermon preached, for which each of the minstrels paid the vicar one penny. From hence they returned in like procession to a large room or hall in the castle, where the king seated between the bailiff, as it were enthroned, made report of such minstrels as had offended against the statutes, upon which the guilty were amerced in the fine of a small sum. Moreover to admonish and exhort them to a proper sense of their duty, the steward gave them a long and solemn charge, in which he expatiated largely on the origin and excellence of music. . . . This charge finished, and multifarious forms and ceremonies passed, they retired to the banqueting hall, where an excellent dinner was provided, and the overplus distributed among the poor.

Then from this display of godliness and benevolence the minstrels immediately proceeded to

> repair to the abbey gate, and demand the victim beast of the prior, by whom they were adjourned to a barn by the townside . . . where the bull was turned out with his horns cut off, his ears cropt, and his tail curtailed or diminished to the very stump, his body besmeared wholly over with soap, and his nostrils filled with pepper to irritate and increase his rage and fury. Being thus savagely equipped, the bull was let loose, a solemn proclamation was announced by the steward, that none were to approach him nearer than forty feet, nor to hinder the minstrels, but to attend to their own safety. The minstrels were to take this enraged bull before sunset, on this side of the

river Dore, which if they could not do, and the bull escaped them into Derbyshire, he still remained the property of the lord of the manor.

It was seldom possible to take the bull fairly, but if they held him so long as to cut off some of his hair, he was then brought to the market cross, or bull ring, in the middle of the street and mart, and there baited, after which the minstrels were entitled to have him.

Even before this time William, Earl of Warren, had established a bull-baiting at Stamford. It is said that this nobleman hit upon the idea in the reign of King John after watching two bulls fighting in a meadow near his castle grounds. A number of butchers, entering the field to separate them, had accidentally left a gate open, with the result that one of the beasts escaped into the town, soon to be chased through the streets by all the dogs in the district. Delighted to see such sport, the noble Earl mounted his horse and rode into the town, and soon every one was chasing the enraged creature. How great was the damage caused or how heavy the casualties is not recorded, but so deep an impression did the whole affair leave on the Earl of Warren that he at once set aside the meadow for an annual bull-baiting, on condition that the butchers of the town exhibited at least one mad bull for a fight with a dog every year six weeks before Christmas.

All kinds of animal were baited in these times. Special arenas were often built for the occasion, and we hear of the Crown appointment of a Master of the Bears at a salary of some sixteen pence a day. We find people of all classes watching these cruel exhibitions with unabated enthusiasm; moreover, we notice a number of women in the crowds, and realize that, far from being horrified at the spectacle, they are obviously enjoying every minute. Yet this was not just the cruelty of an age. Both cock-fighting and animal-baiting were as yet in their infancy; neither the pits nor the bear-gardens had yet arrived in all their glory. Nor was the science of setting one cock against another fully appreciated. All these sports, strangely enough, were to become steadily more loathsome as the people of England gradually grew more and more civilized.

A great fillip was added to these contests—as also to the football-matches—by the betting aspect. So great were the sums now wagered on such sports that in 1409 it was found necessary to issue a proclamation in London banning anyone from levying money on football or cock-fighting on pain of imprisonment or fine. Indeed,

betting had long been rife. At the time of the Crusades an edict had been passed restricting all men in Richard I's army below the rank of knight from gambling. But they did bet for all that: the Englishman was a born gambler, and anything that offered scope in this direction was always sure of a following.

They were strangely varied in outlook, the people of medieval England. This we notice at once as we move away from the revolting spectacles of animal-torturing and watch the men, women, and children of all ages holding their gala festivals on the ice, conducting winter sports in a way that we to-day could never hope for. We watch them making seats of ice—as large as milestones, Fitzstephen informs us—and notice how one of the party will sit upon one of these blocks while the others draw him along—presumably by means of a rope—as fast as they can go. We find them tobogganing too. Still using bone skates—cow-, ox-, or horse-bone, shaped and attached to the foot by thongs—they propelled themselves along the ice by means of staffs until they "doe slide as swiftly as a bird flieth in the ayre, or an arrow out of a cross-bow." Sometimes we may see two skating head-on towards each other in this way, each fearlessly hoping to bring down his opponent in the inevitable collision without falling himself.

Wherever there was ice, whether on the rivers, streams, lakes, or ponds, or on the vast open country of the Fens, and especially on the great 'Fin' of Finsbury, there would surely be sport; and ice was far more common then than now. On Midsummer Day in 1035, for instance, the temperature fell below freezing-point, while in 1410 the Thames froze for some fourteen weeks. The people of England had frequent opportunity of enjoying the thrills of the ice in the Middle Ages, and they were not slow to profit by it. It was not until the dense forests began to be cleared that the winters became less cruel and our ice sports declined.

The people did not depend only on the periods of ice for their water sports. If, admittedly, he did still row mainly from necessity, the English countryman was now beginning to appreciate the peaceful ecstasy of a day's fishing, and to find pleasure as well as usefulness in the pursuit. As far back as 1275 we read a notice detailing the various rights of redress which the lords of the manors and others might seek in the event of their waters being trespassed, while the mysterious Lady Juliana Berners herself not only gives a list of flies most suitable for the different seasons, but also talks of the pleasures to be derived from the sweet air of the meadows as

the angler makes his homeward journey with empty creel. Thus early could she detect pleasure in the simple things from which the unsuccessful angler of to-day tries to take consolation. But "yf the angler take fysshe, surely thenne is there nooman merier than he."

Was the man drawing in his catch in the tranquil of the river-bank really the merriest of them all? Was he, for instance, merrier than the men and women who danced and sang, played ball, and indulged in all manner of games on the village green, or even in the churchyard itself, on a medieval spring or summer's evening? The angler may well have been content, but here, indeed, was merriment. For these were the people who really turned holy days into holidays as well—the people whom Chaucer loved. Wherever we go we meet them. Whether we go to the larger towns or to the smaller villages, we find them developing dances that have long since become traditional features of the English countryside. We find them practising all manner of revels—from the milkmaid's dance round the garlanded maypole on the village green to the rather more austere revels; from the various acrobatic types of dance they had inherited from the Saxon gleemen to the morris dance.

In town and village alike the setting up of the maypole was always a great ritual. That bigoted Puritan Philip Stubbs, writing in Tudor times, gives a picture of the ceremony in his *Anatomie of Abuses*:

> All the young men and maides, old men and wives, run gadding over night to the wood, groves, hills, and mountains, where they spend all the night in pleasant pastimes, and in the morning they return, bringing with them birch and branches of trees, to deck their assemblies withall. . . . But the chiefest jewel they bring from thence is their maypole, which they bring home with great veneration as thus; they have twenty or forty yoke of oxen, every oxe having a sweet nosegay of flowers placed on the tip of his hornes, and these oxen drawe home this Maypole (this stynking idol, rather) which is covered all over with floures and herbs, bound round about with strings, from the top to the bottom, and sometimes painted with variable colours, with two or three hundred men, women, and children following it with great devotion. And thus being reared up, with handkerchiefs and flags hovering on the top, they straw the ground round about it, set up sommer haule, bowers, and arbors hard by it. And then they fall to dance about it, like as the Heathen people did at the dedication of the Idols, whereof this is a perfect pattern.

If May Day was perhaps *the* occasion, Whitsun was hardly less important. Nor, for that matter, were any of the holidays overlooked.

Yet we do not find the programme identical wherever we go. The dances may be the same, and the music of the minstrels sounds strangely familiar, yet if we bide awhile we shall notice many a difference. Here we may find a king and queen of the day; there we meet no such characters. Here we may see a festival fool; there a human horse. And so on. This was the age of chivalry, and chivalry called for pageantry. Thus, since each district had its own ideas as to how that pageantry should best be introduced, the various towns and villages gradually developed their own peculiar seasonal customs, customs that remain in some parts to-day as the living symbol of a bygone age.

Here, then, on the village greens and in the churchyards—sometimes as events of their own, sometimes as part of the programme of the fair—we find the men and women dancing, singing, playing, and making merry in a way that has never been surpassed. We find them instilled with a new spirit. They come to life before our eyes, and we see them as a people of many sports and pastimes—a people able to derive equal pleasure from the base cruelty of baiting animals and from dancing round the maypole.

Yet there is one thing we have not yet noticed. All the while we have been coming into contact with the nobility, with their dogs and horses or their hawks, they have been hard at work building up another tradition: they have been gradually raising hunting from a search for food to England's first real national sport.

CHAPTER III

Hunting, a National Sport

When William the Conqueror landed in England he brought with him from his native Normandy an entirely new hunting code.

In France the "Art of Venerie" had long become a highly scientific business, carrying with it many ceremonies and customs, and a lore and language that were entirely its own. And throughout the Middle Ages that code gradually established itself in our own country, until soon, as the Rev. W. B. Daniel tells us,[1] the medieval gentry had invented a hunting vocabulary with which it became increasingly necessary for all of good birth to be acquainted.

Scarcely had William completed his military conquest when he set to work to make hunting even more the exclusive preserve of royalty, and, in parts, whole villages were denuded of their populations in order to meet the hunting requirements of the King and his immediate circle.

John Manwood, writing in the sixteenth century on the origin of the forests,[2] shows something of the steps taken:

> The king sends out his commission, under the great seal of England, directed to certain discreet persons, for the view, perambulation, meeting and bounding of the place he mindeth to be forest, which being returned into the chancery, proclamation is made throughout all the shire where the ground lieth, that none shall hunt or chase any manner of wild beasts in that precinct, without the king's special licence; after which he appointeth ordinances, laws, and officers fit for the preservation of the vert and venison; and so it becometh a forest by matter of record.

A forest did not mean a mere collection of trees:

> A forest is a certain territory of woody grounds, and fruitful pastures, privileged for wild beasts, and fowls of forest, chase, and warren, to rest and abide there in the safe protection of the king, for his

[1] *Rural Sports*. [2] *Laws of the Forest* (1598).

princely delight and pleasure; which territory of ground so privileged, is meered and bounded by unremoveable marks, meers and boundaries, either known by matter of record, or else by prescription, and also replenished with wild beasts of venery or chase; and with great coverts of vert for the succour of the said wild beasts; for the preservation and continuance of which said place, together with the vert and venison, there are certain particular laws, privileges, and officers belonging only to the same.

An area of rather more than two hundred square miles in Hampshire was depopulated in this way. And when the task was completed in 1079 it became known as the New Forest, to distinguish it from the many other forests at Sherwood, Dean, Savernake, Windsor, and elsewhere, in which hunting had long taken place.

In these royal hunting-grounds harsh laws—the start of the Game Laws as we know them—were introduced. Under these a man who trespassed or transgressed became liable to be castrated, have his eyes plucked out, or his hands and feet cut off, or even, from the time of William Rufus (whose death was surely no accident), suffer the death penalty, according to the severity of his crime. And virtually anything that displeased "our lord the King"—and certainly any form of encroachment or trespass—was a crime.

So we find officers elected to tend the forests, and, as time goes on, these officers increase both in number and power, and we hear of courts being set up in the forests for the trial and punishment of those who offended against the laws. Under a Keeper, or Lord Warden—usually a man of high, perhaps even royal, birth—would rank the verderers, foresters, rangers, woodwards, agisters, regarders, bow-bearers, beadles, and underkeepers. Each was allotted his place in the scheme of things. While certain of the foresters, for instance, were responsible for the game, or 'venison,' as it was officially styled, others were in control of the timber and turf—together classified as the 'vert'—insomuch as they provided for the well-being of the venison, either by yielding food or affording protective covering. The woodward was expected to see to the general condition of the trees, superintending the fencing, felling, and so on, while the regarders, as Mr John Rodgers tells us,[1] were required to examine the hedges and fences, make lists of those who kept bows, arrows, and hounds, and see that all greyhounds and mastiffs had been lamed. They were particularly attentive to this

[1] *The English Woodland* (Batsford, 1942).

last point, for under these new laws no dog of any great size was allowed into the forests without having been 'lamed' or 'expediated'—that is to say, without three claws having been removed from one front paw by the cruel method of setting one foot on a block of wood and striking off the claws by mallet and chisel. The agisters saw to the pasturage of the cattle within the forest, making sure that all who had been granted such rights paid their dues and obeyed the rules and regulations, while the verderers attended to the legal side.

It was a common practice for a forest to be divided into a number of 'walks,' and where this was so each walk was provided with a lodge where would live a keeper or underkeeper in charge of the area immediately around. Often these keepers would be men of fashion, and their lodges stately mansions.

Royalty were not, however, by any means the only ones who hunted. The nobility, among whom were numbered the higher ranks of the clergy, were every bit as enthusiastic. Thus the hunting-grounds fell into three quite distinct categories—forest or venery, chase or park, and warren. Whereas the King's hunting-ground was invariably termed a 'forest,' a nobleman's was known as a 'chase'—for example, Cranborne Chase or Enfield Chase. On the other hand, if he chose to enclose it, it was called a 'park.' Sometimes the King might be willing to let part of his land, in which case there would be a chase within a forest. As for the 'warren,' this was the name given to the land over which the less noble beasts and the "fowls of the air" might be hunted.

Nor was it only a question of territory: the game itself was graded. While the beasts of the forest comprised the hart, hind, wild boar, wolf, and hare, those of the chase included the buck, doe, fox, marten, and roe. Similarly, the beasts and fowls of the warren were taken to mean the hare, rabbit, pheasant, partridge, and woodcock, and, according to some authorities, the wild-cat, badger, and otter.

The matter went deeper even than that. Many species of game were given distinguishing names according to their age or their past performances. Mr C. E. Hare, who appears to have carried out an intensive research into the subject, gives us[1] a great many examples. A male deer, for instance, would be known as a 'knobber' in its second year, a 'brockett' in its third, and a 'staggard' in its fourth. In its fifth it would be classed as a 'stag,' and

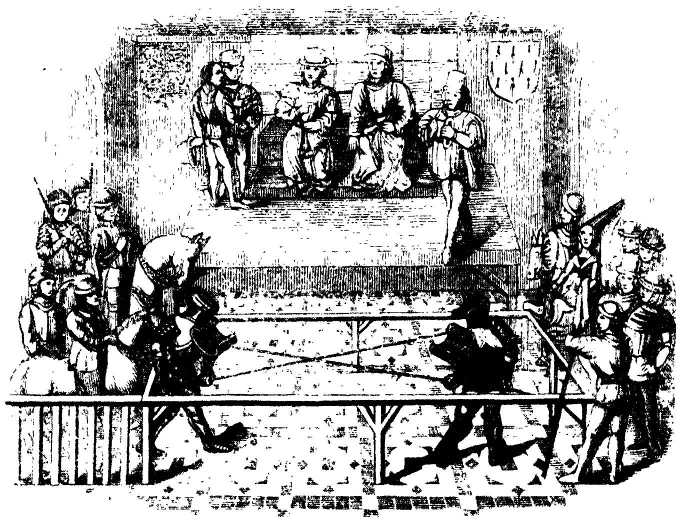
[1] *The Language of Sport* (Country Life, 1939).

HUNTING THE WILD BOAR

The Sporting Magazine

STEEPLECHASING, WITH ALL ITS NINETEENTH-CENTURY HAZARDS

The Sporting Magazine



A MEDIEVAL TILTING CONTEST
From Froissart.
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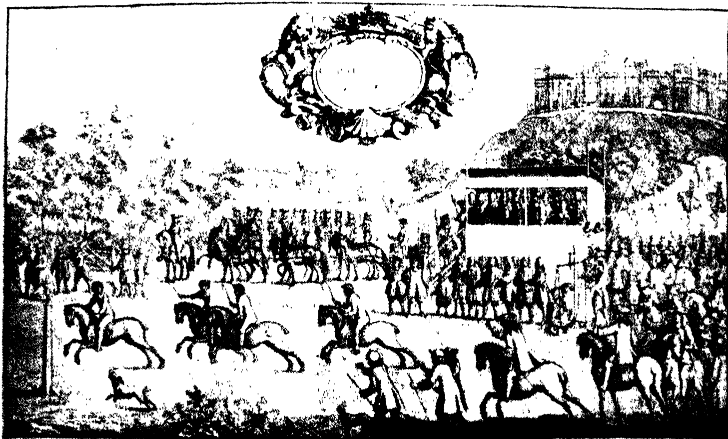


HORSE-RACING AT WINDSOR BEFORE CHARLES II
From an etching by Francis Barlow.
From "Racing England" (Batsford)

in its sixth (when it would first be deemed chasable) as a 'hart.' Should it later be hunted by the King it became a 'royal hart,' or, if it escaped, 'royal hart proclaimed.' Similarly, a hind became a 'hearse' or 'brockett's sister' in its second year, while a fallow deer would be termed, in turn, a 'fawn,' 'prickett,' 'sorel,' 'sore,' 'buck at the first head,' and 'great buck.' There was, moreover, a definite vocabulary for the make-up and habits of the different beasts, and for companies of them. Whereas, for instance, a collection of harts would be termed a 'herd,' a 'route' was the name accorded to a number of wolves. Similarly, we hear of a 'sculk' of foxes, a 'cete' of badgers, a 'richness' of martens, a 'huske' of hares, a 'nest' of rabbits, and so on. So with the dogs. Two spaniels or harriers might form a 'couple,' where two greyhounds would be known as a 'brace.' A hart that had retired to rest would be considered to be 'harboured,' a buck would be 'lodged,' a hare 'formed,' and a rabbit 'set.' All these and many other words and expressions were the inventions of the medieval huntsman, and all who prided themselves on being of good birth and education took care to use them in their everyday parlance. The etiquette of the hunting-field was already becoming established.

Wherever the land was suitable the nobility would proclaim a chase, or enclose a park, and the ruthlessness which they displayed towards anyone whom they even suspected of hindering their sport can be seen in the warning given by John of Salisbury, writing in the twelfth century:

> In our time hunting and hawking are esteemed the most honourable employments and most excellent virtues by our nobility, and they think it the height of worldly felicity to spend the whole of their time in these diversions; accordingly they prepare for them with more solicitude, expense, and parade, than they do for war; and pursue the wild beasts with greater fury than they do the enemies of their country. By constantly following this way of life they lose much of their humanity, and become as savage nearly as the very beasts they hunt. . . .
>
> Husbandmen, with their harmless herds and flocks, are driven from their well-cultivated fields, their meadows and their pastures, that wild beasts may range in them without interruption. . . . If one of these great and merciless hunters shall pass by your habitation, bring forth hastily all the refreshment you have in your house . . . that you may not be involved in ruin, or even accused of treason.

The countryman's lot was indeed a hard one. The interests of everybody were swept aside. Even the clause in Magna Carta compelling King John to give back the vast tracts which he and his predecessors, Henry II and Richard I, had commandeered, and Henry III's Charter de Foresta of 1225, abolishing capital punishment for encroachment upon royal preserves, by no means put an end to the hardships. On the contrary, further controls were still to come.

Under a statute of Edward I, for instance, we read that a convicted man who was unable to pay a crippling fine ran the risk of being deported, while somewhere about a hundred years later Richard II saw fit to decree:

> That no layman which hath not lands or tenements of 40*s*. a year, nor clergyman if he be not advanced to 10*l*. a year, shall have or keep any greyhound, hound, nor other dog to hunt, nor shall use ferrets hays, nets, hare-pipes, nor cords, nor other engines for to take or destroy hares, nor conies, nor other gentlemens games, upon pain of one years imprisonment.

Indeed, throughout the centuries we are constantly hearing of the introduction of one new game law after another, constantly coming upon instances of the common folk waging a vain struggle to defend those rights and privileges that had once been the heritage of their forefathers, and that even now would have been theirs but for the greed of the hunting fraternity.

Under this rigid code it became customary for offenders on the King's land to be tried under the Forest Laws; those breaking the law in chase, park, or warren to come under the jurisdiction of the Common Law. With the establishment of the Assize of Woodstock in 1184 recognized Forests Courts were set up under the administration of Justices in Eyre, and from 1235 these were further subdivided into three distinct courts—the Woodmote, Court of Attachment, or Forty-day Court, and the Swainmote. The first two took the form of preliminary courts from which any offender found guilty might be committed to the Swainmote, there to be tried by perhaps four or six verderers before a jury of forest freeholders, or 'swains,' as they were called. The Swainmote had power to pass judgment and direct the punishment where all petty offences were concerned, but where the crime was of a more serious character the prisoner would be committed to the Eyre of the Forest for trial in what was, in effect, the supreme court.

In such an atmosphere, then, we find royalty, nobility, and

clergy alike hunting with a fervour hitherto unknown, while the common folk—and, indeed, many quite responsible people—often deemed it worth risking the penalties to steal into the woods at night to do a little poaching. Nor is it really surprising that they refused to be intimidated, for, despite the pomp and ceremony which now surrounded the chase and the many stern laws that governed the issue, hunting was still largely a matter of searching for food. In fact, it was for this very reason that the laws were so harsh. Salt meat, year in and year out, grew sickening to the stomach, and the nobility were determined that at least their tables should not suffer such tedium.

Not that the preservation of the game was the only factor: selfishness played a large part. As to-day, there was a certain lure that none who were privileged to hunt could resist. Henry II, who did his best to discourage the clergy from "wasting their time" in hunting and hawking, apparently thought nothing of wasting his own in this way. According to one of his historians, whose identity appears to be lost:

> He neglected his hands . . . never wearing gloves but in hawking. His clothes were short, calculated for expedition; his boots plain, and his bonnet unadorned. His feet and legs were generally in a bruised and livid state, from the repeated blows of his horses, yet he never sat down unless when unavoidable. His chief amusements were those of the field, which he pursued with immoderate ardour. He was on horseback before the sun was up—often fatigued the most robust sportsman in the chase; and returning sometimes late, sat down to a frugal meal, which was soon dispatched, and he was again on his feet till an early hour called him to his couch. . . . His hawks were brought from Norway, and some from Wales; but he was particularly curious in his hounds, that they should be fleet, well-tongued, and consonous.

Edward I, it is said, even went so far as to make shrine offerings for the speedy recovery of any of his birds that fell sick, while Edward III, who went hunting or hawking at least once every day, was never really satisfied unless he had sixty couples of stag at hand. Even the clergy were unable to resist the lure. In 1376 the Bishop of Durham was moved to issue a mandate to all archdeacons and clerics in his diocese, instructing them to proclaim at Mass the sentence of excommunication on all suspected of taking a share in stealing a falcon from Sir Philip Neville unless it was returned within ten days. The clergy were among the sport's most enthusiastic supporters, and they were also among the especially

privileged. Under a clause in the Charter de Foresta, for instance, an archbishop, bishop, earl, or baron passing through a royal forest at the King's command was entitled to sound a horn to warn the forester of his coming, and then kill one deer. Privileges like these, however, applied only to such clergy as could boast of livings worth at least ten pounds a year; the rest were not even permitted to keep a hunting-dog or use any form of engine of destruction. Such was the class distinction of those days.

There were many forms of hunting, and each had its followers. Strutt, taking his information from *The Master of Game*—an early fifteenth-century translation of a French work by Edward, Duke of York, who held the position of Master of Game at the Court of Henry IV—gives us an insight into the ceremony attending a royal hunt. While the sheriff of the county was busily attending to the stabling of the King's horses, and to the provision of carts for the removal of the dead game, others would be hard at work erecting a number of temporary buildings—known as 'trysts,' or 'trests'—for the reception of the royal party. On the morning of the hunt the Master of Game would arrange the greyhounds in their appointed places and detail responsible persons to take up their positions at certain points in the enclosure "to keep the populace at due distance," and, above all, to ensure that not a sound was made that might disturb the game before the arrival of the royal party. As soon as they were comfortably settled in their shelter three long 'moots,' or blasts, would be sounded. Whereupon the hounds were uncoupled and the game

> driven from the cover, and turned by the huntsmen and the hounds so as to pass by the stands belonging to the King and Queen, and such of the nobility as were permitted to have a share in the pastime; who might either shoot at them with their bows or pursue them with their greyhounds at their pleasure.

Doubtless many delighted to shoot at easy targets in this way; doubtless, too, the women spectators found reason to applaud the prowess of their menfolk. Yet the hunt was by no means always so simple an affair: already the huntsman had his cries; already his hounds were well trained, just as the hart himself had his tricks and dodges, or 'blanches,' as they were termed.

As Mr Hare says, the people of Norman times hunted "a force de chiens." On the day before a hunt was to take place a 'lymerer,' taking with him on leash a hound, or 'lymer,' would proceed along the 'ringwalks' searching for the 'slot,' or 'trace,' of a deer, keeping

his eyes open at the same time for any droppings, or 'fumes.' This was an essential part of the programme, for if, when he came to measure, or 'make scantilon of,' his slots he found them to be less than three fingers in breadth and the fumes to be small he knew at once that his hart was a 'rascal'—that is to say, unwarrantable. If, on the other hand, he noticed that they exceeded these measurements he could rest assured that the beast was warrantable. On the morning of the hunt he would report his findings, and show the fumes of the harboured stag to the Master of Game, who developed his technique accordingly.

The hounds were divided into three relays, and the hunt commenced by the lymerer setting his hound on the track and calling, "Ho may, ho may, hole, hole, hole!" while the lord, the Master, and another huntsman each blew, in turn, three hoots on the horn. The stag was now unharboured from his lair, and as soon as the lymerer sighted him he would call "Cy va," at the same time blowing a single hoot as a signal for the 'berner,' or kennel-man, to uncouple his hounds in relays. Then the chase would proceed in full swing. Certainly there was nothing tame about this: the stag might be up to many dodges. Sometimes he might cunningly drive another hart from his lair and take his place; sometimes he might double or turn on his track; perhaps he would take to the water. Yet the Master of Game had his methods of dealing with any eventuality, and already possessed a wide range of hunting-cries with which to announce each new turn. Not until the stag began to hang his head and leave a deeper track with his dewclaws—a sure sign that he was tiring—would he deem it wise to order the letting loose of the last relay of hounds, known as the 'vauntlay.' Not until the stag stood at bay—to be shot by an arrow, or, perhaps, finished off with a knife—would the 'prise' of four hoots be sounded to announce the capture, to be followed soon afterwards by the sounding of the 'mort' to signify the 'kill.'

Then would come the 'curee,' when the game would be skilfully 'broken up' and portioned out to all who had taken part in the hunt, from the lord to the lymerer; from the Master to the berner. And when the sportsman returned home that night he would "wash his thighs and his legs, and peradventure all his body. And in the meanwhile he shall order well his supper, with wortes of the neck of the hart and of other good meats, and good wine and ale." And so to bed "with a clean mind"—the perfect end to a perfect day.

To a somewhat lesser degree the nobility also hunted the wild

boar, at least until the time of James I, but here the sport was never so good, since the boar relied on brute force for his defence where the stag was cunning. Not that such hunting was to be scorned. On the contrary, George Turberville, writing in the sixteenth century, describes the boar as "the only beast which can despatch a hound at one blow," sometimes killing as many as six or seven "with [the] twinkling of an eye." For that reason the wise relied on the heavier mastiff for this sport, and when the boar was at bay the huntsmen would usually ride in upon him together to attack with swords and spears.

So, too, they would hunt bears, wolves, foxes, and many other animals, sometimes employing bows and arrows and sometimes relying on their hounds; sometimes going out on horseback and sometimes—as, for instance, in the case of the fox—on foot. But then the fox had not yet come into its own; the hare was held in far greater regard. With the fox it was largely a matter of exterminating vermin, and the sportsmen were quite content simply to place nets round the coverts and lay on the hounds in relays in a way that virtually deprived the creature of all hope of escape. With the hare it was different. Here it was customary to send harriers to seek out the creature in the first place, and then uncouple the greyhounds once the animal had been sighted. To some the hunting of the hare was even more enjoyable than chasing the stag. Twici himself, who was Master of Game to Edward II, considered the hare "the most marvellous beast which is on this earth." Certainly it was the hare that gradually ousted the stag as beast of the chase before the start of modern fox-hunting in the eighteenth century.

Not every one sought the hare with harriers, any more than were harriers used exclusively on the hare. Another method that was held in increasingly high esteem was coursing, and this proved popular for taking both deer and fox as well. So enthusiastic about coursing was King John that he often expressed his willingness to accept greyhounds instead of money in payment of some of the many grants and fines exacted by the Crown. Edward III too allowed the sport to detain him at Waltham Chase rather more often than was perhaps desirable, and it is said that the Isle of Dogs we know to-day derived its name from the fact that it was here that he kept both his coursing greyhounds and the spaniels which accompanied him whenever he went out to shoot woodcock.

According to the Rev. W. B. Daniel, coursing fell into two

categories—that of the paddock and that of the forest purlieu—each of which called for an entirely different technique. To form a paddock a lord would fence in—either with chestnut pales or a stone wall—a stretch of his parkland to the length of a mile and the depth of a quarter of a mile, making the finishing end somewhat broader than the rest, so as to provide the spectators with a better view. A 'dog-house' would be constructed at the narrow end, and on one side would be ranged the deer-pens in the charge of one or, perhaps, two keepers, the other side being left free for spectators. Three posts were placed along the course at distances of 160 yards, a quarter of a mile, and half a mile, with a fourth—known as the 'pinching-post'—beyond. Finally there came a ditch, whose object was to "receive the deer, and save them from being pursued any further." Near by were the seats to be occupied by the judges.

Two greyhounds and a 'teaser' (also a greyhound, but trained for a different part) were used for a coursing, and these were kept in the dog-house until the deer had been turned from his pen, and moved some twenty yards down the course, when the teaser would be sent out to 'worry' him to greater speed. Not until the deer had reached the near post would the other greyhounds be slipped.

Mr Daniel tells us something of the procedure which then followed:

> If the deer swerved before he got to the pinching-post, so that his head was judged to be nearer the dog-house than the ditch, it was deemed no match, and was to be run again three days after, but if there was no such swerve, and the deer ran straight until he went beyond the pinching-post, then that dog which was nearest to the deer (should he swerve) gained the contest; if no swerve happened, then that dog which leapt the ditch first was the victor; if any dispute arose, they were referred to the Articles of the course, and determined by the judges.

In the forests they had two methods which they adopted according to whether the coursing was scheduled to take place upon the lawns near the keepers' lodges or from wood to wood. On the lawns the technique was not unlike that of the paddocks, but in the woods a number of greyhounds were employed to drive the deer from their cover, and here it was customary for them to be held on leash and slipped as soon as the deer was sighted.

Whether in forest or paddock, on coursing days owners would feed their greyhounds on toast and butter, or, perhaps, oil, while

in the evening—if the coursing had been successful—many went so far as to give them the heart, liver, and lights of the beast, and bathe their feet either in salt water or warm beer and butter.

As we have seen, the medieval sportsman would hunt anything that came his way, from the hart to the marten; from the hare to the badger, beaver, or wild-cat. Nor was he ignorant of the otter, which always provided a pleasant diversion for the summer months. Here three or four varlets, each with lymers, would set out before daylight to search the streams for the 'marks' and 'spaintes,' and, more important, for his 'couch' (dwelling). Only with the help of such initial information could the sportsmen hope to make a stand before the otter and kill him with their spears as soon as he was forced to come to the surface to breathe, or 'vent.' This particular form of hunting appears to have held rather special appeal for both Henry II and John, each of whom became Master of the Otter-hounds.

Nor were the "fowls of the air" overlooked: hawking became as fashionable as hunting. Whereas under the Norman laws only those of the highest rank had been allowed to keep hawks, under the Charter de Foresta those privileges were extended to every freeman, although even now a man was not at liberty to own whichever species of hawk he pleased. There was a recognized category to fit the social scale. While a king might carry a gerfalcon, a prince was expected to make do with a falcon gentle or a tercel gentle. A duke might be entitled to a falcon of the rock and an earl to a falcon peregrine, but a baron had to be content with a bastard; a knight was allowed a sacre, an esquire a laner, and a lady a merlyon. For the yeoman there was the goshawk, for the poor man the tercel, for the priest the sparrow-hawk, and for the 'holy water clerk' the musket.

But, whether king or holy-water clerk, earl or priest, all prized their birds dearly. John Paston, writing from Norwich in 1472 to his brother, Sir John Paston,[1] urging him to find him a hawk, shows the importance attached to the sport in his time:

> I ask no more good of you for all the service that I shall do you while the world standeth, but a gosshawk, if any of my Lord Chamberlain's men or yours go to Calais . . . now think on me good Lord, for if I have not a hawk I shall wax fat for default of labour, and dead for default of company by my troth. . . . I pray God send you all your desires, and me my mewed gosshawk in haste. . . .

[1] *The Paston Letters.*

A few weeks later John Paston got his hawk, though, unhappily, it does not appear to have come up to expectations, and he was moved to write again to his brother, hinting strongly that he might endeavour to find him another.

Paston was by no means unusual in his devotion to the sport. No one was ever parted from his hawk for a minute longer than he could help. Wherever they went, whether to church or the village fair, into the busy streets of the town or the quiet lanes of the countryside, the hawks would go too. Sometimes the birds would even accompany their masters into battle, and at night they were just as inseparable. Not only would the birds be set to rest on special perches in their owners' rooms, but often a hired attendant would be detailed to watch over them during the long hours of darkness, when it was feared that others might come to steal them.

It was not entirely a case of worshipful devotion. Hawks were costly creatures, and, as John Paston found, by no means easy to come by. It was natural, then, that their owners were most anxious not to lose them. Besides, as in the days before the Conquest, all this formed part of their training. By such close liaison the owners hoped to make so sure of their birds that whenever a hawk was released to swoop on the game she would invariably bring back the prey to its rightful owner.

The hawker wore stout gloves as a protection against the bird's claws, and the hawk was normally 'hood-winked' with a cap or hood of soft leather, fitted to the head. All hawks 'taken upon the fist' had straps of leather, known as 'jesses,' attached to their legs.

> The jesses were made sufficiently long for the knots to appear between the middle and the little fingers of the hand that held them, so that the lunes, or small thongs of leather, might be fastened to them with two tyrrits, or rings; and the lunes were loosely wound round the little finger.[1]

Sometimes the jesses were made of silk, and always bells would be fastened to their legs by means of leather rings. These rings were styled 'bewits,' and to them would be attached a long thread, or 'creance,' for the hawker to use for drawing back his bird during training flights. A favourite method of teaching a bird to return was for the owner to tie a large woollen tassel, concealing some tempting offal, round his waist.

As with hunting proper, so the falconers had a vocabulary of their own. While the peasants who bred the birds, and then

[1] *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England.*

peddled them round the countryside, became known as 'hawkers,' the more lowly servants who carried the frames for transporting such birds as were hooded were styled 'cadgers.' There was no such thing as a sick falcon: she simply had 'ungladness.' Nor did she 'catch' a partridge, but 'nomme' it. "A hawk 'rejoiced' when it sharpened its beak and shook its feathers after a meal,"[1] and when it moulted it was considered to have 'mewed,' whereupon it would be put into a special stable known variously as the 'mews' or 'mewhouse.' When a hawk in flight decided to go after a different prey it was said to have 'checked,' while to seize a fowl in the air and bring it to the ground was known as 'binding.' There were the 'boozers,' too, in those hawks whose thirst was difficult to satisfy.

While the prey of the hawk was classified as fur, plume, or feather, peculiar expressions were invented—as with hunting proper—for signifying collectivity. Thus we hear of a 'sege' of herons, a 'herd' of swans, a 'spring' of eels, a 'covert' of coots, a 'gaggle' of geese, a 'nye' of pheasants, a 'covey' of partridges, a 'congregation' of plovers, a 'flight' of doves, a 'walk' of snipe, a 'fall' of woodcock—and so on.

Throughout the Middle Ages, then, we find hunting and hawking gaining an ever-increasing hold on the nobility, while the lower classes, equally desirous, but still badly restricted, resorted to poaching. We find the women, hardly less enthusiastic than the men, holding hunting and hawking parties of their own, or else joining in with the male members of their family. Hunting had come to us from France, with all the tradition of the French 'veneurs' to take the place of the old-style quest for food of the Stone Age and the Roman, Saxon, and Danish eras. Already the Normans had their cries and music, their vocabulary and their hunting-horn. And the tunes and words we use in the field to-day are the outcome of the old French lore and language. The 'soho' of present-day coursing and hare-hunting is simply a shortening of the 'sohowe' used by the medieval sportsmen as a term of encouragement to the hounds, while 'tally-ho' may well be a derivation of 'ty a hillaut' or 'il est hault,' two popular expressions used by the French. And, just as there was a word and phrase to suit every eventuality, so there was the right music. Indeed, as Mr Hare says, it was much more elaborate then than now; every one who took to hunting carried a horn and was fully conversant with

[1] *The Language of Sport.*

the various tunes. There were the 'recheat' to call back hounds, the 'forlange' to signify that the hart was a long way off, but that the hounds were on the scent, and the 'perfect' to show that the hounds were on the right track. There were the 'menée,' the 'prise,' and the 'mort'; and so on.

Well before the end of the Middle Ages hunting had become a truly national sport; by Tudor times it had grown to occupy a place second to none in the affections of the upper classes.

CHAPTER IV

In Tudor England

UNDER the Tudors sport in England—at any rate for the upper and middle classes—received a great fillip, largely through the example of both Henry VIII and his daughter Elizabeth. If the fat, ungainly Henry was unfortunate in his choice of wives, at least he was accomplished at games, indulging in practically every pastime then known, excelling at most, and, what is more, taking a beating in good part. He was a true sportsman.

Even after his accession Henry would devote a certain amount of time each day to the practice of archery, wrestling, or putting the weight. Sometimes, too, he would stage elaborate tournaments, and prove himself as enthusiastic a jouster as the Norman knights before him. Few could surpass him as a bowman, while in the hunting-field he would invariably be found among the leaders, even if his attention did occasionally wander, as, for instance, when he met Anne Boleyn on one of his hawking expeditions in France! Henry played all games, and every game he played he did his best to raise to an altogether higher plane. It was he who standardized tennis by building the court at Hampton Court; he who constructed the Royal Cock-pit; he who laid down bowling-alleys at Whitehall. It was Henry too who put fencing on the map; who ordained that no man over the age of twenty-four should shoot his arrows at a range of less than 220 yards during the compulsory archery practices. Nor was Elizabeth slow to follow her father's lead.

So that under the Tudors sport in England assumed a more organized form, which, in turn, was accompanied by an all-round improvement in the standard of play.

By now "all the great landowners had their parks; and all the countryside was full of these enclosures where deer and other game were preserved."[1] Indeed, many of the lords of the manors now chose to set aside two parks for hunting, one for fallow and the other for red deer. As Mr Salzman says, nowhere in Europe was

[1] L. F. Salzman, *England in Tudor Times* (Batsford, 1926).

there such a worship of deer-hunting as in England. Though this was still the exclusive preserve of the nobility, most people were now free to seek the hare, either on foot or, if they could afford it, on horseback.

While Henry himself is said to have been so energetic a huntsman that it was not uncommon for him to tire out as many as ten horses in the course of a single day, Elizabeth appears to have been hardly less enthusiastic. She continually gained the praise and admiration of both courtiers and villagers alike for her skill in bringing down driven deer with her bow, and for her general courage and tenacity—a tenacity which she maintained almost to the end. Rowland White, writing to Sir Robert Sidney only three years before her death, described the Queen as "excellently disposed to hunting, for every second day she is on horseback, and continues the sport long." In her younger days nothing delighted her more than to be present at the kill. A year before her accession, for instance, she decided to journey from Hatfield to Enfield Chase, escorted, says Mr Salzman,

> by twelve ladies, somewhat unsuitably arrayed in white satin, on ambling palfreys, and 120 mounted yeomen in green. On arriving at the Chase she was met by 50 archers in scarlet, with gilded bows, each of whom presented her with a silver-headed arrow, winged with peacock feathers, and when a buck was taken the princess herself despatched it by cutting its throat.

Nor did either Henry VIII or Elizabeth disregard the otter, both holding the position of Master of the Otter-hounds, like Henry II and John before them.

Hawking too increased still further in popularity before the shotgun began to spell its doom towards the end of the period, while in the reign of Elizabeth we hear of the introduction by the Duke of Norfolk of a new set of coursing laws—laws which in time were to bring the hare into such prominence that coursing gradually became segregated from hunting proper to form an entirely separate sport.

From now on the greatest importance was attached to the care of the greyhounds. In their kennels—which had always to face south, so as to catch the best of the sun, without, however, making them too hot—benches would be erected some two and a half feet from the ground, with holes bored through them to allow the urine to drain away. Owners became increasingly punctilious

about providing fresh straw, and whenever a dog was to be exercised he would first be rubbed down with a cloth, and then

> led out in a leash half an hour after sunrise to some place where there was no cattle or sheep, and there he was suffered to frisk about and empty himself before being led back.[1]

The same procedure was repeated round about sunset, while in the winter most people now adopted the practice of admitting their dogs into the house once a day to warm themselves by the fire.

Under these new laws, Daniel tells us, a 'feuterer' was appointed to let loose the greyhounds at a coursing. On entering the field he would take them into his leash and follow the hare-finder—or the man who was to release the hare if a previously captured one was to be chased—until he reached the 'form,' and "no horse or footmen were to go before, or on either side, but directly behind, for the space of about 40 yards."

No more than one brace of greyhounds might take part at a time, and the hare-finder was to give three 'Soho's' before releasing the hare, which, at the same time, was to be allowed twelve-score yards' 'law' before the dogs were slipped. While it was quite possible for a dog to win simply by causing the hare to turn once on its course, there were higher honours to be won than a straight victory such as this. A hound that succeeded in going endways by his fellow in order to bring about a turn would, for instance, score a 'cote,' and this, like a 'go-by' or a 'bearing,' was worth double the mere single turn. Coursing was becoming quite a complicated business, requiring specialist judges, and the more complicated it became the greater its popularity. Yet the question of ultimate ownership of the coursed hare still seems to have been only of secondary importance, for we are told that "he that came in first at the death, took up the hare, saved her from being torn, cherished the dogs, and cleansed their mouths from the wool, was adjudged to have the hare for his trouble."[2]

Of the remaining sports archery still held first place, and both Henry VII and Henry VIII were as zealous as were their predecessors to find ways to promote more accurate shooting. An important move in this direction was the banning of the cross-bow in favour of the long-bow. By the end of Henry VII's reign no one was allowed to use the former weapon unless he was a peer, or else had holdings in the land worth at least two hundred marks. And

[1] *Rural Sports.* [2] *Ibid.*

in 1514 Henry VIII made the restrictions still more effective by raising the value of the holding to three hundred marks, while at the same time rendering it an offence for a man even to keep such a weapon in his house, let alone use it. And if he did use it the penalty was a fine of ten pounds for every shot fired—a large sum for those days.

The long-bow became the pride of England, and Henry VIII its greatest patron. Every male below the age of sixty, with but few exceptions, was compelled to shoot with it. Fathers were required to instruct their sons in its use as soon as they reached the age of seven; master-craftsmen were expected to teach their apprentices at holidays. Indeed, the only people, other than those especially privileged, who were exempt from this rigorous training were the sick and the lame.

Latimer, in a kind of propaganda sermon—for which, incidentally, he is said to have been paid the sum of five pounds—gives us an idea of the care with which fathers had taught their sons even in his childhood, and of the importance attached to keeping the practice of archery at a high pitch:

> The arte of shutinge hath ben in tymes past much esteemed in this realme; it is a gyft of God, that he hath given us to excell all other nacions wythall. It hath beene Goddes instrumente, whereby he hath gyven us manye victories agaynste oure enemyes. But nowe we have taken up horynge in townes, instead of shutinge in the fyeldes. A wonderous thynge, that so excellente a gyfte of God should be so lyttle esteemed. I desire you, my lordes, even as you love honoure and glorye of God, and intende to remove his indignacion, let there be sent fourth some proclimacion, some sharpe proclimacion, to the Justices of Peace, for they do not thyr dutye. Justices now be no Justices; ther be many good actes for thys matter already. Charge them upon their allegiance, that thys singular benefit of God may be practised; and that it be not turned into bollyng, and glossyng, and horing, wythin the townes; for they be negligente in executyng these lawes of shutinge. In my tyme, my poore father was as diligent to teach me to shute, as to learne me any other thynge; and so I thinke other menne dyd thyr children. He taught me howe to drawe, howe to lay my bodye in my bowe, and not to draw wyth strength of armes, as other nacions do, but wyth strength of bodye. I had my bowes bought me according to my age and strength, as I encreased in them so my bowes were made bigger and bigger; for men shall never shute well, excepte they be brought up in it. It is a goodly arte, a holesome kynde of exercise, and much commended in phisike.

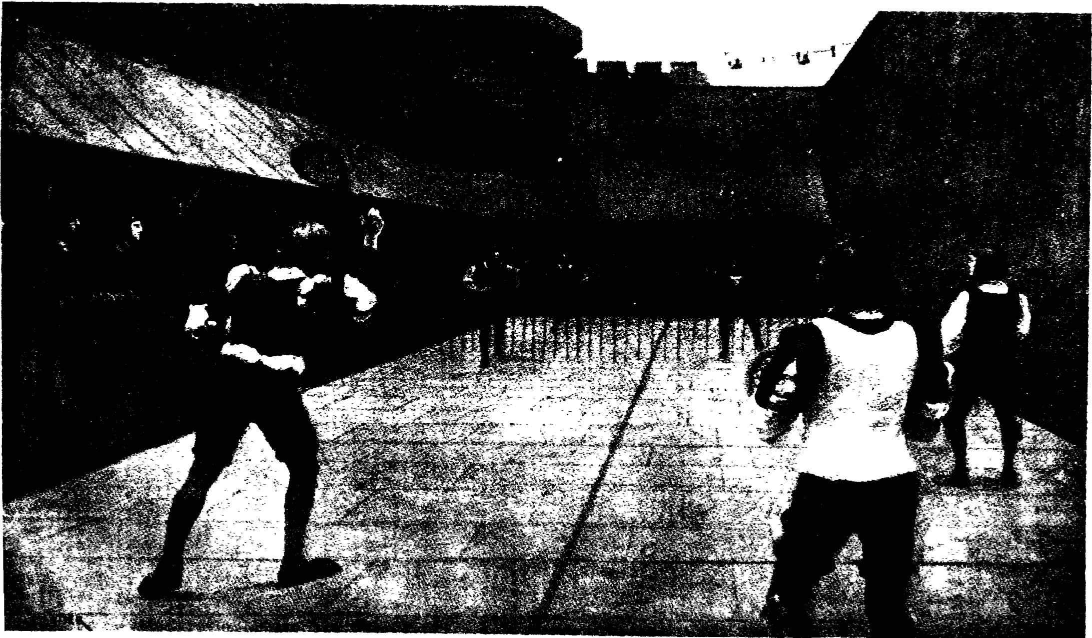
To Henry archery was not only an essential military exercise, but a worthy sport as well. A fine shot himself, he expected his subjects to become as gifted. After all, had he not dumbfounded the French by the accuracy of his shooting at the Field of the Cloth of Gold? Certainly he was seldom happier than when staging an open archery contest at, say, Windsor, Shooter's Hill, or Mile End. More often than not he would compete himself; and when there was no such contest to occupy his attentions he would spend hours practising in the gardens of Hampton Court, where he often won or lost considerable sums in betting on his chances against his courtiers. Once he lost as much as £132 in this way.

From his privy-purse accounts it seems that Henry was constantly paying out fees for his wives to be instructed in the art. Nor was he slow to reward talent in anyone. Often he would make some monetary gift to one who had shot well, and a pleasing story is told of how, at one great match at Windsor, he was so delighted with the skill of a man named Barlow, who hailed from Shoreditch, that he nicknamed him "the Duke of Shoreditch"—a title which, incidentally, stuck to the Captain of the London Archers for several decades.

Roger Ascham, writing in 1545, gives us the first complete picture of archery in these times. The archer, it appears, carried a bracer of stiff material, laced to his left sleeve, and wore a special shooting-glove. His bow was usually made of yew, and his arrows plumed with feathers from various wings, chosen to suit the different wind-courses. While the secret of drawing a good bow lay in bringing the right hand back as far as the ear, resting the arrow-shaft on the knuckle of the first finger, and then releasing the arrow without delay, the most common fault, it seems, was to keep the eye on the latter instead of on the target. So prevalent was this fault, in fact, that special after-dark training classes had to be arranged, when the bowmen were required to shoot their arrows at lighted lamps.

In the normal way there were three alternative types of target—butts, pricks, and rovers—all of which required a different kind of arrow.

If the long-bow became *the* weapon, the cross-bow by no means died out. In 1537 the Honourable Artillery Company—sometimes known as the Fraternity of St George—was established as a permanent corporation "for the promotion of the science of artyllary that ys to vyt for long bowes, cross bowes



A GAME OF TENNIS IN THE TIME OF HENRY VII

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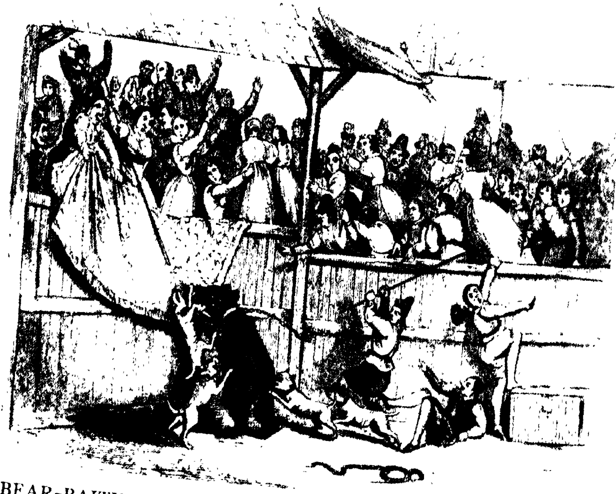

BEAR-BAITING IN THE REIGN OF QUEEN ELIZABETH
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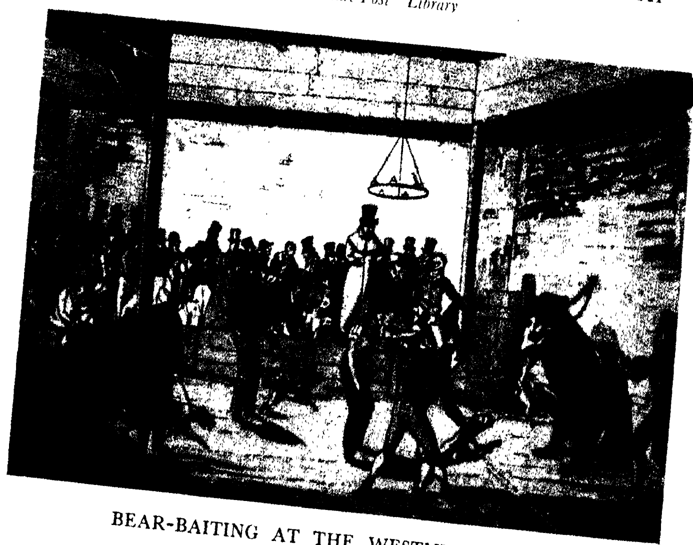


BEAR-BAITING AT THE WESTMINSTER PIT
From "Fighting Sports" (Odhams Press)

and handgunnes,"[1] and its members were permitted to use the cross-bow for such pastimes as shooting at fowls and for certain other games in no way connected with their normal military training.

Most popular of these games was 'popingay.' Here a number of wooden parrots, each painted in a different colour, would be set in line along the edge of a church tower, or perhaps along the top of some conveniently high wall. The competitors took it in turn to shoot at these birds, and, since each colour represented a different number, their scores were reckoned according to the aggregate value of the parrots they dislodged.

Archery in all its forms was at its zenith in Henry's time. Yet before the end of Elizabeth's reign we find it declining into a mere health-giving pastime, practised only by those for whom it held special appeal. Gone were the compulsory practices; gone the majority of the restrictions. Yet this was no discredit to Elizabeth, who was a keen and skilled archer herself, who once organized a corps of archers among the women at Court. It was simply that the musket had arrived, and that, like the medieval kings before her, who had turned to archery as a military training in their wars with the French, so now she had to look to the newer weapons in her troubles with Spain. Archery, in short, was no longer a national asset.

But if archery was to move into the background another sport —fencing—was to come to the fore, once more through the example of Henry VIII. True, there had been fencing of a kind in England ever since the Roman gladiators had brandished their swords in their amphitheatres. The Saxon gleemen had practised their forms of sword-play; the barons of old, protected by heavy armour, had lashed one another to the point of death or exhaustion; while the jugglers of the Middle Ages had even gone so far as to set up schools "for teaching the art of defence," schools which, in practice, did little more than provide a cloak to hide their owners' brigandage.

Though such fencers were in the main a menace to the population—so much so that as far back as the reign of Edward I we hear of their schools being banned by edict on pain of imprisonment and fine—many of these jugglers were nevertheless fine swordsmen, whose schools managed to survive through to Tudor times as training centres for the instruction of the sons of noblemen in the

[1] *Archery* (Badminton Library).

use of the long-sword, back-sword, rapier, dagger, and other weapons.

In 1540 Henry VIII gathered together the professors from these various schools and formed them, by letters patent, into a company known as "the Noble Science of Defence," a move designed to do away with any possible subversive activities, while at the same time establishing fencing as a genuine mode of defence. It was a wise move, for the man who was not well equipped to defend himself in those days might at any time find himself in an unpleasant predicament. Not only was there the constant risk of attack in the streets, but there was also the possibility that he might be challenged to a duel over the most trivial matter, or that he himself might wish to issue such a challenge. And certainly he was no less jealous of his honour than had been the knights of the Middle Ages.

This new company received a splendid welcome from the upper and middle classes. Fencing at once became fashionable, and all were anxious to become members of the various schools, for Henry ordained that only those who gained the highest honours in these academies were henceforth to be allowed to teach the art in public. Moreover, such honours were not to be won easily. On entry as an ordinary scholar a man had first to graduate to the rank of 'provost of defence' by means of a series of degrees. As a start he would be required to give a display with various types of weapon "in the presence and view of many hundreds of people," whereupon—if he satisfied the judges as to his ability—he would undergo a further course of training before giving his final display, or 'prize,' which would qualify him for the cherished rôle of 'maister of fence.' To become a master was the ambition of every man of good birth.

Under Henry's influence, then, fencing became to the Tudors what jousting had been to the Normans—an honourable sport, where each man took up his sword for the sheer joy of the thing, bent only on displaying his prowess to the best advantage. And that tradition did not end with Henry's death: Elizabeth did all in her power to further her father's cause. Dr J. C. Cox quotes[1] a Sloane MS. of 1575 as the source of his information for some of the rules governing "the Noble Science" in her time.

Each school, it seems, had its scholars, free scholars, provosts, and masters, and before ever a man could become a free scholar he

[1] In *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* (revised edition, 1903).

had to compete against at least six of his fellows with both long-sword and back-sword. Similarly, before he could become a provost he had to prove himself with the two-handed sword, back-sword, and staff "with all manner of provosts that came on the appointed day; notice being sent to all provosts within three score miles of the place of play." To become a master he was required to fight against certain other masters within a forty-mile radius not only with these weapons, but also with the pike, rapier, dagger, and bastard sword.

Enthusiasm was great in Elizabethan England, and we witness these fencing contests in many parts. We see them at Hampton Court, in the Artillery Ground of the H.A.C. at Finsbury, at Ludgate, and at many other places besides. We come upon them more frequently in London, perhaps; yet in the country too we can often find a cluster of people gathered together in the yard of the local inn, following every movement of some scholar battling against another, his only thought being to win higher status.

But it is not only the contests that command our attention: in their promotion we detect the first signs of a controlling body being formed to govern the sport. Some four masters from these various schools were now selected by the Queen to sit and exercise complete authority over all. Upon them rested the sole responsibility for making any variation of rules, for judging disputes, and, indeed, for general administration.

Alas, their influence was to be short-lived. Towards the end of Elizabeth's reign a number of Italian masters appeared on the scene—"dastardly fellows" who, scorning all restrictions, set up schools of their own, charging extortionate fees such as no English master had ever hoped to earn, and belittling the English as cowards because of their practice of retreating before the sword. Angry scenes greeted their arrival, thanks largely to George Silver, the most famous of the Elizabethan masters, who wrote libellous statements about the Italians' methods, wittily referring to them as "teachers of offence." Not only did Silver slander them in public; it seems that he even went so far as to visit their premises, in company with a number of other masters, intent on inflicting bodily injury. Though nothing appears to have come of these visits, matters were eventually brought to a head when Silver and his brother challenged the Italians to fight them on a scaffold, the idea being that he who retreated from the sword would fall into the pit and break his neck! Since the Italians refused to take up

the challenge the English masters may be considered to have vindicated their honour.

Still, the tradition which Henry VIII had been at such pains to create had already been lowered, with the result that fencing steadily declined in popularity, until, as Dr Cox says, its eclipse became all but absolute by the time of the Commonwealth.

Yet, even if two major sports were to suffer so sudden a decline at a moment when they appeared to be in their greatest glory, it was of little consequence. The people of Tudor England possessed a large and varied quota of amusements. This was indeed a great age of sport, although it was still not considered etiquette for those of one class to appear in company with those of another. Few games were adopted universally. A nobleman, for instance, might, if he was rich enough, procure a licence to play bowls—by now a most exclusive sport—and his sons would certainly be instructed in swimming, an essential part of any gentleman's education. Yet he would no more think of taking part in the crude form of hockey now emerging—which was the prerogative of the middle classes—than would the common folk of playing tennis, even assuming that they could afford it. He was not even so enthusiastic about skating, which, for some reason, was growing to be regarded as a little infra dig. In short, a man played games almost entirely according to his social status, and, though there was no law on the matter, it was virtually the reigning monarch who decided which sport each might play. In this the King appears to have been prompted in large measure by personal appeal, banning the common folk from such games as gained a following at Court, and leaving unrestricted all those which proved of little interest there.

There was never any difficulty about finding a suitable excuse for the introduction of restrictive laws; prior to its decline interference with archery was always a sufficient excuse. This was the excuse chosen by Henry VIII in the case of bowls. As early as 1511 he had numbered it among the harmful pastimes, and thirty years later, when he himself was a keen exponent, he introduced even more drastic legislation, decrying it as an evil pastime where men would gamble themselves and their families to poverty in dissolute places, instead of undergoing some form of military training. No one, he decreed, was in future to maintain a bowling establishment for gain—indeed, no one was to play the game at all unless he held land whose annual value was at least a hundred pounds, and had been granted a special licence by the King.

There was, however, one curious exception to this rule: craftsmen and apprentices, labourers and servants, were permitted at Christmas-time, as a special seasonal privilege, to indulge in the game on their employer's premises, provided they obtained his consent.

It was a convenient age. When the middle or lower classes were unwise enough to bet on their chances their actions were adjudged sinful; when the nobility—led, as always, by Henry VIII—proceeded to do so bowls became an honourable sport, the sport of kings. The restrictive legislation was nothing more than a convenient method of promoting the sport from the yard of the inn to the grounds of the palace or castle, though why it could not have been played in both places is a little difficult to understand.

In Henry's time, then, we not only find special greens—the first of the kind in the world—being laid out and rolled in the parks and gardens of the noblemen, but we also notice elaborate covered-in bowling-alleys, such as Henry himself had constructed at Hampton Court, being built with boarded floors at extravagant cost, adjoining the homes of the rich.

In this new setting bowls became increasingly fashionable, and, whereas the greens were used in dry weather, the alleys proved suitable the whole year round.

With the passing of Henry the restrictive laws, though still in force—they were not, in fact, repealed until the time of Queen Victoria—were often overlooked by the more democratic Elizabeth. So that soon we find the greens no longer confined to the estates of the landed gentry, but come upon them in many public places as well; we notice, too, the appearance in private gardens of a humble version of Henry's elaborate bowling-alley, when a stretch of turf, perhaps 120 feet long, would be railed in by a hedge or fence. We find, moreover, bowls taking its place once again in the inn-yards, though Stephen Gosson, writing in 1579, has a dismal story to tell of women and children being left to starve while their menfolk gambled away their fortunes at this promiscuous pastime.

Bowls was not, however, the favourite sport of the aristocracy. Tennis, likewise banned to the lower classes by both Henry VII and Henry VIII, as, indeed, it had previously been banned by Edward IV, was just as popular. Here there was good reason for imposing restrictions, for the clergy had grown just a little weary of the frequent banging of the balls against the outside of the church walls while they themselves were struggling within to hold

the attention of their congregation, and were impatient at the frequent interruptions to their services caused by the ball crashing through one of the stained-glass windows. Many a Dean and Chapter must have followed the example of the Diocesan authorities at Exeter and complained to the Mayor, who, unable to obtain satisfaction on his own, would then pass on the complaint to the King himself. A number of protests such as these, and the King came to the conclusion that tennis was interfering with archery, and must therefore be banned.

So that quite early in Tudor times we find tennis too emerging as a royal game—the exclusive game of kings, princes, and noblemen. Even before the accession of Henry VII one or two covered courts had been built to represent the natural architecture of the castle courtyard. Now, however, as Dr Cox tells us, others were being constructed at Woodstock, Wycombe, Sheen, Richmond, Windsor, Blackfriars, Whitehall, and Westminster, in addition to the one which Henry VIII built in 1529. It is generally believed that Henry played an important part in designing many of these new courts, for he had paid many visits to France, whose people were the pioneers of the game. It appears that there were two varieties of court in existence at this time—one complete with dedans, pent-house, and tambour; the other devoid of all such features.

As a rule the balls—like the cricket-balls of later days—were fashioned by the Ironmongers Company, and were stuffed with hair, while a cord with tassels did service as a net.

It was in such a court as this that Henry VIII became the first monarch to give the sport his patronage, and to judge from his privy-purse accounts, it seems that he became an ardent patron who would willingly risk as much as a hundred pounds in a single day in betting on his chances. Not that he lost very often: he was undoubtedly among the most prominent players of his time, and it was largely through his influence that tennis gained as great a hold in England as in France, until by Elizabeth's time women too—led in the fashion by the Queen herself—were competing as enthusiastically as men. It became the ambition of every man of means to build a court in the grounds of his home. But, like bowls, tennis was no longer entirely confined to the nobility. Certainly the middle classes played it, and we come upon frequent instances of applications being made for permission to erect and hire out courts for public use. Moreover, such permission was often

granted, even though, unhappily, the privileges sometimes had to be withdrawn again shortly afterwards, when the licensees proved to be disorderly persons who brought discredit both to their courts and to the sport as a whole. In what way they were considered unworthy is not quite clear; probably it was that their enthusiasm led to a neglect of devotional duties, and perhaps to a rather too-free use of 'language.' At any rate, it was found necessary to impose a ban on play either during the forenoon of the Sabbath or during morning or evening prayers, and a firm injunction was made against blasphemy and swearing on any occasion.

Many forms of ball-play were taking shape by now, and the range was extended in large measure by the fact that there were still no universal rules. The people of one town or village often followed a system of play entirely different from those of another district, even though the games being played bore the same name. Scores of ball-games came to light in this way. Of the majority we have lost all trace even of their names; of the rest, a few have survived as rural customs, while the remainder were modernized and took their present form perhaps in Georgian or Victorian days.

So it was that while the nobility were building their costly tennis-courts others were unwittingly sowing the seeds of rackets, badminton, squash-rackets, and fives. Perhaps it was the children of Tudor England who gave us rackets in its embryonic form when, having no one to whom they could beat the ball backward and forward, some one conceived the idea of knocking it against a wall, thereby using the wall as an opponent that would invariably return each shot. On the other hand, it may equally well have been some middle-class family who, unable to afford to build themselves the elaborate tennis-courts, erected a rather more simple structure, and made the best of their limited resources. We have no reliable evidence to guide us. Indeed, it is not until some centuries later that we first come upon any mention of the name rackets. Yet those villagers in the churchyard, like the barons in the courtyard, who started striking the ball by means of a bat or racket, rather than with their hands, were certainly not playing either tennis or fives. For they used no net as in tennis, nor did they employ their hands as in fives. And when, later, the middle classes began to play against walls that were entirely devoid of such natural hazards as were contained in the architecture of churches and castles alike their game became still further divorced from the other two.

So with badminton. For what else was battledore or shuttlecock but badminton in embryo? Here, again, it may well have been a group of children who really gave us the idea, when, after losing their ball, they proceeded to hit a cork to one another. When the flight of the cork proved disappointing some one may have tried to improve matters by boring a few holes round the edge and pushing in a number of feathers, gathered from the farmyard. As the children began knocking this new missile about they doubtless marvelled at the peculiar flight which the cork now took on, and were delighted to have found a new plaything. Nor is this mere supposition, for a plate of the fourteenth century portrays two children toying with just such an object with the aid of quaint, short-handled, oblong wooden bats, not unlike a child's seaside spade with a shortened handle.

In Tudor England we find men and women of all ranks adopting such play under the name of battledore or shuttlecock, introducing a code of rules and bringing in a net to make it more difficult. If it was too slow and simple to become as fashionable as either bowls or tennis, shuttlecock had the advantage of being a game that all could afford.

Similarly, as we travel from village to village, we notice many other varieties of ball-play from which, in later times, the best points were borrowed to form yet another game—cricket. Gradually and quite unwittingly the medieval 'creag' was being married to stool-ball, club-ball, rounders, trap-ball, knurr-and-spell, and cat-and-dog, until, in 1598, we hear of a dispute over the enclosure of an area of common land at Guildford, and find that the scholars of the local free school had, in fact, been playing "at crickett and other plaies" there in the time of Edward VI. What form their cricket took we have no means of telling, for, beyond the bare mention of the dispute, there are no other records to guide us. We have, however, a reasonable picture of some of those ball-games from which cricket must surely have evolved.

In stool-ball, for instance, it was the practice for one player to take up his position by a stool on the ground while a second aimed to knock it over by throwing a ball towards it. The object of the first player was, of course, to defend the stool by hitting at the ball with his hand, and for every time he was successful he scored one point. Not until the bowler had succeeded either in knocking over the stool or in catching the ball after it had been hit did batsman and bowler exchange places. Strangely enough, the hand was still

preferred to the bat, while running was unknown. Any number of players could take part, it seems. Each competed solely in his own interest, the highest scorer being acclaimed the winner.

Cat-and-dog, on the other hand, was, according to Andrew Lang,[1] definitely a game for three. Here two holes thirteen yards apart would be dug into the ground, and at each of these would stand a man, armed with a kind of club known as a 'dog.' The third player would then aim to throw his 'cat'—a piece of wood a few inches long—into the far hole while the defending batsman endeavoured to hit it away with his club, changing places with the other batsman and adding one to his score each time he was successful. It must, I imagine, have been a rather better game for the batsmen than for the bowler!

In these two games, then, we can detect many of the principles of cricket. Yet cricket did not derive from these alone, any more than did cat-and-dog, or any of the others, die out as soon as cricket came in. All these forms of ball-play were popular on their own account as village recreations; as games in which men, women, and children alike, whether rich or poor, might take part, and it is not until Georgian times that we come upon any reliable records of cricket as a game on its own.

Meanwhile a primitive form of hockey was emerging under the name of 'bandy.' Here, too, we have little to guide us as to the methods of play. From a number of old prints, however, it seems that the players had no goals and were by no means particular about the state of their pitches, for one of these prints depicts four men competing against one another on a cobbled village street, while a fifth stands by as, presumably, an interested spectator. A happy-go-lucky affair, the sole object appears to have been for one player to hit the ball about with a curved stick while the rest did their best to get it away from him. In another print it looks as if the four players had paired up and were engaged in two quite independent games, while the odd man out contented himself with staring straight ahead of him, entirely detached.

Though it remained for the Irish to develop the rules of hockey in a later century, the game was already capturing the imagination of the middle classes in much the same way as football had long captivated the common folk.

Alas, football appears to have improved but little with the march of time. While Sir Thomas Elyot saw it in 1531 as "nothing but

[1] *Cricket* (Badminton Library).

beastly fury and extreme violence whereof proceedeth hurte," Stubbs, several decades later in the Tudor dynasty, portrays a dismal picture of broken backs and necks; of men being thrown deliberately on to the hard cobblestones of the village streets; of others knocking a player's heart with their elbows with the deliberate intention of either killing or maiming.

Though Stubbs was often bigoted, these were no Puritan prejudices: the coroners' records of the various counties bear testimony to many deaths at play, and leave no doubt as to the extreme violence to which players would sometimes resort. In the time of Elizabeth, for instance, Nicholas Martyn and Richard Turvey both attacked one Roger Ludforde in the middle of a match at South Mimms, and delivered such devastating blows as to cause death from concussion within a quarter of an hour. On another occasion we read of a player being hurled against the wall of a house with equally disastrous consequences.

Certainly nobody could have described it as a refined game, and both Henry VIII and Elizabeth, like the kings before them, did all they could to stamp it out completely, even going so far as to make it a penal offence for a landowner to allow the game to be played on his ground. Though such laws were, in the main, well received by the gentry, and though many local authorities introduced further by-laws, their efforts at suppression were wholly ineffective. If they were obedient to the Crown in other respects the peasants were rebellious here, and it was extremely difficult for a landowner to play his part. For even though he strongly approved of the restrictions, he had always to remember that he himself might share the fate that had befallen some of the less fortunate players if he proved unaccommodating. Those stalwarts of the village—perhaps more than a hundred strong—must have appeared very menacing at times! There was another consideration: some of the men might be his own employees. So that it is not surprising if the majority of landowners took no action other than to remain indoors or absent themselves from their premises when a match was scheduled to take place. Ignorance of the event seemed the wisest course.

As in the Middle Ages, the goals, often miles apart, might comprise two trees set conveniently near to each other in fields on either side of the village. Rules were still unknown, and all would display as much disregard for their fellow-beings when rushing through the streets as when in open country.

Football, if the most popular, was not the only sport to gain considerable favour among the lower classes. They had a particular liking for certain forms of athletics. Thus, while Henry VIII and his noblemen displayed their manly strength by throwing the hammer, casting the bar, or putting the weight, the more humble indulged in all manner of foot races. Such races were considered beneath the dignity of a gentleman, not so much on the grounds of snobbery as because those who lived in the country already carried out more magnificent feats on horseback. And riding was as fashionable with the Tudors, who loved to stage elaborate gymkhanas, as with the Normans.

Since, however, only the gentry could afford to ride, athletic sports of all kinds began to occupy an increasingly prominent part in the programme of the village fair. What is more, special meetings were now staged in the country churchyards on Sundays and other festival days. Within this confined space we watch the people of England running and jumping, wrestling, playing ball-games, dancing, playing at leap-frog, throwing the javelin, and even, it is said, holding walking races, taking care, as always, to keep to the north side, where there were no graves that mattered.

Yet such meetings were not free from dissentient voices. To the Puritans behaviour like this was sacrilege; it was, indeed, more than John Northbrooke could bear. Demanding, in 1577, a complete inquiry into the legislation regarding these meetings, the only words he could find to describe those taking part were "loytering idle persons, ruffians, blasphemous swingebucklers and tossepots," while the sports he thought of as "dunghills and filth in commonweals." But what Northbrooke lost sight of—as, indeed, the Puritans invariably forgot—was that many of the clergy themselves were taking a full share in the proceedings, thinking nothing of racing through their sermons in order to get home for an early lunch and be out again in comfortable time for the start of the afternoon's programme.

Yet were these men and women who played in such fashion in the churchyard really any less worthy than the thousands who flocked to the cock-pit? Were they any worse than those who delighted to chain down a bear and set bulldogs to fight it, bringing in fresh relays of dogs every few minutes as others got killed or maimed, until at last the wretched creature was overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers? Were they more damnable than those who would find joy in whipping a blind bear round the arena

while they held it on a chain to prevent its escape? Yet all these things were not only popular sports with the Tudors, but were even deemed *honourable* and well befitting a gentleman. If the people of medieval England had found pleasure in them, their joy was as nothing compared with that experienced now.

When he built his private cock-pit at his palace at Whitehall, Henry VIII was by no means alone among the nobility in showing a fancy for the sport; most of the leading military figures of the day now indulged in cock-fighting as part of their normal training. We even hear[1] of contests taking place on board ship, and of special pens being provided in our men-of-war to contain the birds. As for bear-baiting, it seems that Elizabeth herself found in this an excellent means of entertaining foreign diplomats, and her courtiers were at pains to introduce a certain air of pageantry and provide a plentiful supply of ale and wine and fruit and nuts.

Though cock-fighting was one of the most popular pastimes of the Tudor Age, it is not really until the Restoration that we begin to get any clear appreciation of the many intricacies of the sport or of the almost worshipful devotion with which men would train and match their birds. The gentry might wager large fortunes on their game-cocks; the poor might sometimes stake their all. Yet the cock-pit proper was still in its infancy. In the country we may come upon many open-air pits and notice contests taking place in the inn-yards. Even so, there is no evidence of these new enclosed pits having yet been built outside London; indeed, apart from Henry VIII's, we find mention only of the two at Drury Lane and Jermyn Street, although it is possible that one may already have been constructed in Shoe Lane.

Of bear-baiting we have a rather better picture. Special 'gardens' had already been laid out in many parts of the country, and of these the most famous were those at Bell Savage and in the Paris Garden in Southwark.

Here, in these gardens, huge stands would be erected in the form of a theatre to accommodate the numerous spectators, when, according to an account in *The Progresses of Queen Elizabeth,* the bears would be

> fastened behind, and then worried by great English bull-dogs, but not without great risk to the dogs ... and it sometimes happens they are killed upon the spot; [then] fresh ones are immediately supplied in the place of those that are wounded or tired. To this entertainment there

[1] *Encyclopædia of Sport.*

> often follows that of whipping a blinded bear, which is performed by five or six men standing circularly with whips, which they exercise upon him without any mercy, as he cannot escape from them because of his chain; he defends himself with all his force and skill, throwing down all who come within his reach, and are not active enough to get out of it, and tearing the whips out of their hands and breaking them.

Special bears, Erasmus has told us, were bred for this sport, while a Master of Bears was given more or less unrestricted authority by the Crown to commandeer any dogs that he felt might be trained into suitable fighters. A person of no small importance, this official was provided with a staff of men whose duty it was to travel round the country searching for likely dogs, and to assist generally in carrying out the immense preparations which a baiting demanded. There was also a Bear Warden who, according to Strutt, paraded the streets with the beasts to inform the public when a baiting was imminent. Two minstrels playing suitable tunes usually led the procession, while the bear itself carried on its back either a monkey or a baboon. As this farcical procession passed along men, women, and children would tag on behind, and so make their way to the garden where, for a charge of threepence, they could see all the sport they wished.

Nor was the baiting by any means confined to bears: bulls, donkeys, badgers, and even horses, all came in for their turn of it.

Not all animal sports were cruel. Riding had been reduced to so fine an art that all men of rank were now compelled by a law, introduced by Henry VIII, to maintain a certain number of horses of their own, the number varying according to their station in life. An archbishop or a duke, we are told,[1] was expected to keep "seven trotting horses for the saddle, each of which was to be fourteen hands in height," while a clergyman with a benefice of a hundred pounds a year, or a layman whose wife wore a French hood or a velvet bonnet, need possess only one. Anyone who showed neglect in this matter was liable to a fine of anything up to twenty pounds, a seemingly strange law to impose on a people already horse-conscious. Yet there was a motive. Henry's aim was not only to popularize riding, but also, by compelling owners to keep their animals in good condition, to improve the stock that would supply his military needs. This move had the encouraging effect of causing owners—all of whom were anxious to possess the

[1] *Racing* (Badminton Library).

best horses and themselves to become the finest riders—to settle down to an elaborate system of training.

Soon the owners began to test results by challenging one another to two-horse matches on a greater scale than ever before. Henry VIII himself, and Elizabeth also, often paid out quite substantial sums of money to any who would bring horses to run against theirs. Racing was coming unofficially to the fore, bringing with it the first mention of royal stables, trainers, and jockeys, both amateur and professional. Henry employed a private trainer named Paule, and paid his jockeys two shillings a week salary, fivepence a day board wages, and a bonus for each victory. Already it seems that certain reputed amateurs had found a method of accepting money while still maintaining their amateur status by the simple expedient of persuading their employers to pay them quite fantastic sums by way of expenses.

While the jockeys themselves wore "doublets of burgess satin" and riding-caps lined with velvet, the trainers were certainly never lacking in ideas as to the best method of 'winding up' a horse for a race. While some maintained that a diet of white wine yielded the best results, Gervase Markham held quite different views. In a lengthy discourse on the subject he recommends cutting up and toasting a penny loaf of white bread and drying the slices between a number of warm garments. This precaution, he assures us, will prove so comforting that "the horses empties shall little grieve him." As a final measure he was a firm advocate of opening the windpipe just before the race by spitting strong vinegar up the horse's nostrils.

So that it would appear that both trainers and jockeys had their individual methods, and though racing was still generally a private two-horse affair, staged in some park or in open country to test the relative superiority of the horses, from time to time we begin to hear of a few 'open' meetings taking place—open to any number of horses.

At Chester, for instance, it had become customary for the Company of Saddlers to present to the Company of Drapers, in the presence of the Mayor, a wooden ball which was to be awarded to the man who displayed the greatest skill and endurance in riding his horse round the Roodee. Quite early in Henry's time this Chester meeting had grown into an important Shrove Tuesday event, and when, later, a silver bell, valued at 3*s.* 4*d.*, took the place of the wooden ball, and when, later still, three bells—each

of a different quality—began to be awarded in place of the one, we see for the first time the germ of modern racing.

Nor was Chester the only racing venue of Tudor times, even if the Roodee was, perhaps, the only 'course.' Horse-races soon formed one of the attractions of the Elizabethan pageants, as, for instance, when Archbishop Parker, on the occasion of the Queen's visit to his palace at Croydon in 1574, stages a special race-meeting for her benefit with much pomp and ceremony.

It was a great sporting age, an age when the men and women of England learned—except when playing football—to compete with one another in a spirit of friendly rivalry, obedient on occasion to written rules and regulations, instead of doing just as they pleased as the spirit moved them.

And as we lose sight of this milestone in the sporting progress, so we approach another; the Union of England and Scotland was about to take place.

CHAPTER V

A Fateful Era

When, in 1603, James VI of Scotland became James I of England, and so heralded one of the most fateful eras in British history—that of the Stuart dynasty—sport entered upon a period of alternating prosperity, decline, and revival.

If James could never display such personal skill as had Henry VIII, at least he held sport in high esteem, and soon made it apparent that he was anxious to give every one, regardless of class, ample opportunity of taking part in any recreation that did not offend against the taste of the times. When, on his return from Scotland in 1618, he found restrictions that made it difficult for the common folk to get their fair share of exercise being enforced in Lancashire he openly showed his disgust, and commanded that

> after the end of divine service our good people may not be disturbed, letted, or discouraged, from any lawful recreation, such as dancing . . . archery . . . leaping, vaulting, or any other such harmless recreation; nor from having of May games, Whitson ales, and Morris dancers, and the setting-up of Maypoles, and other sports therewith used . . . without impediment or neglect of divine service. . . . But withal, we do here account still as prohibited all unlawful games to be used upon Sunday only, as bear and bull-baiting, interludes, and, at all times in the meaner sort of people by law prohibited, bowling.

Charles I, equally broad-minded, endorsed this relaxation by issuing a further proclamation in the ninth year of his reign.

Concerning sport generally, James gives us his views in a special code, written in his own hand, for the benefit of his son, Henry, Prince of Wales. "Bodily exercises," he advises him, "are very commendable, as well for the bannishing of idleness, the mother of all vice, as for making the body able and durable for travell, which is very necessarie for a king." After condemning football as "meeter for laming than making abel the users thereof," James advises his son to take up running, wrestling, fencing, dancing, "playing at the caitch," tennis, archery, pall-mall, and "the

SKATING IN THE MIDDLE AGES

"Picture Post" Library

SKATING IN HYDE PARK, 1787

From a contemporary engraving.

"Picture Post" Library

"THE GOLFER"

By courtesy of the Royal Blackheath Golf Club

WILLIAM INNES, CAPTAIN, 1778

From a painting by Lemuel Francis Abbott, R.A. Innes is wearing the club uniform, and his clubs are carried by his "college man," attired in the dress worn at that time by a pensioner of the Royal Naval Hospital, Greenwich.

By courtesy of the Royal Blackheath Golf Club

honourablest and most recommendable games that yee can use on horseback." Here he is strongly in favour of employing "great and courageous" horses and adopting such pursuits as might help him to handle his arms with greater proficiency.

Even on the question of games of hazard he found himself "unable to agree with the curiositie of some learned men of our age," and, in fact, actually approved of some of them as being particularly suitable for "foule and stormie weather."

James was far-sighted too. "Beware in making your sporters your councellors," he warned his son, stressing that games should be treated as games, and not converted into a serious science.

Hunting, in his opinion, was the finest sport of all, which is not surprising since James himself was so continually gaining the disfavour of local farmers for his habit of riding straight over their crops in his excitement and anxiety to be near the head of the field. On one occasion, it is said, an anonymous petition was tied to the neck of his favourite hound, requesting that the Court return to London forthwith. Certainly he seems to have cared little for etiquette. Nor was his style of riding orthodox. Often he would be thrown bodily into a pond, and it is recorded that he once crashed headlong into a frozen river, sinking so deep that only the royal boots were visible.

Like his predecessors, he also became a Master of Otter-hounds, and, in that capacity, endeavoured to popularize the sport by making it an offence for any to hunt such animals other than with hounds, by compelling all millers to cease work when a hunt was planned and see to the level of the water near their mills. In certain districts, such as Norfolk, where local conditions were particularly favourable, he even went so far as to compel corporate bodies to provide towards the maintenance of packs of otter-hounds.

There was, however, one form of hunting for which he had no use—shooting at animals, either with the old-fashioned bows and arrows or with the guns that were now becoming increasingly popular. This, to him, was "thievish."

Under James—bad horseman though he was—any exercise connected with the horse received special encouragement. Thus racing began to be recognized more and more. The one race-course at Chester was soon followed by others at Theobalds, Wallasey, where the "largest gentlemen's races" were held, Enfield Chase, Garterly, in Yorkshire, Croydon, where Archbishop

Parker had staged his special meeting for Elizabeth's benefit, and Newmarket. It was to Newmarket, where many of his Scottish courtiers had settled, that James paid most attention, and here we find him ordering the building of extensive stabling accommodation within convenient distance of his new palace, and establishing a centre which has remained to this day the headquarters of the racing world.

Such courses became known as "bell courses," because of the fact that it became customary for silver bells to be awarded to the riders of the winning horses. To these courses crowds would make their way from miles around, despite the wholly inadequate transport system then available.

These meetings were conducted throughout in all seriousness. The question of training—or 'winding up,' as it was termed—already noticeable in the Tudor age, now followed a rather different technique, when, according to a contemporary writer, the horses were "kept always girt that their bellies may not drop and thereby interfere with the agility of their movements," and eggs and soaked bread formed a favourite diet. A crude form of handicapping whereby a horse was allotted a rider more or less according to its strength and build had also been introduced. The animal's age does not, as yet, appear to have been taken into account, the standard for which all handicappers aimed being around ten stone.

Captain R. C. Lyle explains[1] that at this time the Newmarket races were run five times round the course, that the riders of the six or so horses wore distinguishing jackets and caps, and that the races were started by the sheriff, mayor, or other important official. The presentation of the prizes afterwards was often quite an elaborate affair, calling for speeches and laurel-wreaths for the winners.

As the following these meetings enjoyed grew year by year, owners devoted rather more attention to breeding and pedigrees and to recording the successes and failures of their horses. A few—like James himself, who gave a merchant, Markham, a considerable sum for the first Arabian stallion to be brought to this country—began to look farther afield, and imported foreign stock to cross with their own. Their efforts were rewarded. As the fame of these new race-meetings spread, English horses came into increasing demand on the Continent and elsewhere.

[1] *Royal Newmarket* (Putnam, 1939).

Meanwhile two new games—pall-mall and golf—were emerging. Of the origin of pall-mall we have but scant information. Perhaps it was a direct offshoot of the outdoor variety of bowls we discovered in the Middle Ages, developing quite naturally once the players decided to abandon their maces in favour of a kind of club or mallet; possibly it was the amalgamation of a number of Scottish ideas. At any rate, we now hear of it for the first time. Yet almost from the outset, it was to become fashionable both with the new Court and, in rather cruder form, with the country folk. It was in the fields of what we now term the West End that James's courtiers—like those of Charles I after him—were most prone to play. The area of grassland by St James's Palace was a convenient spot, sufficiently near to the royal residence, yet not too close to other buildings to cause danger. Indeed, so closely did it become associated with this sport—which was, in effect, a sort of cross between croquet and golf—that it eventually assumed the name of Pall Mall.

As for the new golf, this appears instinctively to have remained exclusive to the Court, since nobody followed their lead. When James I first took up his residence in London many of the Scottish noblemen accompanying him established their headquarters at Blackheath. Few, however, took kindly to this new life, cut off, as they were, in this peaceful corner of England, far from their homeland and amid scenery that was to them entirely foreign. Only in the wide expanse of common-land could they find any resemblance to the land they loved so well, and here they soon set to work to make holes at varying distances one from the other in the turf, cutting the grass shorter around those holes, and perhaps setting up a flag in each to mark its position.

Here, then, on Blackheath Common, these Scottish noblemen proceeded to allay their boredom by playing a game which their ancestors had first developed—although some said that they had taken the idea from the Dutch—some two hundred or more years before. Thus they brought golf to England, built our first course, and established our first club—a club which was later to be known as the Knuckle Club, and, later still, was to take a leading part in helping to popularize the game throughout the length and breadth of England.

In their own wild and rugged country, ideally suitable for the purpose, golf had long gained so firm a hold that the Scottish Parliament, like the English kings where some of our own sports

were concerned, had often found it necessary to decry it as a menace to archery. Already a fascinating game, it may well be that the principles adopted by the noblemen at Blackheath differed but little from those we know to-day, except that bunkers would not have been constructed deliberately. In Scotland such natural hazards as hillocks, sandbanks, ponds, and streams provided all the obstacles that were required, and, doubtless, the bunkers of our time are simply replicas in miniature of some of the rugged scenery over which the Scots have played since time immemorial. Already the players had devised many different forms of club to meet the various problems that might face them on a normal round; already the old wooden balls had given place to leather ones stuffed with feathers. But if the Scots found pleasure in this way at Blackheath, close on two hundred and fifty years were to pass before golf achieved any great popularity in England.

Under the Stuart dynasty, then, we find a pleasingly fresh flavour creeping in from across the Border. We find the people still clinging to the many pastimes their ancestors had loved so well in bygone centuries, trying their hand at new ones, and practising both under a king who was sufficiently broad-minded to allow them to play on what was virtually the only day that the common folk could call their own—on Sundays.

Under Charles I progress continued. Though rather too preoccupied with civil wars to be able to devote much time to sport, he was nevertheless a decidedly better horseman than James, and it was he who extended Richmond Park in order to promote the "noble science" of riding. Nor was Charles in the least anxious to restrict the people's play.

When the face of England changed under the Commonwealth, however, sport, like so many other things, went into a decline of many years' duration. But with the Restoration rich and poor alike made merry. No longer fettered by armed dictatorship posing as democracy and by Puritan doctrines, they broke into a national rejoicing to which they gave expression in their games.

Not only did they revive and develop still further all their earlier sports and pastimes, but they too adopted new ideas, some of them picked up by the cavaliers during their exile abroad. Since this was a time for rejoicing, we find men of all walks of life gambling on their play as they had never gambled before. All who could afford it—and many who could not—now liked to have their flutter. The Court set the fashion, and the Court gambled high.

Evelyn tells us how even on his death-bed Charles II sat "toying with his concubines, Portsmouth, Cleveland and Mazarine," while some twenty of his courtiers played at basset round a large table, "a bank of at least 2000 in gold before them." Nor was this gambling by any means confined to indoor games of hazard. It became evident in most forms of sport, for the cavaliers had found it to be the custom on the Continent, and they had found it to their liking.

One of the games that became extremely fashionable at this highly fashionable Court was pall-mall. During the Commonwealth the fields by the palace patronized by the courtiers of both James I and Charles I had been built over, so that Charles II was compelled to lay out a new ground inside St James's Park itself. This new site he called simply "the Mall."

Special alleys, it seems, were laid out for the game, and Pepys recalls a talk he had with the keeper of the Mall, when he learned that the well-beaten sand-bed forming the alley was dressed with powdered cockle-shells "spread to keep it fast." In wet weather the idea worked well: the ball would fly—as Waller put it—"as from a smoking culverin 'twere shot." In times of drought, however, the powder quickly turned to dust, deadening the ball, with most disappointing consequences.

Not all alleys were identical in composition, but, as a rule, they would stretch for seven to eight hundred yards in length. Sometimes, in addition, low walls—perhaps four feet high—would be erected round the sides to keep the ball in play. The balls themselves were usually made of boxwood, about a foot in circumference and "beaten to a proper surface" by continual hammering, while the mallets, or 'malls,' were just under four feet long, with the heads curving slightly upward at each end, and the handles bound with soft leather to improve the grip and lessen the sting when the player came to strike the hard ball.

Pall-mall was, as we have seen, a cross between golf and croquet, the player driving off as in golf, but then settling down to a game more reminiscent of croquet. Indeed, from a contemporary list of instructions it appears that the stance advocated for driving was almost identical to that employed on the golf-course to-day, the players being urged to "get an even swing behind the drive, make full use of the hips and refrain from hitting at the ball."

The object of the game was to drive the ball down the alley in

as few strokes as possible. The hazards consisted for the most part of a number of iron arches, through each of which the player was expected to pass his ball in turn. He did not, however, employ the same heavy mallet throughout, nor did he use the same ball. On approaching the first arch he would throw down a small steel ball in place of the boxwood one, at the same time substituting a 'lifter'—an implement rather like a golf spoon—for his mall. Whereupon he would concentrate on making shorter and more controlled strokes.

The people of England devised many varieties of pall-mall to suit their own peculiar needs and financial circumstances. Sometimes they would discard the driving element entirely, and content themselves with simply hitting the ball through the arches and on towards a post, set up to act as a goal. To them this was just an improvised form of pall-mall; yet here, surely, were the seeds of croquet, even if those seeds did first have to be nurtured in both France and Ireland before the game could blossom forth in its more modern form in a later century? At other times they might play a game more after the nature of billiards, play being conducted in a boarded-in alley some two hundred yards long, with two arches and a wooden peg at one end.

Then, again, in direct contrast, we find the commoners adopting yet a third version. For them mallets and boxwood balls and well-laid alleys, powdered with cockle-shells, were too extravagant. So they did their best with improvised malls—fashioned, maybe, by some village wheelwright or carpenter—and home-made balls, carved from some handy tree-stump, forgathering in the open fields when the day's work was done, to practise a game that differed but little from the Roman paganica. While rough arches of willow or hazel boughs, gathered from the woods, took the place of the iron hoops, a convenient post or tree did service as the winning goal. And here, in the heart of the glorious English countryside—a countryside not yet defiled by jerry-built bungalows—the common people found as much enjoyment in their simplified form of pall-mall as did the courtiers in London. For pall-mall was indeed one of the great sporting developments of both the pre- and post-Commonwealth periods. Yet before the end of the Stuart dynasty it was for no apparent reason to suffer a complete eclipse.

Probably the most remarkable change in this new age in English social history concerned archery. The decline which had started

during Elizabeth's time was now all but absolute. True, a commission had been set up by Charles I in 1628 for the purpose of enforcing some of the compulsory laws established by Henry VIII. But, unlike his predecessor, Charles could no longer quote military necessity as a reason, for by now the bow had given place entirely to the musket. Not only did the people refuse to attend further practices, but the landowners were no longer prepared to set aside valuable ground to such wasted purpose, and so proceeded to enclose it for their own use.

Yet archery did not fade out so completely as pall-mall. There were some who actually derived pleasure from the use of this now obsolete weapon, and these adherents began to form archery communities, the chief of which was the H.A.C., whose members became known as the Finsbury Archers.

Charles II, who had wiled away many of his hours in exile shooting with the bow, did all he could to encourage these new societies, as also did his luckless wife, Catherine of Braganza, with the result that soon after the Restoration we hear of frequent attempts being made to revive archery for purely recreational purposes. As a kind of curtain-raiser, an elaborate exhibition was staged in Hyde Park in 1661, when some four hundred archers, bedecked in splendid costumes, headed by Sir Edward Hungerford, turned out with full fanfare. Their efforts were not lost on the populace. Indeed, their skill at shooting "near twenty score yards within the compass of a hat" appears to have been so impressive that three Regiments of Foot, we are told, immediately laid down their arms and went over to watch. After this encouraging start many further exhibitions were staged from time to time.

Meanwhile the societies themselves adopted the practice of holding three annual meetings, named respectively the Easter, Whitsun, and Eleven-score Targets. When any such meeting was planned the archers would be called together by proclamation, signed by the stewards for the year, and on receipt of the 'call' were required to pay two shillings and sixpence each to the bearer of the notice, and on the day of the event a further sum of one pound as a contribution towards the purchase of the plate trophies. Invariably, we learn,[1] would the Captain and Lieutenant shoot first and second respectively, whereas it was customary to draw lots to decide the order of shooting for the remainder. Prizes were awarded to those who first succeeded in lodging an arrow into

[1] *Archery* (Badminton Library).

each of the various colours, a system which seems to have been remarkable for its unfairness to those who came late in the order of shooting. Since each colour held a different value, he who first hit the red, or gilded, centre gained the Captain's prize, while the Lieutenant's was given to the owner of the first arrow to pierce the circle round the 'bull.' There was a whole range of prizes, including many spoons, and the meeting lasted until all these had been awarded, when the day would be declared to have been "shotten down."

As time goes on we are struck by the hold which these meetings were gaining, and particularly by a group of Yorkshiremen, who, in 1673, inaugurated the Scorton Arrow contest, which, incidentally, has been held almost every year since. We find, too, new archery clubs springing into being, and hear of Queen Catherine presenting as trophies silver shields depicting bowmen bearing the arms both of her native Portugal and of England. Under this new royal patron we see archery arising once more to flourish in a new light, as a sport pure and simple.

Not that it gained anything like general popularity now that the shot-gun had arrived. Fencing, riding, and swimming were all held in higher esteem, while cock-fighting—considered universally to be the most manly of sports—definitely took pride of place.

Yet fencing was not as Henry VIII or Elizabeth had known it, even if in London it did become for a time more fashionable than ever. The long rapier and the two-handed sword had all but disappeared, and men no longer fought for the honour of the thing, but for monetary awards, and for such coins as the excited and unruly spectators chose to toss on to the stage from time to time by way of encouragement. Fencing, once a noble sport, was becoming a blood-bath. Pepys tells us something of his reaction to the dismal scene when, in 1663, he watched a match at the New Theatre between a man named Matthews and one Westwicke:

> Westwicke was soundly cut several times both in the head and legs, that he was all over blood; and . . . Westwicke was in a most sad pickle. They fought at eight weapons, three bouts at each weapon. . . . I felt one of their swords, and found it to be very little, if at all, blunter on the edge than the common swords are. Strange to see what a deal of money is flung to them both upon the stage between every bout. But a woful rude rabble there was, and such noises made my head ake all this evening.

Even so, Pepys could not resist paying further visits. Few could. If it was the lower orders who fought such contests now, others, though perhaps reluctant to admit it, were certainly no less eager to watch. Since there was still a great class distinction, and one had to be careful where one went, imagine the embarrassment of the Secretary to the Admiralty when, on making his way from his office in Whitehall to the Bear Garden at Southwark, hopeful of a good evening's entertainment, he found the yard full of seamen, all pushing and shoving to get in:

> I was afeared to be seen among them, but got into the ale-house and so by a back way was put into the bull-house where I stood a good while all alone among the bulls, and was afeared I was among the bears too; but by and by the door opened, and I got into the common pit; and there, with my cloak about my face, I stood and saw the prize fought.

If fencing had become somewhat sordid, riding had lost none of its tradition. If anything, the people of England had become even more horse-conscious. Charles Cotton, writing in 1674,[1] shows with what care young colts were now broken in:

> After your colt has been eight or ten days at home, and . . . will endure currying without showing avertion thereunto, and will suffer his keeper to handle and stroke him in what part of the body he thinkest best, then it is time to offer him the saddle; first laying it on the manger that he may smell to it. . . . Having gently put on the saddle, take a sweet watering-trench, wash and anoint with honey and salt, and so place in his mouth, that it may hang directly about his tush, somewhat leaning thereon. Having so done, which must be in the morning after dressing, then lead him out in your hand and water him abroad, then bring him in, and after he hath stood rein'd a little upon his trench an hour or thereabout, then unbridle and unsaddle him, and give him liberty to feed till evening, and then . . . having cherished him, dress and cloath him for the night.

Riding was still part of a gentleman's education. On the other hand, so was cock-fighting. True, Cromwell had forbidden the holding of public mains once he had realized that the Royalists were making them an opportunity for scheming. But who was Cromwell now? Every town worthy of the name—and many a village too—now boasted its cock-pit, which could be relied upon to attract rich and poor alike in enormous numbers.

Pepys, paying his first visit to the pit in Shoe Lane in 1663,

[1] *The Compleat Gamester.*

having been drawn by the numerous advertisement posters that were plastered all over the city, was not impressed:

> Lord! to see the strange variety of people, from Parliament-men . . . to the poorest 'prentices, bakers, brewers, butchers, draymen, and what not; and all these fellows one with another in swearing, cursing, and betting. I soon had enough of it, and yet I would not but have seen it once, it being strange to observe the nature of these poor creatures, how they will fight till they drop down dead on the table, and strike after they are ready to give up the ghost, not offering to run away when they are weary or wounded past doing further, whereas where a dunghill brood comes he will, after a sharpe stroke that pricks him, run off the stage, and then they wring off his neck without more ado, whereas the others they preserve, though their eyes be both out . . . sometimes a cock that has had ten to one against him will by chance give an unlucky blow, will strike the other starke dead in a moment, that he never stirs more; but the common rule is, that though a cock neither runs nor dies, yet if any man will bet £10 to a crowne, and nobody take the bet, the game is given over, and not sooner. One thing more it is strange to see how people of this poor rank, that look as if they had not bread to put into their mouths, shall bet three or four pounds at one bet, and lose it, and yet bet as much the next battle (so they call every match of two cocks), so that one of them will lose £10 or £20 at a meeting.

To Pepys it was all rather "rude and nasty." Yet Pepys was somewhat exceptional in his views. To most it was both thrilling and, for some reason best known to themselves, manly. Indeed, Cotton regarded cocking as "so full of delight and pleasure" as to give it pride of place among all sports. In a way this is not altogether surprising, for cock-fighting was undoubtedly extremely scientific, in that as much attention needed to be paid to the breeding and training of the cocks, and to the preparation of the pits, as is displayed by the racehorse trainers of our own time.

The pits, we learn,[1] were sometimes covered in and sometimes open, and measured anything from eighteen to twenty feet in diameter. The sides were padded with chopped hay covered with canvas, while the floor was spread with carpet or matting, or, better still, with green turves—a system which gave the sport the alternative name of the Sod. Considerable attention was paid to the initial choice of a fighting-cock, and Cotton expressed the view that the most promising was one of medium size, with a small head and keen eye, having at the same time a strong back. As for

[1] *Encyclopædia of Sport.*

colour, his choice was grey, yellow, or red, with a black breast, the darker colours proving the stronger and less liable to bleed in battle. A sharp-heeled cock, "though he be somewhat false," was always a better proposition than one with a dull heel, since "the one fights long but seldom wounds," whereas the other "carrieth a steel so fatal that every moment produceth an expectation of the battail's conclusion."

The best season for breeding was "from the encrease of the moon in February to the encrease of the same in March," during which time the cock-masters would pay almost worshipful attention to the behaviour of both hens and chicks alike, even to the extent of wringing the necks of any who revealed their cowardice prematurely by crowing before they were six months old. Dieting formed an important part of the preparation, and on this breeders had their own ideas, which they were invariably at pains to keep to themselves. All sorts of concoctions did they prepare, ranging from white toast steeped in urine to port-wine and sherry; from jellies and isinglass to eggs or raw meat. Only in one respect do the breeders appear to have been in anything like complete agreement, in their firm belief in feeding three times a day—at sunrise, midday, and sunset.

When only a few months old the cocks would be sent out to 'walks,' or training-farms, in readiness for the start of their fighting career in their third year. Cotton's method of sparring the birds during this period was to cover the heels of two cocks with 'hots' —rolls of leather—and set them on a straw bed to fight just long enough to be sure of heating their bodies and breaking down any surplus fat. After this would follow a course of 'sweating,' when the cocks were fed with a mixture of sugar-candy, chopped rosemary, and butter, before being shut down in a deep basket of straw until early evening, when the 'feeder' would have the doubtful pleasure of licking the eyes and head of each with his tongue before placing them in their pens. Finally, to round off the day, the feeder would fill the troughs with square-cut manchet and "piss therein and let them feed whilst the urine is hot; for this will cause their scouring to work, and will wonderfully cleanse both head and body."

No pains were spared in this training. It was a long, elaborate, and at times disgusting business, well befitting an altogether disgusting sport. Nor was the training by any means the only consideration: before a bird was put to battle it was fitted with a

pair of exquisite silver spurs with which to attack. And these spurs were all fashioned with infinite care by expert craftsmen who made a life-study of cock-fighting. On each pair they would carefully engrave their names as the hall-mark of fine workmanship. London became the centre of these craftsmen, and the Cockspur Street we know to-day gained its name through their activities.

While each straight fight between two cocks was termed a battle, a number of battles, taken collectively, constituted a main. Before the first battle was fought the owners of the various birds—who were termed the 'masters'—would provide the referee with lists showing the names and weights of their contestants. Whereupon the latter would match them against each other and prepare his 'match-bill.' This done, the cocks were weighed by the pit side, 'cut out,' and 'heeled'—that is, their tail and feathers were trimmed. This trimming, carried out in such a way as to leave a 'fair hackle,' was followed by the fixing of the silver spurs, always "round and tapering from socket to point, and no drop-sockets."

When these preliminaries had been completed to the entire satisfaction of the referee the main would commence with the light-weight contests. After all had backed their fancies the setters-to would advance into the centre of the pit, where, holding their birds in their hands, they would first allow them to peck each other a few times. This, however, appears to have been little more than a way of arousing their first anger, for after a minute or two the setters-to would retire again to their respective corners and set the cocks on their feet. The battle was on. The hardiest birds might fight with all their fury for perhaps three minutes; on the other hand, there was nothing to prevent one of them striking a deadly blow within a matter of seconds. It was impossible to foretell how long a battle might last. There was not, it seems, any time-limit: it was simply a knock-out affair which went on until one of the birds was either dead or too exhausted to give further fight, the verdict being usually reached either by an elaborate system of counts or else by the betting method described by Pepys.

Meanwhile the crowds would be working themselves up into a frenzy, shouting excitedly, perspiration pouring down their faces as they saw the chances of their fancy rapidly fading. Yet while there was life there was always hope—even for the most badly battered cock—for the setters-to would certainly never allow their charges to give in easily. They were, in certain circumstances,

permitted to handle their birds, and then they would be entirely ruthless. Few would hesitate to place a bird on its feet once more even if it meant holding up its neck to prevent the head from drooping. So long as there was still breath in its body they would cherish the hope that it *might* strike a lucky blow. After all, there was money on this.

By no means all battles ended in a 'kill.' Sometimes a cock would run from the pit without striking a single blow, in which case the battle was declared void. But shame to the master, for this cock would simply be deemed a loser where the *main* was concerned.

There were various ways of conducting mains, of which probably the most popular type was the 'Welsh.' Here the birds would fight by rounds, rather on the lines of a present-day lawn tennis tournament, the ultimate winner of the main, and the stakes, being he whose cock was successful in the last round of all. Then, too, there was an even more loathsome system, known as the Battle Royal. Here any number of cocks might be placed in the pit at the same time, and left to fight until only two remained alive, whereupon the respective owners would act as setters-to and continue the battle as before.

When a main was over the owners, happy in their self-satisfaction or disgruntled at their losses, would return to their homes and proceed to nurse back to health their wounded cocks, showing them once more all the loving care they had displayed during the training period. Their only thought now was that these cocks should fight another day.

Equally loathsome was their behaviour and outlook at the baiting of animals. If this sport had been allowed to decline during the Commonwealth, the people were now zealous to make up for lost time to such an extent that by-laws were introduced empowering local boroughs to punish any butcher who was bold enough to sell unbaited meat.

Bull-rings, previously torn down, were now set up again on stout wooden or stone posts. To these rings would be fastened one end of a fifteen-foot rope, and when the other end had been secured to the roots of the beasts' horns the dogs would be let loose. Not that the dogs by any means always had it their own way. Evelyn describes a visit he once paid to the Bear Garden at Southwark, when, during a full programme of cock-fighting, bear- and bull-baiting and dog-fighting, he saw one of the dogs tossed

"full into a lady's lap as she sat in one of the boxes at a considerable height from the arena."

Bull-running too was more popular than ever, with contests being held in many places besides Tutbury and Stamford.

Nothing, it seems, was regarded in any way as cruel where animals were concerned. Yet were the people of Restoration England really any worse than those of earlier centuries? Such sports did not strike them as cruel. In any case, if the baiting of animals proved perhaps rather more exciting than the rest, they were hardly less enthusiastic about many other forms of recreation. As we have seen, Charles II was every bit as keen a sportsman as Henry VIII, and by his personal example encouraged most forms of play to the full.

Athletics—seriously curtailed under the Puritans—was one of the first to come to the fore. Now that Chaucer's Merrie England, so long cast into gloom, was being reborn we see the maypole being put up once more on the village greens, and find men, women, and children laughing, dancing, and competing one with another at all manner of sports with the heart of a people relieved of a great burden. We even hear of cripples taking part in special races on Newmarket Heath. Everybody was anxious to join in the fun. There was, however, a difference between the athletics of both the Middle Ages and Tudor times and those we now witness. Though the old sports—wrestling, throwing the bar, jumping, and so on—were still in evidence, they were no longer confined to the country fair, to the churchyard or the village green. True, they were still held in these places; true, the women often competed as energetically as the men, anxious to win a smock for a prize, or, better still, gain a husband, who—if he had been successful in any event—would in turn have been given a hat as his reward.

In the main, however, athletic meetings now took on a more organized form, and were staged almost as much in the towns as in the country. Moreover, the nobility ceased to regard them as beneath their dignity. The miserable Duke of Monmouth, Macaulay assures us, was a keen exponent, capable of beating the best, even if he could never hope to achieve such spectacular success as Lord Castlehaven and Lord Arran, who together, so it is said, once succeeded in running down and killing a stout buck in St James's Park. Charles himself delighted to attend such meetings, as can be seen in the fact that he and his brother the Duke of York made a special trip to Banstead Downs to bet three

or four to one on an unnamed tyler who was scheduled to race against a footman named Lee. This meeting had been the talk of the city for days beforehand, and Charles was determined to see it.

Hyde Park was now a favourite venue, and Pepys recalls a race between an Irishman and a footman named Crow, when the latter, covering a distance of three times round the park, won by the comfortable margin of more than two miles. It was solely on account of its proximity both to the City and to Westminster that Hyde Park became the chosen site. The downs at Epsom and Banstead, Windsor Park, Richmond, and various other equally suitable spots all came in for their fair share of meetings, and we even hear of the Court attending the sports as far away as Bodmin, in Cornwall.

In 1681, we are told, Charles II and the Duke of Albemarle actually went to the extent of picking up sides—twelve men on each—to contest a wrestling-match in a meadow not far from Windsor Castle. While the King's party wore red waistcoats, the Duke's sported blue. A ring was formed, and the royal coach was drawn up alongside it. The Queen and her ladies-in-waiting chose to watch from the terrace, which doubtless suited Charles very well, since, like the Duke, he preferred to mingle with the crowds. When the wrestling was over the two teams went on to challenge each other, first at back-sword and then at football. An unknown writer of later times gives us this picture of the scene:

> The activity displayed on this occasion excited great applause, and only one of the number offered foul play, which the duke punished by tripping up his heels. The victory was gained by the blues; and they thus procured their employer two hundred guineas, the wager depending; the sum of ten shillings each were given to the king's men, and twenty shillings to the victors; after which, the king's men challenged the duke's at backsword, in which exercise some being unskilful, others were taken in, to complete the number. The issue of this was some broken heads, and the palm was again given to the blues. The king's men being heated, and unwilling that the duke's should thus carry a victory, resolved to have another trial with them, and challenged them at foot-ball, which being accepted, the goals staked out, and the ball placed in the middle, the duke held up a handkerchief over the ball, the dropping of which was the signal to give the start, and the handkerchief a reward to him that got the first kick, which was one of the duke's men, who (in all these exercises) behaved himself so singularly active that his majesty took particular notice of him,

and gave him a guinea. And, notwithstanding fortune still attended the duke's side, the king seemed highly pleased with the day's diversion.

As a rule separate events were arranged for the gentry and the common folk, many of the latter being employees of the former. Particularly was this so in the case of the footmen, who, in fact, were usually professional athletes, chosen in the first place on account of their fleetness of foot, and engaged on the firm understanding that their service should include running in such races as their masters decided, from time to time, to name. The footmen were always greatly in evidence.

These races could in no way be regarded as merely a side-issue. It is no exaggeration to say that they provided a useful means of keeping a man fit and able to perform some of the many arduous tasks demanded of his post. The importance of the footman began, we are told,[1] when the gentry first took it into their heads to maintain two establishments—one in the country and the other in Town.

With the roads almost invariably in shocking condition, an able footman became a necessity. Besides being entrusted with running messages from one house to the other, he might sometimes even be expected to proceed ahead of the family coach throughout an entire journey. Seldom did he experience any difficulty in outpacing the fastest coach, while it is said that the more athletic could cover a greater distance in a single day than a man on horseback. Thus an employer was always careful in his choice of a footman, and, once experience had proved his worth, he lost no time in matching him against others, and betting heavily on his prospects. Some employers, it is recorded, won as much as a thousand pounds on a single race of this kind, and, indeed, many must have found it a sound way of paying for their services.

So, too, we find running contests quickly gaining in popularity throughout the length and breadth of England, and see enormous crowds making their way, by any means available—on foot, on horseback, on farm carts, on anything—to some town where a sports meeting was scheduled to take place, many of them coming from miles away, all anxious to watch the fun and back their fancies.

As we have seen, such meetings were not by any means restricted solely to running, or even, for that matter, to events that we should

[1] *Athletics* (Badminton Library).

HUNTING:

GEORGE III WITH HIS STAGHOUNDS IN WINDSOR FOREST

The Sporting Magazine

HAWKING:

THE FATAL STOOP

From a painting of 1839 by F. G. Turner.

AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FENCING ACADEMY

After T. Rowlandson.

"Picture Post" Library

term athletics. As in the village fairs, ball-games of various kinds might sometimes be included in the programme. Football—the game that had so enraged the Puritans, that had spread terror to the villagers and sometimes caused death and, invariably, destruction—was becoming even more popular. Happily, though, it was at last also becoming slightly more refined. It still caused a certain consternation when played in the streets of London and other big cities, but even in London it was growing sufficiently ruly for the aristocracy to tone down their angry outbursts. Plenty besides Charles II and the Duke of Albemarle were now known to patronize it. And why not? They were now playing the game at Cambridge.

Yet, technically, football had not really advanced greatly: the object was still simply to get the ball through your opponent's goal by whatever means appeared the most suitable at the time. Rather was it entering upon a transition period, about to leave for ever the streets of the cities to emerge, later, in a rather more orderly form from our great public schools and universities.

So it was with fives. Although still played in the country churchyards, this too was to undergo something of a revolution at certain of the public schools before acquiring its more modern forms.

Tennis, on the other hand, was definitely losing popularity. According to Pepys, the best players in the nation were now to be found only at Court, with Charles II an immensely enthusiastic but indifferent performer, nowhere near so accomplished as Henry VIII. Tennis had also declined during the Commonwealth, but now Charles and his courtiers staged frequent matches at Hampton Court, Whitehall, and in a special court close by the Haymarket. To such matches the public were always more than welcome, and each revealed his appreciation of the fact in his readiness to applaud even the most ordinary stroke made by the King. To Pepys such open flattery was just "beastly." Charles, however, revelled in it, beaming with delight at each fresh burst of applause. For Charles liked 'atmosphere,' and that atmosphere he embellished when, at the end of a match, he ordered a steelyard to be brought to the court so that he might weigh himself. It was a great moment. Every one waited eagerly to hear how much his Majesty had lost. For to lose weight was, to his thinking, proof of good play, and he was overjoyed when once the scales showed four and a half pounds less.

Still, the most that Charles or any of his courtiers could hope for was that they might bring about some temporary revival of *interest,* for tennis, although never to die out, was definitely on the wane.

Far more popular now was bowls. As we travel around England we find public greens and alleys being laid out far and wide. No one any longer seemed greatly disturbed if men did leave their women and children to starve while they themselves gambled away their money. The nobility still tended their private alleys with loving care, and what the middle and lower classes did with their time and money ceased to be any concern of the Court. Bowls, then, became a universally popular pastime. Not that the attitude of the lower orders appears to have grown one whit more honourable; indeed, where they were concerned, the scene remained as grim as ever. Cotton, for instance, saw the public greens as hotbeds of "cunning, betting, crafty matching, and basely playing booty," where three things—besides the bowls—were thrown away—namely, "time, money, and curses, and the last ten for one," and where those who got the best of the sport were the few who were content to watch without betting.

Yet even Cotton had to admit that there was a great art in the game. The greens and alleys, he tells us, varied enormously in their make-up, so that the players had not only to adjust their style accordingly, but also to be careful in their choice of bowls. Whereas, for example, a flat bowl was considered the most suitable choice for a close alley, a "round byassed" one usually yielded better results on open ground. On the other hand, for "green swaths that are plain and level" the bowl could never be too round. As for the players themselves, Cotton tells us that

> never did mimmick screw his body into half the forms these men do theirs; and it is an article of their creed that the bending back of the body or screwing in of their shoulders is sufficient to hinder the over-speed of the bowl and that the running after it adds to its speed.

To Cotton this was all rather ridiculous; but then Cotton should have watched some of our present-day bowlers!

Just as bowls had steadily come to the fore as an outdoor game ever since Elizabeth had overlooked the restrictions, so, too, had the medieval shovel-board gradually given place to billiards as one of the most popular indoor recreations. Every town now boasted at least one public billiard table, while those who lived in a

sizable house invariably gave up an entire room to the game. In the first printed account of the sport Cotton shows that it was as yet as much a matter of chance as of skill. The best player was by no means the most likely to win: the tables were altogether too unreliable.

Oblong in shape, made of ill-seasoned oak, these tables were covered with green cloth, railed round the top with a ledge stuffed with fine flock or cotton, and provided with three pockets, or wooden boxes, on either side to serve as hazards. At one end was placed a small ivory arch—the 'port'—and at the other a kind of peg, known as the 'king.' The players used sticks of weighted wood, tipped with ivory at the broad end, and confined themselves to only two balls. The object was both to pass through the port and to touch the king without knocking it down. In certain conditions a player was allowed to use either end of his stick, and the skill lay in baulking an opponent on every possible occasion, without, however, rendering oneself liable to any of the penalties that might result from a misdirected shot. Of these there were many. A man who broke a king, for instance, was required to forfeit one shilling, while he who did the same to the port might be fined as much as ten shillings, and so on.

Cotton shows, moreover, that these penalties were also inflicted on such "lolling, slovingly players" as allowed their pipe-ash to fall upon the table or offended against the code in any other respect. Already there was a lore of the billiard-room, and in order to enforce this etiquette and to settle any possible disputes that might arise, 'standers-by' were appointed who likewise had to guard their behaviour. It was not, for example, expected of them to direct or instruct, or, in fact, to open their mouths at all, unless their opinion had been deliberately invited, and any who did venture an opinion unheralded would be asked to leave the room or "instantly forfeit two pence for the good of the company." Indeed, to judge by Cotton's opinion of the characters who frequented these rooms—"spunging caterpillars which swarm where any billiard tables are set up"—a certain code of conduct appears to have been an absolute necessity.

Yet there was an even less worthy variety of billiards, known as 'trucks,' which was played on a larger table and with ten holes on either side instead of three.

But while the "caterpillars" were swarming here and the nobility were priding themselves on the splendid manhood that

cock-fighting was developing in them, others were taking an increasing interest in some of the water sports. The Royalists had brought back from their exile in Holland the iron skate, and were now busy displaying some of the finer points that they had learned from the Dutch. Since others were quick to follow their lead, we soon find the people moving across the ice at a greater speed than could ever have been possible on the old bone skates. As one of the secrets they learned at this time was the art of stopping dead, accidents were minimized, and skating gradually became, in the words of Pepys, "a very pretty arte," with the new canal, laid out in St James's Park by Charles II, its principal venue. It was a gay scene.

At the same time we find more and more making their leisured way to the river-bank to "take fish," and hear of frequent new experiments taking place with rod and line, with hook and fly, and with tackle generally. For Izaak Walton had spread the charm, and who, after reading *The Compleat Angler*, could any longer resist the lure? Besides, Markham, in a lengthy definition of the requirements of an angler in his *Country Contentments*, shows that the sport was becoming not a little scientific. A skilful man, he assures us,

> should have knowledge in the sun, moon and stars, that by their aspects he may guess the seasonableness or unseasonableness of the weather, the breeding of storms, and from what coasts the winds are ever delivered. . . . He should have knowledge in proportions of all sorts . . . that when he shall be questioned of his diurnal progresses he may give a geographical description of the angles and channels of rivers, how they fall from their heads, and what compasses they fetch in their several windings. He must also have the perfect art of numbering, that in the sounding of lakes or rivers he may know how many foot or inches each severally containeth; and by adding, subtracting, or multiplying the same, he may yield the reason of every river's swift or slow current. . . . Then he must be exceeding patient, and neither vex nor excruciate himself with losses or mischances, as in losing the prey when it is almost in the hand. . . . He must not disdain . . . to kneel, lye down, or wet his feet or fingers, as oft as there is any advantage given thereby, unto the gaining the end of his labour.

Swimming too was steadily becoming more fashionable. If, in the past, the fear of learning "so dangerous an art" had proved a deterrent to many, swimming was now regarded in rather a

different light. All who dwelt by the water, or who earned their living on it, now took it up as a form of insurance for their own safety, so that wherever there was a river or lake—or, indeed, any suitable stretch of water—there would usually be found a band of swimming masters to teach the art to every local child, from the sons of the squire to those of the lowliest peasant. Many strokes were taught, and if any child appeared particularly nervous or lacking in confidence they would fasten a bundle of bulrushes or a line of corks to his body to give him greater buoyancy, an excellent substitute for the rubber floats and other appliances we know so well to-day. So greatly did swimming grow in importance that quite early in Charles II's reign we hear of water-races taking place on the Thames and other rivers.

Meanwhile two even more significant developments were taking place on this important waterway. While the boatmen—whose craft, like those of their ancestors, formed an important link in a still wholly inadequate transport system—were beginning to test their skill in impromptu rowing races against one another, the first seeds of yachting as a sport were being sown by Charles II. A Dutch pleasure-boat—"one of the finest things for neatness of room" that ever Pepys did see in so small a vessel—had dropped anchor up the Thames one day in the summer of 1660, and Charles, with boyish enthusiasm, had been up at five o'clock the following morning, causing no little stir at Whitehall Palace and no little annoyance to his staff, to see this new wonder. The sight stirred his imagination, and he at once ordered Commissioner Pett to build him an even finer yacht of the same type. When the *Jenny* was completed Charles was so delighted with her trial at Deptford in the following year that he showed her to his brother, the Duke of York (later James II), who also commissioned Pett.

With each now owning a yacht, the royal brothers decided to hold a race for a hundred guineas from Greenwich to Gravesend and back, to decide which yacht really was the better. So in October 1661 was staged what was probably the first yacht-race of the kind ever to be held in British waters. Of the scene of this memorable event we have no definite details; yet we can picture the colourful sight as the watermen, dressed in rich garments of crimson satin, lined the route in their strange medley of craft, each ready to come to the rescue should either boat turn turtle. We can imagine, too, the excitement as the King's yacht gradually drew ahead of James's; we can see Charles's face aglow with excitement

when at last he stepped from the *Jenny* into the midst of his cheering subjects on the river-bank.

But it was not in the waters of the Thames, any more than it was in the Haymarket tennis-court, or the bowling-alley in the Mall, or in his patronage of the foot-races in Hyde Park—it was not in any of these things that the Merry Monarch was to play his principal rôle. This man, who, according to Pepys, divided his affections (and his time) between his sport and his mistresses, had one special love—the love of a horse—and just as the nobility in the Middle Ages raised hunting from a quest for food to our first national sport, so now Charles II was making horse-racing more popular than ever before.

CHAPTER VI

Racing becomes the 'Sport of Kings'

If James I was the founder of Newmarket, Charles II was the true Father of the Turf. Under the Commonwealth racing had taken its place among the many banned sports, with the result that the bloodstock which James had built up with such care had been distributed all over the country, while much of Newmarket itself —then the only home of racing in the accepted sense—had been ravaged. Thus Charles had to start, more or less, afresh. Yet his task was simplified not only through his own enthusiasm, but also by the fact that a race-meeting provided just the right atmosphere to appeal to this new opulent and extravagant age.

While at Windsor Charles built himself a private race-course on Datchet Mead, at Newmarket he became owner, jockey, gambler, and judge, all in one—the principal figure in a fashionable centre. Though his lead was followed by the formation of many local race-meetings, Newmarket remained *the* centre. Thither would the Court, the royal mistresses, and the aristocracy generally make their way, often spending days on end in this now fast-growing town, whenever a meeting was to take place.

Before his palace was rebuilt the King often chose to stay at the seat of some nobleman living near by, one of his favourite haunts being the stately Essex mansion known as Audley End, of which he subsequently became the temporary owner. Since Audley End was a little way out of Newmarket, Charles found this a convenient spot to leave his Queen, while he himself went on, unfettered, to enjoy all the frivolities of the daily races and nightly gambles.

That such meetings had their frivolous side there can be no doubt, for all were there at different times—Nell Gwynne, the Duchesses of Portsmouth, Mazarin, Cleveland, and Richmond, and doubtless many others. Each had her own apartments, and, what is more, one or two, like Mazarin and Cleveland, became almost as important to the show as the King himself. While the Duchess of Mazarin's gambling-house, which she attended in person on almost every possible occasion, became, as Captain

Lyle says,[1] "the resort of the highest and the most depraved in the land," the fortunes which changed hands at basset in the course of a single night at the Duchess of Cleveland's salons often ran into tens of thousands of pounds.

Strangely varied was the scene. Newmarket, comprising scarcely two hundred houses, was not sufficiently large to accommodate even the whole of the royal retinue, so that, while some were passing their time in wild extravagance, others were striving to keep themselves warm in tents especially erected for their benefit on the windswept heath.

As for the course, this extended for something like four miles, and the track to be followed was indicated by a series of white posts, the farthermost one of which bore a flag to denote the finish. Enclosures were as yet unknown. Before the commencement of a race the royal party would ride to a strategic position not far from the end of the course. Here they would wait patiently for the field to approach them, when they would join in behind and follow the competitors to the winning-post.

In the absence of recognized officials the results of the race were usually decided by a group of noblemen who happened to be present, but when in doubt these noblemen would refer the matter to the King, a practice which must sometimes have placed Charles in an awkward predicament, seeing that the Merry Monarch, like the rest, was prone to back his fancy.

Despite this lamentable lack of officialdom, racing thrived. By 1670 one John Nelson had started a kind of racing calendar, while the old bell prizes were giving way to silver bowls and cups, each valued at perhaps a hundred guineas and engraved with the name, pedigree, and achievements of the winning horse.

One of the principal events at Newmarket was the Town Plate, instituted five years previously as an annual October race, to be run in three heats, with a final over a course of four miles. Charles himself, who, incidentally, became known as Old Rowley after his favourite hack—the famous Rowley Mile Course was called after him—won the Town Plate on more than one occasion, being successful in 1671 against a field that included his illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth, also a fine horseman. A great sportsman, Charles took his racing seriously, and was as fond of supping with the jockeys at the end of the day as of mingling with the crowds on the Heath, where he would talk to all and sundry in his free-and-

[1] *Royal Newmarket* (Putnam, 1939).

easy, democratic way. It was by no means only the fashionable side of Newmarket that appealed to him.

It is not surprising, then, that under his influence the setbacks of the Commonwealth were soon put to rights, and that racing came forward in a new light. Horses began to be bred and imported again on an even greater scale, while the accomplishments of the trainers assumed new dimensions.

Cotton gives a lengthy list of instructions on this subject, advocating, among other things, watering a race-horse in a running river or clear spring, and then feeding him with "sweet sound oats, either dryed by age or art." He should be exercised three times a week, he says, and purged with a concoction consisting of "ani-seeds, cummin-seeds, cathamus, fen-greek-seed, brimstone, salad-oil, honey, and white wine," all of which were to be kneaded into a ball, dissolved in a pail of water, and given to the horse to drink after exercise. As a means of improving the animal's wind Cotton recommends breaking a raw egg into the horse's mouth before each airing.

Towards the end of Charles's time Newmarket was ravaged by fire. Since this caused damage amounting to something like £20,000 (in modern equivalent more like £200,000), racing temporarily shifted its headquarters to Winchester, where, according to Evelyn, Sir Christopher Wren was commissioned to build a palace at an estimated cost of £35,000. By the time of William and Mary, however, the damage had been made good, and Newmarket came into its own again.

William, who, through the nature of his accession to the English throne, needed always to be on his guard, deemed it wise to give racing his full patronage. Not only did he add to the number of plates, both at Newmarket and elsewhere, but he also founded a riding academy, under a French horseman, Major Joubert, and imported even more bloodstock than his predecessors. Like Charles before him, he attended the races on every possible occasion; unlike Charles, however, who because of the extravagance of his mistresses had himself to be cautious, he bet on a large scale. Unfortunately William was not a good loser, and would fly into tantrums when the fortunes were against him.

Queen Anne, by contrast, was a genuine lover of the Turf. Indeed, there seems to be something quite reminiscent of Elizabeth in her devotion to sport, for Dean Swift to relate how she "hunts in a chaise with one horse, which she drives herself, and drives furiously like Jehu, and is a mighty hunter like Nimrod." On one

occasion, he tells us, she hunted the stag until tea-time, and then drove home more than forty miles in her chaise. But Anne was a victim of gout by then, or she would have hunted on horseback, donning a habit comprising a blue coat, edged with silver, and a beaver hat, complete with feather, as was her practice when in her prime. Equally devoted was she to the sport of the sod, and it is recorded that she once had to be ordered out of the Westminster pit after she had succeeded in creeping in, unnoticed, hopeful of watching, incognito, a cock-fight in which she was particularly interested.

The race-course, however, was her great love, and on it Queen Anne definitely left her mark in more ways than one. Her very presence at so many meetings brought a vogue hitherto undreamed of. For, whereas in the past it had not been etiquette for women to put in an appearance, the Queen's patronage altered the whole complexion. Hitherto virtually the only women to be seen on the course at Newmarket, apart from the wives and daughters of the local farmers and craftsmen, and, of course, Charles's mistresses, were those related to the neighbouring squirearchy, who might occasionally turn up for one particular race, but who would usually depart again as soon as it was over. Once Anne began to show her unveiled love of the course, however, women began to follow her example and became almost as regular in their attendance as the men.

But Anne also left her mark as an owner who took the greatest pride in the improvement of her stud. It was in her time that the famous Darley Arabian, which, together with the Godolphin Arabian, or Barb, and the Byerly Turk, was to give us the finest bloodstock in the world, was brought to England.

As one improvement followed another it became customary for legal agreements to be drawn up whenever a race of any importance was to be run. From one of these agreements, "made and concluded on the 30th August A.D. 1706 for a plate to be run on ye new Heates on Winchester Downs," we gain an impression of some of the conditions imposed:

> Every contributor that puts in a horse etc. for ye said plate shall shew and enter such horse etc. with marks and mane, and name of ye owner, att ye starting post of ye said heats ye day sevennight before they run, between the hours of ten and twelve in ye morning, to ye stewards of ye said plate for ye time being, or his deputy, otherwise to have no share in ye said plate.

No one was allowed to enter more than one horse, and each was required to carry twelve stone. As for the races themselves,

> Every horse etc. yt runs is to start att ye starting post of ye said heats between ye hours of 2 and 4 in ye afternoon of ye day above written, and to leave all ye posts and flaggs on ye right hand ye first and third heats, and on ye left hand ye second and fourth heats; and there is to be allowed half an hour between each heat to rub and refresh.

Such agreements as these were not, it seems, entirely binding, for another clause renders it permissible for any one of these rules to be altered at a minute's notice on a majority vote of the contributors to the plate.

Another step towards modern racing was the appointment of the first professional trainer in the unpleasant person of Tregonwell Frampton, later to become the "Dictator of the Turf." Born at Moreton, in Dorset, Frampton first appeared on the scene at Newmarket in the time of Charles II, and later he was to take complete charge of the racing stables of no fewer than four monarchs in turn—William III, Anne, George I, and George II. Repulsive in appearance, he seems to have been hardly less repulsive in character. It is said, although somewhat dubiously, that he once went so far as to castrate a particularly brilliant horse named Dragon in order to accept a challenge. This horse, by all accounts, was so superior to others that for quite a time Frampton found it impossible to issue a challenge which any would accept. At last a match was made, but with the usual result, and Frampton was able to put a further £10,000 into his pocket. No sooner was this race over, however, than the losing owner offered to match his entry for double the stakes against any gelding in the country. Frampton accepted with alacrity, and within a short time Dragon was winning his first, and only, race as a gelding, dying in agony shortly afterwards.

Whether or not Frampton really descended to such depths, there is no doubt that he was by no means always entirely straight. A good story is told[1] concerning a match at Newmarket in which one of Frampton's horses was scheduled to run against Old Merlin, owned by Sir William Strickland and trained by a man called Heseltine. Enormous fortunes, not only in money, but also in homes and furniture, hung on the outcome of this match, and Frampton was determined to reap the profits. Since both horses

[1] *New Sporting Magazine*, November 1840.

had impressive records, however, it was difficult to decide with any degree of confidence which of the two was likely to prove the winner. This feeling of uncertainty was not at all to Frampton's liking. His concern was not so much as to whether his own horse was victorious as about making sure that he bet on the right one, for the Dictator of the Turf never did things by half-measures; when he gambled he gambled high.

Placed in this difficult dilemma, Frampton decided to send a groom to Heseltine suggesting that the two horses should first run secret trials, each carrying an agreed weight, so that both owners might improve their chances of making a successful bet on the great day. Heseltine passed on the proposition to his master, who at once agreed.

Frampton was relieved, but nevertheless decided to instruct his groom to handicap his horse on the sly to the tune of an extra seven pounds. When Old Merlin won the trial by a length or so Frampton, overjoyed by the narrowness of the defeat in face of the extra burden he had placed on his horse, naturally decided to back his charge up to the hilt. Sir William, ignorant of the position, was equally delighted and put a large sum on his horse.

Alas for rogues! On the great day Old Merlin again proved his superiority. Frampton had been beaten at his own game, for Sir William had conceived exactly the same idea, and had also handicapped his horse at the trial by seven pounds. Thus each owner had deceived the other so completely that the trial, although crooked in intention, had, in fact, proved to be a genuine test.

So great were the fortunes won and lost that an Act was passed making it illegal for anyone to win or lose more than ten pounds on any one event. And this Act, although much abused, was not repealed until the time of George II.

Under Anne's patronage racing began to prosper in many parts besides Newmarket. Although her main object may well have been to improve the stamina of the hunter, in furthering this cause she was also responsible, not only for the start of the Hunters' Plates (later known as the Royal Plates), but also for laying the foundation of what has long been the most fashionable course in the world—Royal Ascot. Ascot did not, however, become fashionable in her time. Originally it comprised simply a private ground for the holding of test races between such hunters as rode regularly

with the Queen's Royal Buckhounds in near-by Windsor Forest. It was to Cheltenham that the *élite* turned first, and Ascot long had to be satisfied with a few coloured tents in which to accommodate the spectators, a canvas booth for a weighing-room, and a number of old cowsheds for stabling the horses. It was not until somewhere about 1862, when certain "noblemen and gentlemen," growing tired of such conditions, decided to erect an hotel with stabling accommodation for perhaps a hundred horses, and to provide refreshments on the course, that Ascot became anything more than a name. Even then there were few who would have dared predict, or even hint, that it could ever quite achieve the glories of the Gloucestershire course.

But if Ascot was Anne's greatest material legacy to the Turf, York was also near to her heart, and it is said that one of her horses, Star, was on the point of being saddled for the Gold Cup of 1714 when news of her death was brought to the course by special messenger.

Although long years were to pass before racing was to find another royal patron like Anne, the sport by no means remained dormant with her passing. Somewhere about 1750 a number of enthusiasts met, as was the custom of so many sportsmen of this time, at a coffee-house in Pall Mall, known as the Star and Garter. Their object was to form some kind of organization that might bring owners and breeders together in a way likely to improve the standard of racing generally. Thus, with Newmarket as its headquarters, there came into being the Jockey Club to guide the destinies of racing from that day to this. Although the original idea was to govern Newmarket only, such a body as this, numbering as it did a hundred or more of the most aristocratic patrons of the day, including such men as Sir Charles Bunbury, the Duke of Queensberry ("Old Q"), the Duke of Cumberland, and the Earl of Derby, could hardly be expected to confine their activities to but one spot for long. Soon their influence was to spread throughout the length and breadth of the land.

In the early days, Mr Patrick Chalmers tells us,[1] members wore special uniforms, comprising a cut-away brown coat with gilt buttons, doeskin breeches, boots, and spurs.

With the formation of the Jockey Club the old lax ways began to mend. Hitherto the judges, more often than not, were both incompetent and unqualified, the jockeys just a little crooked. A

[1] *Racing England* (Batsford, 1939).

rider who failed to get away to a good start, for instance, would have no hesitation in calling back the field, in the hope of obtaining better luck a second time, while the jostling and bumping that took place at the bends would defy description. Now, however, these and many other problems were gradually to be put to rights. Properly elected officials began to take their place in the scheme of things during the next few decades—from the stewards themselves to the clerk of the course, from the starter to the judge, from the handicappers to the clerk of the scales.

Racing gradually became more orthodox. Not only were jockeys required to be weighed after races, but by 1762 it became compulsory for owners to adopt racing colours, and for their riders to wear them. Some ten years later James Weatherby introduced his famous *Racing Calendar*, which was a welcome improvement on the earlier efforts of Nelson, John Cheny, and Pond, all of whose sheets, despite the fact that Pond was so bold as to include "fifty-one rules concerning racing in general," had been in no way recognized.

At first Weatherby appears to have confined himself more or less simply to reprinting Pond's rules and regulations. However, as soon as the Jockey Club began to acquire proprietory rights at Newmarket—starting with the local coffee-house, where the members were wont to meet and dine, and then going on to obtain a large part of the all-important Heath itself—and so was the accepted controlling power, the *Racing Calendar* became its official voice.

As the Jockey Club made further acquisitions in the form of Warren Hill, Bury Hill, the Exning and Cheveley estates, and the Limekilns, new rules, designed to make cleaner and better sport, were constantly being introduced, and these, together with details of "adjudged cases," were kept before the public everywhere through the medium of the *Racing Calendar.* Indeed, so powerful did the Jockey Club become that after a time its officials found themselves in the happy position of being able to 'warn off' the course anyone who offended against their new code.

The whole science of racing advanced under this new guiding star. Among the greatest improvements were the shortening of the races, the inclusion of younger horses in the programmes, and the granting of weight allowances to four-year-olds and upward.

A leading light in bringing about these reforms was Sir Charles

Bunbury, who was to serve as senior steward of the Jockey Club for more than forty years. Always bent on guarding the welfare of the horse, he reduced the length of the 'sweating' gallops in his own stables and strictly forbade his grooms and jockey-boys either to whip or strike a horse on any pretext whatever. Not even in a race would he allow more than the moderate use of the spur.

Another prominent figure was the Duke of Cumberland, victor of Culloden and son of George II. At the time when the Jockey Club was coming into being the Duke was one of the principal owners and breeders in the country, perhaps the greatest patron of the race-meetings, and certainly one of the heaviest gamblers the Turf has ever known.

It was while holding the office of Ranger at Windsor that he set up his stud, and from then on he bred horses on a prodigious scale. Among the many that came from his estate were Eclipse and Herod, two horses which, with Matchem, have left so permanent a mark on the racing world that Captain Lyle goes so far as to express the view that "English racing dates itself from Eclipse."

This son of Marske out of Spiletta was foaled in 1764, the year of the Great Eclipse, after which he was named, but, alas, was never to carry his breeder's colours. For in the following year the Duke died, ignorant of the fame his colt was to achieve. Eclipse, like the rest of the stud, was sold, since there was as yet no reason to believe him to be anything exceptional, for the modest sum of seventy-five guineas to a dealer named Wildman at Leadenhall Market. After a few victories he was sold again—for many times the original figure—to Colonel Dennis O'Kelly, who had previously bought only a part share in him. It was under this new ownership that Eclipse began to make history.

"Eclipse first and the rest nowhere," drawled O'Kelly at one of his early meetings, as he offered to bet that his young charge would finish a full 240 yards ahead of the rest of the field—a bold gamble, but a successful one. So was it always to prove with this "fleetest and best horse that ever ran," this horse who never once tasted defeat.

Yet it was at stud, when his great racing days were over, that Eclipse, like Herod and Matchem, was to leave his most permanent and beneficial mark, so that to-day it can be said that every thoroughbred race-horse throughout the world is a direct descendant of one or other of these three.

Naturally every owner was anxious to cross his stock with these sires, and to buy up their offspring. In this they were helped to no small degree by the foresightedness of a certain Richard Tattersall. With the Jockey Club gaining prestige and breeders growing steadily more scientific, he considered that the time had come to open up an auction-room where prearranged horse sales could be held at stated intervals.

Tattersall's idea was warmly acclaimed by Lord Grosvenor, who at once arranged for spacious premises to be built for him on his estate at Hyde Park Corner. So it was that, in 1766, the doors of one of the greatest of all racing institutions were thrown open for the first time, with Richard Tattersall himself, already well known to many owners, installed as auctioneer.

So well did the venture prosper that it was not long before Tattersall found it necessary to make considerable additions to his premises, including the erection of stands for carriages (sold by private contract) and kennels for hounds and dogs (sold, like the horses, by auction). Soon Tattersall deemed it necessary to give up part of his house for the provision of a tavern and coffee-rooms, and to fit up "two of the most elegant rooms in London" for the use of the Jockey Club, who at once, and for some years to come, made them their London headquarters. Then followed a betting-room, for the use of which an annual subscription of two guineas was asked, only those of the highest integrity being admitted.

Everything was to be clean and above board in this new establishment. No ungentlemanly act of any description was to be tolerated, whether it concerned buying, selling, racing, or betting. Even the most scrupulous might render himself liable to immediate expulsion simply through "smoking in the room, or creating a noise, uproar, or disturbance."

In such an atmosphere, then, the "gentlemen of the Turf" assembled daily at Tattersall's, first to lay wagers on the events of distant races, and then to surrender or receive the fortunes they had won or lost.

Yet if the betting-room soon enjoyed a good following, this was really but a side-issue. Tattersall was, first and foremost, an auctioneer, who devoted the greater part of his time to travelling all over the country buying up horses and private studs. His greatest achievement was the purchase of Highflyer, one of Herod's most successful sons. Bred by either Lord Bolingbroke or Sir Charles Bunbury, it is said that Highflyer netted no less than

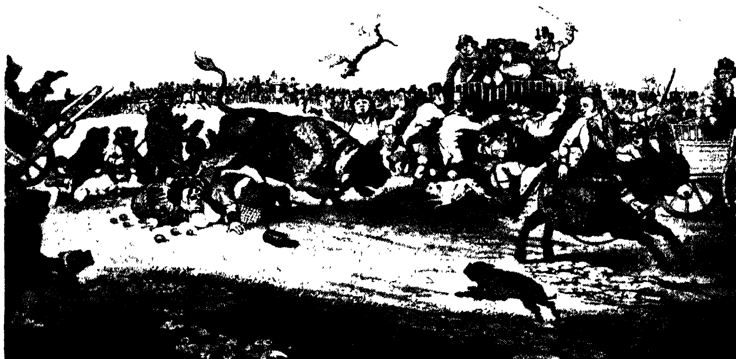
AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY MEETING OF THE ROYAL SURREY BOWMEN ON EPSOM DOWNS

The Sporting Magazine

A CRICKET MATCH FOR STAKES OF ONE THOUSAND GUINEAS

Between teams captained by the Earls of Winchilsea and Darnley, on the original Lord's cricket ground at Marylebone.

The Sporting Magazine



BULL-BAITING: THE BULL BREAKS LOOSE
From a contemporary painting.

THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY COCKPIT
Hogarth.
"Picture Post" Library

£25,000 for his enterprising owner, and the fortunes of Tattersall's went steadily forward from the day of that purchase.

After winning each of his eight races Highflyer became the sire of more winners than any other stallion of his day. Thus, while Colonel O'Kelly was buying up Herod mares for Eclipse, Tattersall was no less busy acquiring Eclipse mares for Highflyer. In this way he had before long developed a stud "equal to that of any nobleman in the Kingdom." Although, naturally, he found a ready sale for his produce, a member of the Jockey Club of that time tells us that

> the circumstance that contributed above all others to his almost engrossing the market was that he never trained or tried a colt or filly. There were many other gentlemen and noblemen who sometimes sold a part of their young stock, but they were always suspected to have been tried, and therefore inferior to those that were retained. Mr Tattersall's was an open unqualified sale, where persons might purchase all or any part without reservation, and where every person had an equal chance of procuring the best. The produce of several mares was often engaged for years to come, at the price of 150 gs. the colt, and 70 gs. the filly, to be delivered in the October next after the time of foaling. They were generally in very good order, as his paddocks and lodges were peculiarly convenient for the purpose. If any remained unsold the first year, they were always brought to Newmarket the next, and sold by auction without reserve. At these sales it frequently happened that some were sold for fourteen or fifteen guineas, which were equal to those that had been sold the year before, by private contract, at five or six times the price. He often declared, when he put them up to auction, that if there were no bidders he would order them to be unhaltered, and turned loose on the spot, and that they should become the property of those who should first become possessed of them!

In 1795 Richard Tattersall died, but the firm continued to prosper under his descendants, moving to spacious new premises at Knightsbridge on the expiry of the original ninety-nine years' lease and occupying to this day an all-important place in the racing world.

By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, then, racing had begun to advance on modern lines. Horses were becoming more nimble, trainers more sensible, jockeys more skilful. The Jockey Club had become a power within its own rights, and Tattersall's was firmly established. In such an atmosphere the races themselves began to assume more glorious proportions.

This, however, was not yet the case at the more local meetings, judging by a description in *The Sporting Magazine* of the Barnet races of 1794:

> Carpenters were busy in erecting the booths, stands, etc., and other conveniences for the accommodation of customers; while the fond mothers in the town had washed and dressed their children in new caps, sashes, and other taudry ornaments, for the gaping multitude to admire; and by eight o'clock the breakfast tables were spread for their friends and relations. Jackasses loaded with fruit, oysters, and pickled salmon, had come down by nine, and links of raw sausages were hung upon sticks, to invite the hungry stranger; and about ten, the charcoal and pans went to work; the savoury smell spread itself around, and 'walk into my parlour' became a general cry. A squad of barrow-girls took possession of an eligible spot of ground, with their tubs of oysters; some of the fattest were opened, to make the mouth water, and 'all fat and good oh!' was bawled by lungs of leather. There was plenty of shrimps, crabs, and perriwinkles, at every mugging-booth, in addition to their larders of ham, cold beef, etc.... The pedestrians on the road were almost suffocated by the dust raised by the numerous train of coaches, landaus, phaetons, curricles, chaises and buggies, bringing down publicans, bailiffs, bullies, gamblers, butchers, horse-dealers, bawds, and their white-legged chickens.

The races themselves appear to have been of but secondary importance in the eyes of the reporter, who, beyond bursting forth into blank verse to describe the start, has little else to say:

> Now from the goal the managed coursers play
> On bended reins, as yet the skilful youth
> Repress their foamy pride; but every breath
> The race grows warmer, and the temper swells;
> Till all the fiery mettle has its way,
> And the thick thunder hurries o'er the plain.

A certain sweepstake for fifty pounds seems to have caused no little commotion, if only for the fact that a number of dealers were "thrown over the bridge" when the favourite, who had been "laid on thick," was beaten a distance.

The majority of courses, however, were now advancing along the aristocratic lines of Newmarket. From the beginning of the seventeenth century races of a kind had been held on the Town Moor at Doncaster, and by the 1760's these cut-throat affairs, often resulting in "suites, quarrels, murders and bloodsheds," had assumed an altogether different character. The Gold Cup and various other races now attracted the *élite* of Georgian Society, and

in 1776 a rather novel sweepstake race of twenty-five guineas was introduced, to be run by three-year-olds over a distance of two miles. Six sportsmen competed, we are told,[1] and there were five starters. Among the more important subscribers were two noblemen—the Marquess of Rockingham and Lieutenant-General Anthony St Leger—whose horses, appropriately, finished first and second respectively.

Soon after this race the Corporation of Doncaster decided to lay out a new course on the Common, and to construct an elaborate stand, the cost in all amounting to more than £7000, and in 1778 the patrons of this luxurious centre held a celebration dinner at the Red Lion Inn. Every one who mattered attended to drink to the success of the new venture. The wine flowed freely; there were toasts in plenty; life was grand. One toast came from the Marquess of Rockingham, who proposed that the sweepstake race which he had won two years previously should henceforth be named after his most popular runner-up, Lieutenant-General Anthony St Leger. Thus it was that in the same year (1778) the first of the 'classics' was born on this new course, when Hollandaise won from a field of eight.

Doncaster was not the only course to adopt Newmarket standards. Epsom too, where since 1730 races had been held twice yearly, in spring and autumn, began to attract the gentry from miles around. Among them was the twelfth Earl of Derby. In 1773 he bought a house close by, and from then onward divided his attention between cock-fighting and horse-racing, becoming as much the figure-head of the Surrey course as were St Leger and Rockingham of Doncaster.

Six years after his arrival at Epsom this immensely enthusiastic sportsman gave the name of his house there to a new race, the Oaks, for three-year-old fillies, an event which he won himself with one of Herod's daughters, Bridget. The following year (1780) he gave his own name to a further race for three-year-olds. But the Derby, it seems, might equally well have been the Bunbury, for it is said that the idea of instituting such an event emanated from the brains of both these great patrons, and that the ultimate choice of a title was decided simply by the spin of a coin. The Earl of Derby, the story goes, had been discussing the matter with his guest, Sir Charles Bunbury, over the dinner-table one evening, when the question of a name cropped up. Since, obviously, it

[1] *Flat Racing* (Lonsdale Library).

should be called after one of them, but since neither party wished to be embarrassed by making the choice, they decided that the only way was to toss for it. Yet, if it was Earl Derby's name that was to become famous throughout the world, it was Sir Charles's horse, Diomed, who, from a field of nine, was to win the first of these world-famous struggles for what has long been the Blue Riband of the Turf.

By 1780, then, three of the five 'classics' had been established; with the institution at Newmarket of the Two Thousand Guineas in 1809 and of the One Thousand Guineas in 1814 the list was complete.

Into this fast-changing scene stepped the next great royal patron after Anne—the Prince of Wales (later Prince Regent, and, later still, George IV), adventurer, gambler, and immoral, but nevertheless always the "First Gentleman."

Hemmed in, suppressed, and fettered by his father, the Prince determined to sow his wild oats when, at last—in the year of the first Derby—the time came for him to have his own establishment. In company with various dubious characters, he divided his time between Carlton House, Brighton, and Newmarket; between gaming-parties and racing. No sum was too great to risk on the tables, no figure too high to give for a horse. Soon he had one of the finest studs in the country; soon, too, he had run into debt to the tune of something like £160,000, and was seeking financial aid from Parliament.

When this was granted the Prince began afresh. In 1788 he won the Derby with his horse St Thomas, and in the next four years or so registered no fewer than 185 victories, which together netted him well over thirty thousand guineas in stakes. In the face of such prodigious victories the Prince soon found himself the leader of fashion and one of the central figures at Newmarket, whither he now went on every possible occasion.

Alas, towards the close of the season of 1791, when the Prince was in his hey-day, an event took place that was to shake the entire racing world. The heir to the throne was virtually 'warned off' the course at Newmarket by the stewards of the Jockey Club.

The trouble arose through the suspicious running of the royal horse Escape. This animal had been bred by the Prince, sold to a man named Franco at the time of his financial embarrassment, and then bought back again for £1500. A temperamental

creature, Escape was nevertheless one of the best horses of his time, just as his jockey, Sam Chifney, was one of the most brilliant riders.

When, then, on October 20, 1791, Escape, with Chifney up, was matched against three extremely mediocre horses he naturally started favourite. But, alas for the confidence placed in favourites, Escape finished last. That in itself caused no more than a mild sensation, but when, the following day, Escape, no longer favourite but ridden by the same jockey, won in a field of six, including two of the horses which had beaten him the day before, the spectators in general and the gamblers in particular had grave suspicions. And those doubts were only strengthened when later the news leaked out that, while neither owner nor jockey had backed Escape in the first of these races, both had won modest sums on the second. The Prince and Chifney were at once accused of scheming, and it was even whispered that on the first occasion the Prince had been seen to sneak into the stables to water and feed the animal in order to break his wind.

It was an intolerable situation, and after cross-examining Chifney in private the Prince led the jockey to Sir Charles Bunbury, a great stickler for etiquette, and thus one of the prime movers in demanding an inquiry, and begged that he should obtain an affidavit from the jockey and advise him of his feelings afterwards.

Whereupon Chifney gave a full explanation of his behaviour, and, when further questioned at a meeting of the stewards, protested that his reason for not betting on the first race—and, indeed, for Escape's failure—was simply that the horse had not been galloped for some time, and so was out of condition. On the other hand, this victory on the second day was explainable in that the first race had opened up the horse's muscles.

Most likely his case was perfectly genuine. Yet it left Sir Charles Bunbury entirely unmoved. Within a few days he called on the Prince to warn him that no gentleman would start against him so long as he continued to employ Sam Chifney. The Prince, however, remained loyal to his jockey, with the result that for a time racing saw the last of the "First Gentleman." Seven years later he was back again; but not at Newmarket. His racing days at the Headquarters course were ended, for, though he eventually came to friendly relations again when a deputation of the Jockey Club called on him in 1805, requesting that the unpleasant

incident be forgotten, he had by then transferred his patronage to Ascot and Brighton.

The Escape affair was not the only one to shake the racing world. In 1812 a tout named Daniel Dawson was sent to the gallows for poisoning a number of horses at Newmarket by placing arsenic in their water-troughs. Then, in 1844, a most cunning intrigue was exposed after Running Rein, starting at ten to one, had won the Derby of that year. Before the race it had been whispered that Running Rein was in reality a four-year-old horse, and, as such, unqualified to run. So it proved.

What happened was that a dubious individual called Levi Goodman had come into possession of a number of horses of varying ages, and had seen fit to do some changing of names. Among those he acquired was one named Running Rein, who would have been suitable for the Derby of 1844 in every respect but one: he was a mediocre animal who stood only an outsider's chance of victory. Since Goodman's idea was to own an almost certain winner at an outsider's starting-price, he decided to enter his four-year-old Maccabeus under the name of Running Rein, while at the same time substituting another for Maccabeus. The genuine three-year-old he sent into 'retirement.'

Although by this arrangement victory seemed assured, Goodman was taking no chances, and so decided to have the first two favourites, the Ugly Buck and Ratan, 'seen to.' Moreover, since he did not want to use his own name, he managed to persuade an Epsom corn merchant, one Wood, to make the entry for him. Meanwhile, unbeknown to him, a German family named Lichtwald were concocting a similar trick, and had, in fact, gone one better by entering a five-year-old, Leander. Still, luck favoured Goodman: Leander broke his hind-leg when in the lead, leaving Running Rein to win by three-quarters of a length from Orlando, who was owned by Colonel Jonathan Peel, brother of the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel.

Unhappily for Goodman, though, rumours had reached the ears of Lord George Bentinck, generally acclaimed as the "Dictator of the Turf," who, determined not to rest until the whole matter had been thoroughly investigated, appealed to the Exchequer to impound the prize-money, and, supported by all the funds he needed, proceeded to build up so damning a case that he was even accused of having previously been bribed by some of the witnesses.

It was an important day in the annals of racing: Lord George

won his case. The Derby went to Orlando, Goodman disappeared abroad, and the Lichtwalds were warned off the Turf for ever. But Lord George was doing more than contest a mere 'incident'; he was fighting for the general well-being of the Turf, and his crusade brought even greater power to the Jockey Club, whose stewards also became *ex officio* stewards at Epsom, an arrangement that was extended in 1857 to Ascot, and in 1881 to Goodwood.

Alas for the irony of fate! One to suffer most from this intrigue was William Crockford, the owner of Ratan. Many said at the time that this was a just punishment for one who had spent the greater part of his life in shady dealings; for the following day Crockford was found dead, having succumbed, it was supposed, to a broken heart.

Originally a fishmonger on a small scale, Crockford had succeeded in fleecing the public of hundreds of thousands of pounds, and so gaining for himself the unenviable title of "Father of Hell and Hazard." On one occasion, together with an equally shady character named Gye, he managed to relieve five noblemen of no less than £100,000 at the tables within the space of twenty-four hours. By such ventures he was able to amass sufficient money to set up, at extravagant cost, an elaborate gambling palace in St James's Street, London, to which, Captain Lyle tells us, all the leading men of the time, from Disraeli to George Payne, from the Duke of Wellington to Bulwer Lytton, would make their way. The subscription was twenty-five pounds a year, and the palace became as famous for its superb cuisine as for the vast fortunes that often changed hands there within the course of a single night.

Nor did Crockford confine himself to the tables. He was equally successful at laying the odds on races and at betting generally, and the further fortunes he was able to accumulate in this field enabled him to open up other gambling places at Newmarket.

Crockford became, in fact, one of the pioneers of bookmaking. Another was a builder's mate named Davis. Whereas, in the past, bets had usually been made more or less privately between the various sportsmen, or else at Tattersall's, now 'sharpers' and 'black-legs' began to find a profitable business in laying odds. Not only were bookmakers soon to be found on the courses, but in London too recognized 'centres' sprang up. One was in Hyde Park, another on Clerkenwell Green, and a third in a back alley leading from Oxford Street to the back of Meux's brewery in the Tottenham Court Road. It was to the last of these that the *élite*,

donning their high hats, frock coats, and kid gloves in an effort to keep up some semblance of appearances, would go to gain the latest 'tips' from unscrupulous touts in a vain attempt to try to redeem their lost fortunes with "Mr Mather" after luck had played them ill on the course. Here they would meet daily, some time between 10.30 A.M. and 3 P.M., according to the whereabouts of the police.

Later, when street betting was finally stamped out, these and other such centres gradually gave way to the Victoria Club, for long the hub of the bookmakers' world and the hall-mark of straight dealing.

Under the benevolent 'dictatorship' of Lord George Bentinck racing gradually assumed the shape and dimensions we know to-day. A great sportsman, perfect gentleman, and tremendous gambler, Lord George probably did more for the Turf than any one individual either before or since. Besides laying out the course at Goodwood and planning the new Derby course at Epsom, it was he who instituted the flag method of starting, initiated the system of enclosures, and introduced the idea of numbering horses. Perhaps more important he designed a special van for transporting his horses to the various meetings.

Hitherto it had been the fashion for all entries to journey from meeting to meeting by foot, which meant that they were usually unable to do themselves justice when the time came to line up for the race. Lord George considered this entirely unsatisfactory. "Spare no expense, but let the horses be fresh," were his instructions to his trainer, John Kent. And so Kent would set off from Goodwood with a succession of vans, drawn, at a cost of several shillings a mile, by several pairs of horses, complete with ostlers and postboys. Even then a journey to Newmarket might keep them on the road for a week, while Epsom or Ascot meant a trip of four days. To enter for the St Leger at Doncaster invariably necessitated starting at least a fortnight beforehand.

With the arrival of the railway, things became easier—but not for John Kent. In his great enthusiasm for the Turf and his lavish hospitality towards his employees Lord George was apt to wear his trainer to a shadow. Often, at the end of a long day's training, he would invite Kent to dine with him at midnight, and keep him talking until 5 A.M., leaving him just enough time to wash and breakfast before catching the first train out of London.

Lord George did nothing in a small way. He maintained three

stud farms, and spent as much as £3500 a year on transporting his horses from course to course, and anything from £15,000 annually on forfeits alone. To help meet these expenses he gambled in equally lavish style. Racing was his life-blood, just as he was the life-blood of racing, and his one ambition was to win the Derby.

But, alas, Lord George was also a great patriot, and during the Goodwood meeting of 1846 he reached the momentous decision to abandon his greatest love in order to devote his whole time to politics. He sold every horse he had, including a particularly pleasing foal named Surplice, for £10,000. Two years later Surplice won both the Derby and St Leger, carrying the colours of his new owner. Not long after the second victory Lord George was found dead. "A visitation of God" was the coroner's verdict; more likely it was a broken heart.

From Lord George's time racing has moved steadily forward. Great characters have come and gone—great trainers, great jockeys, great horses—and with them have sprung up new courses, far and wide.

Great characters there were—Lord Glasgow, who headed all subscription lists and bet in thousands; Sir John Astley ("The Mate"), who turned to gambling when his investments fell, and proceeded to win more than £28,000 in twenty-five years, only to end up "dead broke"; and Vice-Admiral Henry John Rous, a seemingly bombastic gentleman, who, strongly opposed to such wild extravagances, became the handicapper of the Victorian age. A man with a grumble, the Admiral did his best to make it compulsory for winners of large bets to forfeit the lot, and was for ever finding something fresh to complain about: owners were hard on their horses; every one, it seems, was dishonest in some way or other; in short, racing was degenerate. Still, he was skilful at his job, and before his death in 1877 had become as much of a power, if never so likable, as Lord George himself.

As for the trainers, if John Scott was to be the leading light of Victorian times, it was the Dawson brothers—Joseph, Matthew, and John—who first did away with the old system of sweating and adopted more modern methods.

Scott's father was a trainer, and John's first introduction to racing was when, at the age of thirteen, he was sent off to Blandford in company with his terrier Viper to sell a horse, Tentoes, for thirty pounds—"if you can get it." After losing himself on Salisbury Plain young John duly arrived in Dorset, in time to

enter the horse at a local meeting before selling her. His luck was in: not only did he win a fifty-pound plate, but he also went on to sell the horse for double the figure his father had suggested. From that day John Scott's career was assured, and the whole art of training benefited under his influence.

Many were the jockeys, too, who were to play their part in making racing the science we know to-day—Frank Butler, George Fordham, Tom Cannon, John Osborne, Charles Wood, the American Tod Sloan, Henry Custance, Fred Archer, and now, in our own time, Steve Donoghue, Gordon Richards, and Harry Wragg.

If Archer—"the Flying Tinman," they called him—was to reign supreme as far as the nineteenth century was concerned, scoring no fewer than 2748 victories before eventually taking his life, there were plenty who considered Fordham to be a finer jockey. Fordham, it seems, was far kinder to his mounts than Archer, and he devised a clever dodge, which became known as "Fordham's kid," of appearing to abandon hope and then, just as his opponents were relaxing their efforts, coming forward with a tremendous spurt to bring off a brilliant victory practically on the post. On the other hand, Sloan was the pioneer of the 'monkey-on-the-stick' style, where the rider tucks up his knees and rests his chin on the horse's withers.

Yet Archer was the idol and acknowledged champion of the time, just as is Gordon Richards to-day. Of all his successes none, perhaps, was finer than his thrilling victory with Bend Or in the Derby of 1880. Upon this hangs a tale both of courage and of skill. Archer was something of a butcher, who would never hesitate to use his whip or spur to bring his mount to victory. One horse, Muley Idris, like Hermit, whose jockey had to be changed when, in 1867, he won the Derby in a snowstorm, never forgave Archer for his treatment of him in a race the previous year, and savaged Archer when confronted by him during a training exercise at Newmarket. Only by luck did Archer avoid being trampled to death. As it was, his arm was badly mangled, and had to be placed in a sling. Since this was but a month before the Derby, it looked as if he would be unable to take part. But Archer chose to ride at all costs and do the best he could with his one sound arm.

It was a daring undertaking, and the start was not encouraging. For a good part of the race it seemed that Bend Or had no hope, and it was not until the field reached Tattenham Corner that he

even looked like catching the others, let alone beating them. But all was not yet lost. Getting close to the rails, so close, it is said, that he even had to lift his leg on to the horse's neck to avoid injuring a second limb, Archer settled down to some of the most masterly riding ever witnessed in the whole long history of the Turf. By now Robert the Devil, with Rossiter up, was drawing ahead to a comfortable lead, so that Archer, unable to use his whip properly, proceeded to stir on his mount to even greater effort by shouting, swearing, and gripping his legs like a vice round the horse's body. Yard by yard, foot by foot, inch by inch almost, he shortened the distance between the two as the crowd grew steadily more excited. At this crucial moment Rossiter made the mistake of glancing backward to measure the acuteness of the threat. Archer seized the opportunity. Tightening his grip still further, he lunged forward, to win by the narrow margin of a head.

Many thrilling races were fought and won by these and other jockeys, many great horses were ridden by them. Yet none, surely, can quite have equalled this for resolute courage and fine horsemanship.

From the time of Charles II, then, right down to the present we see racing making a great surge forward, to become, in time, the sport of kings and paupers alike, with Edward VII, George V, and George VI following in the footsteps of Anne and the Prince Regent, and with all the great noblemen of the twentieth century following those of the nineteenth, their names linked for ever, like those of their forefathers, with the general prosperity and well-being of the Turf.

Nor was progress being made only on the flat: 'over the sticks' as well things were improving. Whereas, in the first place, a steeplechase was an informal affair, arranged very often over a glass of claret with a view to testing the relative skill of various hunters, added attraction being provided by a bet of, perhaps, a thousand guineas, by now it had become a race in the true sense. This change in outlook was largely prompted by the fact that the landed gentry were paying increasingly high prices for their horses, and were anxious to test them before buying. A steeplechase afforded just that opportunity, with the result that such races began to be held here, there, and everywhere, particularly in the hunting districts of the Midlands.

In 1837 an open sweepstake of ten sovereigns each, with eighty sovereigns added, was run over a distance of four miles at Maghull,

the winner being a Captain Becher, riding a horse called the Duke. Two years later this event gave way to another, to be run annually at Aintree. The Grand National, the "Derby of the Sticks," with all its hazards, dangers, and false hopes, had arrived, with the sixth fence, named after the winner of the original sweepstake, soon to become, as Becher's Brook, almost as famous as the race itself.

Nevertheless the chase was not to achieve either the following or the backing so long enjoyed by the Turf. By comparison with flat racing it was a haphazard business, and it was not until the formation in 1866 of the Grand National Hunt Committee, which later became the National Hunt Committee, that the sport began to advance along the orderly path we know to-day.

CHAPTER VII

The Golden Age

IF the Restoration brought a great sense of relief to the people, resulting in a general desire to make merry, and also saw the emergence of racing as a national sport, the period between the dismissal of James II and the accession of Queen Victoria introduced, despite the wars and rumours of wars of the later Napoleonic times, a certain dignity and restraint. England began to find her balance. If the morals of the upper classes left much to be desired, if the harsh laws often caused scandalous hardships to the common folk, the compensations were many. For this was the Golden Age, the age of fine architecture and craftsmanship, of town- and country-planning, of good taste generally. So, in many ways, was it a golden age for sport.

While Beau Nash, as Master of Ceremonies at Bath, was putting an end to duelling, and generally bringing about a better feeling for manners, games, although still far from organized, were claiming increasing attention at the public schools. If this, admittedly, had little immediate effect on the outside world, it at least paved the way for the time when Thomas Arnold would make organized play form an essential feature of his educational-reform plan at Rugby School.

Throughout the Georgian era we notice a gradual refinement taking place in the people's play, at once in complete accord with the æsthetic merit of the new architecture, with the superb standard of craftsmanship so rapidly developing, and with the sobering, though sometimes gay, influence of the mannerly Beau Nash. It was an age when every one was out to enjoy himself to the full—not least the 'Bucks,' who, besides forming a society of their own, took their place among the keenest sporting patrons of the century.

From the pen of an Ascot Buck we gain an insight into the ceremony, outlook, and origin of their strange society:

> A herd of City Sportsmen, hirers of hack-horses, and frequenters of Easter hunts, to console themselves for the disgrace which their wives (while they were absent on their Sylvan occupation) annexed

> to their names, associated themselves in a convivial body, and literally adopted the appellation which had individually been bestowed on them by their neighbours, that of Bucks. The first brilliant act of which their record speaks, was that of uniting against so many of their domestic foes as were MARRIED; and afterwards, proceed with the same virtuous unanimity, to exercise their revenge upon the rest, by seducing the objects of their affection. Many of the lodge ceremonies bear some small allusion to the origin of the institution. Three gentle knocks are given at the door, and returned. This being the usual signal of intrigue, may be sure to remind us how our predecessors became BUCKS, in the original domestic sense; our Keeper wears a green coat, like a gamekeeper; jockey cap, buckskin breeches, and boots; buck's horns are embroidered on the front of his cap, and he has also a staff crowned with buck's horns, with the motto "We obey." Previous to the admission of a new member, this officer keeps the door secure, while the proposer advances to the chair, and requests permission to introduce a stranger—"Who is the stranger?" "A man of integrity, and worthy to be made a Buck!" "Do you know him?" "He will be answered for, Most Noble!" "Keeper, admit the gentleman." The stranger being admitted, he walks uncovered, between the mace and the sword, supported by two of the brothers, up to the chair.

Here would be seated "Most Noble":

> . . . invested with a velvet sash, as also a collar richly embroidered with tinsel, from which depends a medal (a buck tripping) encircled by a glittering star; he is seated in a crimson chair, the back of which is embroidered with the BUCK's arms; and over his head is placed a very large buck's head, the horn tipped with gold; and his own arms painted by a very ingenious brother, a dealer in red lions, green dragons, and sugar-loaves, late a resident in Harp-alley.
>
> The introduction of a new member is followed with the usual ridiculous forms.

If this was all rather facetious, these Bucks nevertheless introduced a certain light-heartedness of a pleasing nature. Loose in morals, they were also stout of heart. And that spirit helped to make sport something of an adventure.

A strange mixture were the Georgian gentry. Those who cared so little for the welfare of their servants were at the same time often more than willing to mix with them in certain of their sports. In short, the scene was gradually changing. Most of the old games remained in evidence to a greater or lesser degree. Men still delighted to shout the odds at a cock-fight, as also did they

continue to find pleasure in visiting a bear-garden. They were still cruel, remarkably cruel at times. Yet behind it all they were definitely becoming at heart more gentlemanly. A healthier sense of competition, where men showed rather more desire to excel for the honour of their town or village than for their own sakes, was making itself felt. Thus as time goes on we find the various towns vying with one another on a greater scale than before, with certain districts gaining a reputation for their excellence at one particular sport. Bristol, for instance, became famous for her boxers, while Nottingham achieved equal fame on account of her fives-players.

Yet, although they were becoming more gentlemanly, they played harder than ever, the difference being that hardiness no longer necessarily entailed rowdyism, which was now beginning to meet with definite disapproval. This change of mood had a particularly marked effect on wrestling. As the aristocrats of Georgian England began to find the roguery and intrigue less and less to their liking, wrestling became correspondingly less and less fashionable in London, and instead began to descend to the level of the bear-garden and the cheap tavern. Only in the country did it survive in more or less civilized fashion. Long after it had ceased to be fashionable in the towns it still held its ground at the wakes and fairs, though even here the customary serving out of a hogshead of ale may well have helped to maintain the interest.

In a few counties, such as Cumberland and Westmorland, Devon and Cornwall, wrestling remained as the breath of life to the inhabitants, for those who, in the process of centuries, had developed their own peculiar styles were not readily to cast aside what to them had become a tradition. Nor was there any apparent reason why they should. Though the bouts were hard and at times extremely painful for the competitors, there is no evidence of roguery. Some of the methods may have appeared barbarous, and many of the rules ridiculous, yet there *were* rules, and anyone who entered the ring knew beforehand what he was in for. And that thought intimidated the country parson no more than the farm-labourer. After all, to win a belt was an honour cherished by all who prided themselves on their strength and manliness, since not only would the winner be expected to wear his belt on the day of his victory, but, on the Sunday afterwards, we read,[1] he would attend his village church "begirt with it," and again, on the Sunday after that, would visit some neighbouring parish similarly attired.

[1] *Wrestling* (Badminton Library).

Indeed, far from looking down on it, the clergy showed their approval so wholeheartedly that their influence was largely instrumental in rendering the sport almost a fetish in both the northern and western counties. W. Litt, writing towards the end of the Georgian era, gives a picture of one particular country parson, the Rev. Abraham Brown, who was educated at Bampton School, on the borders of Westmorland:

> This gentleman was the first of whom we have any authentic records of excelling as a buttocker. Having lost no time in perfecting himself in this manly exercise when a scholar, he fully maintained the character of a very first rate, when acting in the more exalted situations of usher and schoolmaster in different places; and occasionally after he became a curate. When a very young man he acquired great renown in carrying away a silver cup of considerable value from Eamont Bridge, which divides the counties of Cumberland and Westmorland, and which was consequently in the very centre of the most noted wrestling country in England. After his establishment at Egremont, Mr Brown had no objection, in the spirit of good fellowship, to oblige any man who felt extremely anxious for a trial of skill with him; and in these casual turn ups it is said he was never vanquished. Abraham being a man of considerable humour, and good nature, palmed himself more than once, as a friend of Parson Brown's, on men, who hearing of his celebrity, expressed a strong desire to try a fall with him. On such occasions, he pretended to be well acquainted with the Parson, and assured them that if they could throw him easily, they would prove a match for Brown, when they met him. This of course caused a contest—and Master Abraham, after giving them full satisfaction, would advise them to go home, as he could assure them that they were not able to vanquish the Parson.

It was by no means only the common folk who attended these wrestling bouts. Often there would be as many as twelve thousand spectators, including such even as the Marquis of Queensberry and the Earl of Lonsdale. Nor did the aristocracy always confine themselves to the public exhibitions: many would stage private contests in their own grounds, offering golden sovereigns or, as in the case of the Duke of Norfolk, buckskin breeches as prizes.

Wrestling was so inbred in both the Northerners and those of the West Country—and still is in the case of the former—that towards the end of the eighteenth century we even hear of men from the North, whose work had brought them to London, forming their own wrestling society in the capital, and holding annual meetings in different localities.

THE ROYAL COCKPIT, BIRDCAGE WALK, IN 1808
Rowlandson and Pugin.
"Picture Post" Library

ANOTHER MILESTONE REACHED: THE FOUR-IN-HAND
The Sporting Magazine

RACING: GOING TO SCALE
The Sporting Magazine

Fencing too, although still practised there on occasion, lost popularity in London. Dover instead became the venue. The wild, slashing, bloodthirsty tactics that Pepys had witnessed held little appeal now, and it is not until later in the century, when the French masters had taken the place of the Italian, when the 'edge' had entirely given way to the 'point,' and when men had at last been persuaded that to use a face-mask was *not* effeminate, that we find any signs of a revival.

At the turn of the century, however, back-sword and single-stick matches came into favour. We hear of a match between Harrow and Willesden on Harlesden Green, when the proceedings were rounded off with a "jingling match," a "general set-to at eating and drinking," and a large bonfire and fireworks. We hear of a contest for fifty guineas between the men of Somerset and Hampshire at a spot near Winchester; of Somerset challenging All-England at Frome; of fencing tournaments lasting six hours or more being staged as part of the July fair at Hurstbourne Tarrant. Even so, fencing was in the main looked upon with scorn as a game of the rustics; of Wiltshire, Somerset, Kent, Hampshire, Berkshire, Dorset, and Buckinghamshire in particular.

All contests were now fought with basket-sticks three feet two inches long, in rings not less than sixteen feet square, he who secured most 'heads' being adjudged the winner. A head was allowed only if blood was drawn an inch above the chin.

Infinitely more popular than fencing was cock-fighting. Despite the general refinement that was taking place in so many directions, this was the one sport which every one continued to prize above all else as a really manly pursuit. In Georgian England it became, for a time, as fashionable as is racing to-day, and titled people would often be found owning both horses and cocks. In one respect there was a certain similarity to racing in that the birds now carried names, and wherever a main was to be fought lists of the competitors, together with their 'starting prices,' were widely published in the newspapers.

Most prominent among the owners were Hugo Meynell, the "father of fox-hunting," and the twelfth Earl of Derby, who, while he was making history on the Turf by the establishment of the Oaks and the Derby, had as many as three thousand fighting-cocks on his estates. Captain Fitz-Barnard tells us[1] that whenever he let out a farm his lordship invariably went to the extreme of

[1] *Fighting Sports* (Odham's Press, 1921).

inserting a clause in the agreement compelling the tenant to "walk" some of his cocks on the land during tenancy. He was not content merely with fighting mains in the many existing pits, and it is said that his first wife, Lady Elizabeth Hamilton, eventually decided to divorce him largely on account of his irritating habit of staging them in the drawing-room of their home! Be that as it may, he certainly built at Preston the most elaborate cock-pit of all, where battles would be fought in feverish excitement at a hundred guineas a time, with, perhaps, five hundred guineas added by way of stakes.

Though to the people of England cock-fighting was still supreme, upon outsiders the scenes at the pits left a rather different impression. A German visitor, for instance, found it a strange spectacle, where "the people, whether of high or low rank, behave like madmen, betting higher and higher up to 20 or more guineas."

Another form of fighting was coming to the fore. If duelling with swords was virtually at an end, ruffians still lurked in dark corners of the streets, and men still had a need to defend themselves. Thus in 1718 James Figg, with a view to teaching the aristocracy a suitable method of defence, opened an "Academie of Boxing" in a little London lane, later to be called the Tottenham Court Road. When, the following year, to convince the public of his wisdom, he staged an official fight and succeeded in knocking a certain Ned Sutton insensible, he at once proclaimed himself England's first boxing champion.

But this was not boxing as we know it; rather was it defence at any price, where Figg and his pupils would turn unhesitatingly to bludgeon, cudgel, or quarterstaff if things were going badly. Nevertheless it was the start of a tradition, and Figg's academy became one of the high lights of London entertainment, to which even the most fashionable of the dandies might come for a course of lessons, or to take part in an open bout. Even women were not above learning "the noble art."

There was not as yet, we gather, any limit concerning the duration of rounds, and a fight would end only when one of the contestants was either unconscious or too weak to raise himself from the floor. Neither was a contest necessarily restricted to only two. As in a battle royal, almost any number were permitted to enter the ring at a time, and the 'art' appears to have involved all lambasting one another without mercy in an atmosphere of utter confusion.

In many respects there was a great similarity between these new man fights and the battles and mains of the cock-pit. Not only were they fought on much the same principles; much of the nomenclature of the sod was adopted. Doubtless this very factor helped to speed its rise. So great a success did Figg's school prove that soon many of his pupils were starting academies of their own, while Figg himself, only once defeated in nearly three hundred contests, was able to retire at the early age of thirty-six—only to meet, however, a premature death from pneumonia some four years later.

Among the first to follow Figg's lead was George Taylor, who set up a booth near by and at once embarked on a publicity campaign of no small magnitude. Some of the notices make amusing reading, if only for the remarkable lack of modesty on the part of the boxers themselves. On May 4, 1742, for instance, a certain John Francis issued a challenge to one Patrick Henly in the following terms:

> Whereas I, John Francis, commonly known by the name of the Jumping Soldier who have always had the reputation of a good fellow, and have fought several bruisers in the street, etc., nor am I ashamed to mount the stage when my manhood is called in question by an Irish Braggadocia, whom I fought some time ago (in bye battle), for twelve minutes, and though I had not the success due to my courage and ability in the art of boxing, I now invite him to fight me for two guineas at the time and place above mentioned (Taylor's Booth), where I doubt not but I shall give him the truth of a good beating.

Nor was the Irishman's reply any less lacking in confidence:

> I, Patrick Henly, known to every one for the truth of a good fellow, who never refused any one, on or off the stage, and fight as often for the diversion of gentlemen as for money, do accept the challenge of this Jumping Jack; and shall, if he don't take care, give him one of my bothering blows, which will convince him of his ignorance in the art of boxing.

Taylor's booth proved so popular that soon Jack Broughton, who had been a pupil of Figg's, and who, in 1740, had gained the championship title so long held by his master, was urged by certain of the nobility to open an even better amphitheatre in Oxford Road, just off the Tottenham Court Road. A somewhat luxurious affair, it was complete with stage, auditorium, pit, gallery, and

boxes, and on March 10, 1743, appeared the following notice announcing the official opening:

> At Broughton's new amphitheatre in Oxford-road, the back of the late Mr Fig's, on Tuesday next, the 13th inst., will be exhibited the true art of boxing, by the eight famed following men, viz. Abraham Evans, Sweep, Belos, Glover, Roger Allen, Robert Spikes, Harry Gray, and the Clog-maker. The above eight men are to be brought on the stage, and to be matched according to the approbation of the gentlemen who shall be pleased to honour them with their company. Note, There will be a battle-royal between the noted Buckhorse and seven or eight more; after which there will be several bye-battles by others. Gentlemen are therefore desired to come by times. The doors will open at nine; the champions mount at eleven, and no person is to pay more than a shilling.

As might be expected, this move brought forth considerable opposition and abuse from Taylor and his followers. But Broughton had influential backing, and it was not long before his opponents were forced to close their own premises and seek engagements at this new amphitheatre. Whereupon Broughton, finding himself the undisputed master of the Ring, set himself the task of preparing a set of rules such as would completely revolutionize the sport. Besides banning the use of sticks and other implements, he went so far as to devise a special kind of glove for use during sparring or training bouts, and on August 10, 1743, decided to demonstrate his new rules at a public exhibition. The idea was a success. The crowds who flocked to his amphitheatre from miles round were impressed. Broughton's rules, which in many respects were not so far short of those in vogue to-day, at once found universal appeal. Prize-fighting proper had arrived, soon to become the most fashionable, and, perhaps, most popular, pastime of the age.

Under these rules more began to turn to the prize ring, from princes and dukes, statesmen and clergy, to the meanest peasant. No one as yet had learned the wisdom of using both arms for attack, the technique being to employ the right arm for attack and the left for defence. Yet the battles they fought were keen, hard, and sometimes rough.

As we visit some of these prize rings we notice two quite distinct types of boxer. While the tradesmen and craftsmen might delight to contest an odd bout in their leisure-time for the sheer joy of the thing, many of the more skilful were beginning to realize that they

could earn quite a comfortable living from the sport, in that, apart from the income derived from conducting their own booths, they were often fortunate enough to be financed by the nobility. These noblemen, Georges Carpentier tells us,[1] would

> attend to their upkeep and training, treating them more or less like companions. They were often seen in their company, the pugilist, on his part, acting somewhat as a bodyguard to his master. The latter also backed his champion with gold coin, thus furnishing the purse for which the opponents fought.

Broughton himself was patronized by no less a person than the Duke of Cumberland, who went so far as to appoint him a Yeoman of the Guard in acknowledgment of his skill. This partnership, however, came to an unhappy end. When a coachman named George Stevenson died after a fierce contest against Broughton the latter swore never to fight again. Criticism was keen, and the hero who had virtually made boxing, and had reigned supreme for some ten years, now found himself the object of ridicule and abuse. One of the more offensive of the hecklers was Jack Slack, a butcher, who, a reasonably successful 'bruiser' himself, was said to be jealous of Broughton's reputation. One day, on Hounslow race-course, Slack became so exceptionally abusive that Broughton forgot his vow, and accepted Slack's challenge to fight him in the ring. But alas for over-confidence; so full of contempt was he for this insolent butcher, never really in the same class as a boxer, that he refused to train, and even, it is said, made Slack an offer of money as an inducement to keep his appointment.

Slack, however, was perfectly serious. So on April 11, 1750, the two met in the ring at Broughton's amphitheatre. Huge crowds turned out to see the fight, among them being the Duke of Cumberland, who, sharing Broughton's confidence, backed his 'yeoman' for as much as £10,000. For a time all went well, and it soon seemed obvious that Slack was no match for the champion. Broughton experienced not the slightest difficulty in penetrating the butcher's extremely weak defence, and, indeed, might well have knocked him out within a matter of seconds had his over-confidence not caused him to relax his efforts. Taking advantage of the lull in Broughton's attack, Slack delivered one good, blinding blow between the eyes, which he proceeded to follow up with a series of short, sharp punches before the champion had time to

[1] *The Art of Boxing* (Harrap, 1926).

recover. Though Broughton was by no means defeated, he was nevertheless so badly blinded as to be unable to see his opponent, and was compelled to give up the fight.

Furious at having lost so much money, the Duke of Cumberland not only withdrew his patronage, but went to great pains to see that his former champion's amphitheatre was closed permanently. Thus Broughton, broken in spirit, lived in retirement for close on forty years, though he was not forgotten, for when he died his funeral in London attracted large crowds.

On the departure of Broughton boxing lost for a time much of its appeal. But with the arrival on the scene of Daniel Mendoza, a Jew, "Gentleman Jackson," and Jim Belcher, who, incidentally, started the practice of using both arms for attack, it was to become in the last decade of the century more fashionable than ever.

Soon the boxers had devised a language of their own. A head became a 'conk,' and a hand a 'mandy,' for instance. The principal exponents began to enjoy a reputation with the public second to none. Boxing meetings, although not yet legalized, were held far and wide. No one who prided himself on being a sportsman, from the Prince Regent downward, ever missed a bout if it was humanly possible for him to get there; even the magistrates themselves, whose duty it was to suppress such meetings, often went out of their way to remain in ignorance about them until the events were over and it was too late to do anything about it! Some, who did get to hear beforehand, made it a practice to be 'out of the district' at the appointed time. Equally tactful were the constables to see that their duties took them in a completely opposite direction. For the prize ring, despite the laws against it, was something that no decent person could ever really wish to suppress.

It was, however, always as well to take precautions, since not all magistrates were so benevolent or all constables so obliging. The selected rendezvous was kept secret until the last minute, and its locality would be divulged to as few as possible. On no account would any posters be printed. There were more discreet methods of informing the public; there were certain recognized meeting-places where the 'fancy' could forgather for their information. Here they would be certain to meet with some one who knew when and where a fight was to take place. And as long as anyone knew, the news would spread.

Pierce Egan, who, as the generally acknowledged first ringside reporter, produced a publication called *Boxiana*, gives us a view of

the scene in Piccadilly once the news had got round. Coaches, carts, gigs, tilburies, whiskies, buggies, dog-carts, sociables, dennets, curricles, and sulkies, he tells us, would intermingle with tax-carts and wagons, each decorated with laurels, to form one vast procession, conveying all forms of humanity, from the "dashing Corinthian, tickling up his tits and his bang-up set-out of blood and bone" in his barouche, down to the "eight brawny bull-faced blades," smoking their way in a heavy drag, drawn by a skeleton of a horse.

Here and there, perhaps, a wagon might overturn, and hold up the whole procession while the vehicle was righted and the unfortunate occupants helped back to their places. But no one minded greatly; no one seems to have cared what happened as long as they did eventually reach their destination, which, in itself, was always doubtful. Thomas Burke assures us[1] that on such occasions few of this strange medley of travellers ever had the slightest idea as to what that destination might be. "Everybody followed everybody else, and hoped for the best," and it was not until they recognized some familiar patron of the Ring that they could, in fact, feel quite confident that they were even on the right road. To add to the confusion, these journeys might sometimes need to follow an unnecessarily long and devious course as rumour spread that the magistrates were on the scent. Sometimes the venue itself might have to be changed *en route*, not once or twice, but even three times, while the many processions were working their unsteady passage along the narrow, winding, bumpy lanes of England, all converging from many different directions upon the appointed rendezvous.

For miles along the various approach roads the inns would be full to overflowing on the night before such a meeting, and innkeepers, as Burke says, could charge whatever they liked "not for a room, or even for a bed, but for a share in a bed with perhaps two bed-fellows." Everything was as uncomfortable and inconvenient as is possible to imagine, for hardship was the password to safety. Yet sometimes as many as 20,000 spectators would assemble. "In one aspect," says Professor Trevelyan,[2]

> these vast outdoor assemblies were festivals of the common people. But the priests of the national cult were fashionable members of the aristocracy, who presided over the ceremonies and held the rough and often violent multitudes in awe.

[1] *Travel in England* (Batsford, 1943).

[2] *English Social History* (Longmans, 1944).

While some of the 'bruisers' themselves were undoubted scoundrels, most were men of no mean integrity whose aristocratic patrons might well be proud to be seen in their company, and who would have no hesitation in driving with them to the ringside.

Many fierce fights were now staged; many fortunes won and lost. Nor did the Bucks content themselves for long with merely watching; soon it became fashionable for every male of gentle birth to be taught "the noble art" in early childhood as part of his training in chivalry towards women. It became fashionable, too, for the 'bruisers' themselves to be given noms de plume by their admirers. Belcher, Henry Pearce, John Gully (who went to gaol for failing to pay his debts, but who later won the Derby three times and became a prosperous Member of Parliament), Tom Cribb, Tom Spring, and Jem Ward all had their nicknames, as, indeed, all were to have their place in the history of the prize ring.

Doubtless many, despite all the risks and inconveniences, derived almost as much pleasure from the drives to these meetings as from the fights themselves. For the road was coming forward in all its glory: riding and driving became more than ever the occupations of a gentleman. While the Prince Regent, and the nobility in general, rode in Rotten Row more or less as a Sunday-morning ritual, the Four-in-Hand, Barouche, and Whip Clubs grew into flourishing concerns quite early in the nineteenth century. Adventurous and daring were the races staged between the Corinthians along the high roads of England, in settlement of some wager, and the thrill was only enhanced by the constant thought of highwaymen, and by the inconveniences of turnpikes, toll-gates, and the like.

There was something rather delightful about these clubs. We see something of the great spirit of their members in a letter which one particular Corinthian wrote to a friend describing a meeting with a long line of barouches on the road from Benson to Oxford in 1810:

> Although it rained with deluvian copiousness, the gentlemen to whom these equipages belonged, drove their own carriages, and were, with several friends, exposed to the peltings of the pitiless storm, whilst, snugly protected within, their servants were lolling comfortably, and most deservedly laughing at the choice which their masters had made. This cavalcade was composed of the members of the

Barouche Driving Club, who were proceeding to the inn at Benson, to hold one of their periodical meetings. All the members of this association are men of large fortune, amongst whom it is the fashion to imitate, as much as possible, in dress and manner, the coachmen and guards of the mail-coaches, the shape of which their carriages bear. These gentlemen have colloquial phrases, which are peculiar to this singular mode of recreation:—for instance—when they meet each other with ladies in their carriages, they ask, with a significant, but highly studied wink of the eye (which is called classical) "What luggage have you to-day?" They have also a peculiar mode of saluting each other by a semicircular movement of the arm, which a young Oxonian, apparently of high sporting blood, assured me, with infinite gravity, required nearly two years of constant practice to attain to any degree of perfection; and that there was a professor of this art, under whose tuition all the members had been.

Once a week, it seems, the members of this club undertook to deliver the mails in various parts of England, one Corinthian acting as driver and another as guard.

Whenever it was known that any one of these clubs was to hold a muster the streets would be lined with well-wishers. Such, we read in *The Sporting Magazine*, was the scene at the spring meeting of the Whip Club of the same year:

... long before noon Cavendish-Square and the neighbouring street and avenues were closely occupied by fashionables and amateurs. ... The windows of the Nobility displayed a brilliant assemblage of beautiful females; Mr Charles Buxton's front drawing room, in particular, was crowded with rank and fashion, and the houses adjoining were the resort of elegant company. The ladies were dressed *a-la-mode*. ... Every dashing pupil of the new school appeared anxious to be seen—tandems, barouches, landaus, and, in short, every tasteful vehicle in London was driven to the scene.

About twelve o'clock the principal whips were in motion. ... The set out of these gentlemen excited admiration. Their horses and harness were complete, their servants in appropriate livery, and the whole made a very dashing appearance. The leader harnessed and put to a short time before one o'clock. When his barouche was brought out, it was admired for its light and elegant appearance. The body and wheels are bright yellow, picked out black, with box and boot to correspond. ... Having taken the reins, dressed in a dark green frock, with metal buttons, white leathers, and boots, a horn was sounded for the Whips to prepare for the rank. The vehicles were remarkable for the uniformity which prevailed in all their appendages. The harness in general was distinguished by brass

instead of plated ornaments. Each barouche had two on the box, and two servants behind. About one o'clock the drivers mounted, with their friends. . . . The horn was again sounded, and the leader started in grand style, followed by the rank. Having driven round Cavendish-square, they turned down Holles-street, up Oxford-street, and down Park-lane.

Such a muster would often be rounded off with a suitable dinner, at which perhaps as many as ten different wines might be drunk.

But riding was not entirely restricted to out-of-doors. About this time Sergeant-major Philip Astley opened a riding-school off the Westminster Bridge Road. A massive affair, "supported by 100 large columns, 37 feet high," this school, later to become the Amphitheatre of Arts and to deteriorate into nothing more than a circus, was said to be the first building of the kind in England, laid out in elaborate fashion, with stage, gallery, pit, boxes, and stables. In addition there was also an oval-shaped arena, around which pony-races would be held from time to time.

The Ring and the Road—and, of course, racing—were not, however, by any means the only features of the age. From the time when Dutch William made his landing at Brixham, right down to the accession of Victoria, one sport after another began to emerge from the transition stage into which it had passed in Stuart times.

The aristocracy were now becoming extremely conscious of their health, and decided to look to the value of mineral springs. As a result the leaders of fashion began to pay frequent visits to such spas as Tunbridge Wells, where Henrietta Maria had once drunk the waters, and Bath, where Beau Nash was already in command. Whether or not one's body was really in need of a cure, to take the waters became as fashionable as riding. While those who suffered from rheumatism would take them in the genuine hope of getting better, those already perfectly sound took them as a safeguard.

Mr C. E. Vulliamy gives[1] this description of the way in which the women underwent "the cure" at Bath in the middle of the eighteenth century:

Early in the morning the ladies went to the Cross Bath. They entered the little pool of rather dirty warm water, clothed in yellow linen, to the sound of a gay music of flutes, fiddles or harp. Every

[1] Quoted in *The Old Towns of England*, by Clive Rouse (Batsford, 1936).

lady was provided with a tray, floating about the level of her bosom, on which she put her handkerchief, nosegay, snuff box and anything else she might require.

Tunbridge Wells and Bath became the great centres of fashion, high lights in the world of entertainment, where whole streets had to be replanned, with rich avenues of trees leading down to the baths, superb houses built in conformity with the new architecture of the age, and spacious pleasure gardens, complete with bowling-greens, laid out to keep pace with this sudden increase in popularity. As the new influx of visitors numbered both royalty and the cream of the aristocracy, no expense was spared in providing for this development. But Tunbridge Wells and Bath were not the only towns to prosper in this way. Other towns soon proclaimed the presence of mineral springs. Cheltenham, Harrogate, Buxton, Bristol, Clifton, Leamington, and a few others began to acquire an importance hitherto undreamed of, even though, in some instances, the existence of a spring had long been known.

Nor were the spas the only places to benefit by this health-consciousness. Salt water, it was discovered, could also yield extremely beneficial results, and there were many attractive little villages—fishing villages for the most part—to be found on both the south and east coasts. If none could quite equal that fascinating little place known as Brighthelmstone (later shortened to Brighton) there was no disputing that Worthing, Weymouth, Hastings, Margate, Broadstairs, Bournemouth, Scarborough, and others had a definite charm of their own. There were plenty of places from which to choose, and the young Bucks were not slow to make their choice. The seaside villages were to have their character torn from them, to become, in time, the soulless resorts of the masses.

With this change in fortunes, swimming began to acquire a somewhat different flavour. The dwellers by the water still learned the art as a form of insurance policy; they still held races in the rivers and lakes, as in Charles II's time, and, in fact, had even gone so far as to build in 1734 their first open-air swimming-pool where London's Old Street now stands. Now, however, they grew so venturesome as to swim in the sea for the benefit of their health, though their courage was not yet sufficiently developed to prompt them to dash boldly into the water, a far too risky undertaking. Besides, they had no bathing-dresses, and, however loose one's morals, there were limits, we imagine. To go for a swim was an

elaborate business, which a certain Mr Beal helped to solve by his invention, at Margate, of a special bathing-machine. It was a good idea, designed to reduce the risks while at the same time saving the dandies—and their womenfolk—from the possible embarrassment of having to walk down the beach unclothed in full view of the rest.

As a further most necessary precaution the majority of places soon boasted 'dippers.' George III, who had a special fancy for Weymouth, always employed the same man, and the diarist Fanny Burney tells us that on one of his visits all the other bathers who patronized him embroidered the words "God Save the King" on their bonnets. And Fanny Burney was able to see the humorous side of the business:

> Flannel dresses, tucked up, and no shoes or stockings, with bandeaus and girdles, have a most singular appearance; and when first I surveyed these loyal nymphs it was with some difficulty I kept my features in order. Nor is this all. Think of the surprise of His Majesty when, the first time of his bathing, he had no sooner popped his royal head under water than a band of music, concealed in a neighbouring machine, struck up God Save Great George our King.

At Brighton, where his son became almost as fond of bathing as of racing, there were at least two dippers—'Smoaker' and Martha Gunn. Though Smoaker was the Regent's choice, both dippers were known to him. A good story is told[1] how, when the Prince once totally disregarded his dipper's orders not to venture too far out to sea, he found himself being dragged back to safety by the ear, the irate Smoaker muttering that he was not going to risk being hanged by the King for allowing the Prince of Wales to drown! The Prince, a good sportsman if nothing else, enjoyed the joke, and continued to patronize Smoaker until the latter's retirement, when he awarded him a pension.

At these seaside villages, now rapidly growing into towns, the Georgian Bucks, always immaculate in their dress, would mount the steps of strange wheeled contraptions, to be drawn by a horse slowly, if bumpily, down the beach and out to sea. Once inside they would undress and stand naked, ready to take the plunge the moment the guide halted the machine and gave the word. These machines were designed to accommodate only one passenger, who, when the moment arrived to enter the water, would step bashfully down a well-screened ladder. A few minutes later he would be

[1] Osbert Sitwell and Margaret Barton, *Brighton* (Faber, 1935).

back, shivering with cold and glad that it was all over, to rub down and dress again on the homeward trek. Meanwhile his lady might be making a similar expedition at a discreet distance down the beach, except that she would be wearing a flannel dress for the occasion, and would be accompanied by a woman guide.

We may find not one but several of these machines on the beach, and each will be making a whole series of pilgrimages between sea and shore, for the resorts were developing rapidly. The dandies were gaining confidence, and were deriving pleasure as well as benefit from these swimming expeditions.

The advance of the spas and resorts caused no falling off in the activities on the rivers and inland waterways, where, too, the scene was changing. When, in the winter of 1715–16, the Thames became "a solid rock of ice," the river, all along what is now the Embankment, was transformed into one vast sporting arena as London turned out to make merry. Coaches, wagons, and carts drove straight on to the ice in such numbers that it soon became a town in itself, with thousands crossing it and playing games on it for days on end.

Booths were set up for the sale of brandy, wine, ale "and other exhilerating liquors." A cook's shop was erected, "and gentlemen went to dine there as frequently as at an ordinary," royalty and others of the nobility among them. And over by Whitehall, Westminster, and Whitefriars Stairs special printing-presses were established "so that the gentlemen and others may have their names printed, fit to paste into any book, to hand down the memory of the season to future ages."

In one corner would be a puppet theatre; in another a pulpit where an itinerant preacher took it upon himself to deliver suitable sermons to the motley crowd. Here there would be a party of skaters; there a group of men and women whirling themselves dizzy on the new sledges which they had devised to take the place of the old "seats of ice." The theatres became deserted as every one made their way to the ice. No one was bored; the programme was altogether too full. It was a festival such as had never been known before, and such as has not been seen in quite such glory since, even though lesser galas have taken place on the Thames.

Even when, in the midst of it all, a spring tide raised the ice some fourteen feet, no one minded. The occasion became the talk of the age—an event which some unknown poet summarized in the following lines:

> Thou beauteous river Thames, whose standing tide
> Equals the glory of thy flowing pride;
> The City, nay, the world's transferr'd to thee
> Fix'd as the land, and richer than the sea.
> Three miles together for the common good,
> The slippery substance offers dainty food.
> Here healing port wine, and there, Rhenish Flows;
> Here Bohea tea, and there tobacco grows;
> In one place you may meet good Cheshire cheese,
> Another proffers whitest Brentford peas.
> Here is King George's picture, there Queen Anne's,
> Now nut-brown ale in cups, and now in cans;
> See there's the Mall, and in that little hut,
> The best Geneva's sold, and love to boot.
> See there a sleek Venetian Envoy walks,
> See here an Alderman more proudly stalks.
> Here is St James's-street, yonder the Strand,
> In this place Bowyer plies—that's Lintot's stand.

If the weather was wholly responsible for this remarkable scene, the Thames was fast becoming a Mecca of sport at all seasons. To honour the accession of George I a certain comedian, one Thomas Doggett, instituted an annual race for six Thames Watermen, to be rowed "in old-fashioned boats for coat, badge, freedom and money prizes." The object was to test the skill and endurance of young watermen *against* the tide, and the course chosen was from the Old Swan at London Bridge to an inn of the same name at Chelsea. The race was to be held on August 1, and to be "continued annually on the same day for ever." To complicate matters as much as possible, the start was timed to take place just when the majority of other Thames craft might normally be expected to leave their moorings. While the winner was to be given an orange coat, together with a badge depicting the White Horse of Hanover—in Doggett's opinion a symbol of freedom—there were also many money prizes to be won, and, to ensure that this should be the case in future years, Doggett lodged certain funds with the Fishmongers' Company for the maintenance of the race.

So it was that on August 1, 1715, six watermen manned their boats and staged the first rowing-race where Charles II and his brother had made history in their yachts close on fifty-five years before. Of the identity of the winner we have no idea. All details of the race are lost. The only point of which we may be certain is that Doggett instilled the professional oarsmen with a new enthusiasm, for not only was his wish that the event be continued

annually fulfilled, but within a very short time we hear of similar races being promoted by others. In June 1775, for instance, a number of watermen elected to hold an open regatta before Ranelagh Gardens.

If this regatta was of but little immediate importance in itself, it nevertheless left its mark in one quite unexpected direction. During the last few years the Georgian gentry—"*very* respectable gentlemen," a contemporary writer assures us—had become steadily more attracted to sailing. The yacht-builders in their many yards by the Thames and elsewhere were devoting more and more of their time to perfecting their craft, and, as one improvement followed another, the desire of the *élite* to own a yacht became more and more apparent.

A favourite haunt of these sportsmen was Battersea, where a number of them had even gone so far as to form themselves into a kind of sailing fraternity. When the news of the forthcoming regatta reached them they decided to turn out as many yachts as they could muster and line them up by the river-bank, whence they might obtain the best view of the proceedings. On the day of the regatta these yachts aroused so much interest that a fortnight later it was announced that the Duke of Cumberland was to award a silver cup for a race from Westminster Bridge to Putney Bridge and back again between "Pleasure Sailing Boats, from 2 to 5 tons burthen, and constantly lying above London Bridge." The owners, although permitted to have two others to accompany them, were to take the helm themselves, and it was agreed by common consent that all should wear the same uniform.

Thus on July 13, after bad weather had caused a postponement of two days, some eighteen to twenty of the "respectables" held their first open sailing-race. The memorable occasion called for due ceremony, and the Duke saw that it got it. No sooner had he embarked on board his state barge, we are told,[1] than the Royal Standard was hoisted at the bow, and as he proceeded on his way towards the starting-point a band from an accompanying barge broke forth into triumphal music. And there, at the starting-point, stood the yachts, all neatly anchored in line, their sails furled and each carrying a white flag with a red cross and a varying number of blue balls according to her position at the starting-line; close by the "respectables," or "captains," as they preferred to be called, waited in wherries.

[1] *Yachting* (Badminton Library).

With the approach of the royal barge a signal went out, the captains boarded their yachts, a gun was fired, and the race was on. When at last a certain Mr Parkes brought his yacht, the *Aurora*, first past the post the band broke once more into martial music, and the gallant captain was taken on to the royal yacht to be toasted in claret by the Duke and Duchess themselves. The drink flowed freely; every thirst was more than quenched before three cheers were eventually called and the triumphant gentleman was presented with his well-earned cup. But the day was not yet ended, for afterwards the whole company—royal barge, band, yachts, and all—sailed peacefully up-stream to the tea-gardens kept by Mr Smith on the Surrey side of Vauxhall Bridge, there to dine and wine together. How memorable a day this was to prove when later the captains who staged this first open yacht race formed themselves into the Cumberland Fleet, and so became our first yacht club!

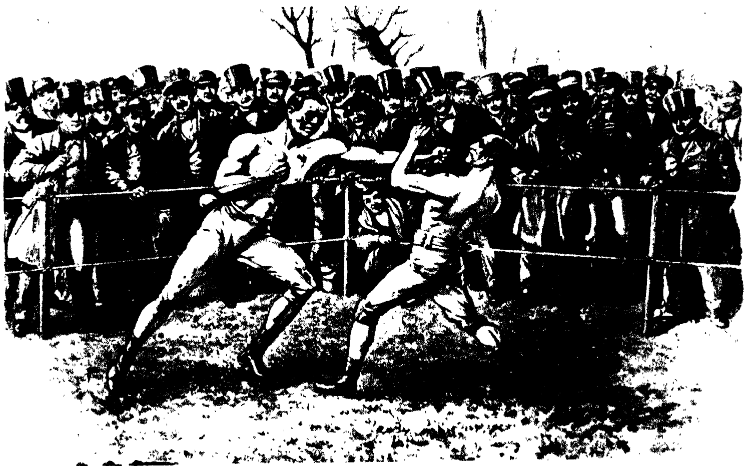
The "men of polite society" were having a busy time these days. Fishing was occupying their attention too. Izaak Walton's spell was spreading so widely that angling was now numbered by the more wealthy among the 'things to do,' and more and more manufacturers of fishing tackle saw fit to open shops in London and the various riverside towns—"At the Signe of the Fish," or, perhaps, "At the Signe of the Salmon." From the trade cards they so proudly displayed we see that they now fashioned all manner of rods, hooks, gentles, worms, flies, and even Indian weed, "newly come over." Everything that a man could possibly wish for could now be bought at one or other of these shops, whether it be salmon, trout, carp, or any of the other freshwater fish that he was anxious to catch.

The wealthy took full advantage of all this new tackle, and as, with their aid, their prowess improved they revealed an increasing desire to match their skill against others. The inevitable result was the formation of angling clubs, whose first move was to organize fly-casting contests to decide who was the most skilled among them, who was to be their champion, and, more important still, who would prove champion of the whole district.

Naturally by no means all fishermen came into this category. There was the professional, who preferred to go out in boats, relying largely on various kinds of traps and nets. For him matters were to be tightened up considerably. Hitherto, it seems, he had done more or less as he pleased, and that had amounted to his

"THE HUNT" AND "THE ROAD"
Alken.
The Sporting Magazine

THE CARTED STAG
Alken.
The Sporting Magazine



THE PRIZE RING

The Heenan and Sayers contest. The Championship at Farnborough, April 1860.

"Picture Post" Library

AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PRIZE-FIGHT

Broughton *versus* Figg.

"Picture Post" Library

almost entirely denuding the rivers through his complete inability to appreciate that even fish must breed if their numbers are to be kept up. As early as 1710 Queen Anne had empowered the Fishmongers' Company to enact certain by-laws to improve the standard of fishing in the Thames. As these had proved ineffective, in 1757 the Court of Common Council petitioned the House of Commons to introduce a more exacting Bill to guarantee the preservation of the "fly and spawn" of fish in the Thames and Medway.

Whether amateur or professional, not every one stuck to orthodox methods. Mr Daniel recounts[1] the strange exploits of a man named Graham, hailing from Whitehaven, who took into his head to go salmon-fishing on horseback at low tide:

> With a three-pointed barbed spear, fixed to a shaft fifteen feet long, he plunges into these pools at a trot, up to the belly of his horse. He makes ready his spear, and when he overtakes the salmon, strikes the fish with almost unerring aim; that done, by a turn of the hand, he raises the salmon to the surface, wheels his horse towards the shore, and runs the fish on dry land without dismounting. He has killed from 40 to 50 fish in a day.

Graham's father, it appears, was actually the first to adopt this practice, and he became so enthusiastic with the idea that, it is said, he was still indulging in this strenuous exploit when in his ninety-ninth year!

Another of the more peaceful pursuits to gain in fashion was shooting. By the turn of the century the muzzle-loading gun had arrived, and the men who were beginning to make their fortunes through the rise of industrialism started to look out for some pastime rather less hazardous than hunting, yet, at the same time, essentially rural. Such men were buying themselves houses in the country now, and their one desire was to ape the squire and landed gentry. Shooting seemed to afford just that opportunity. So, while in the towns many were vying with one another to see who could erect the largest factory, and make the most money, in the country they strove to develop the most important shoot in their particular districts.

Naturally not all who took to the gun belonged to this group of 'synthetic' sportsmen. Those who inherited the ancestral homes, protected as they were by strict game laws, became genuine lovers of the gun, who displayed the keenest interest in the preservation of their stock for the good of the sport. There were others too

[1] *Rural Sports.*

who, enjoying no such protection, derived infinite pleasure from shooting over the vast open heaths and tracts not yet enclosed, in the common fields, or in the woods. Unlike the urban interlopers, the true countryman, both squire and common man, shot because he liked it, not because he believed it to be the thing to do. If the guns were cumbersome, inaccurate, and extremely hazardous to load, what matter? No one was accustomed to anything better, and in any case they were a great improvement on the old ones.

Yet shooting still had a long way to go. To aim at a bird in flight, and to succeed in hitting it, was no longer quite so miraculous a feat, and the undergraduates at Cambridge were becoming quite renowned for their exploits in the Fens. Even so, there were few who felt at ease except when aiming at a 'sitting' target or firing just a few stray shots to drive the birds into a net on the ground. It remained for a certain Colonel Peter Hawker to promote shooting to a field sport, after he had been invalided out of the Army towards the end of the Georgian era. The day of 'heavy bags' was yet to come.

Just as shooting had by now largely taken the place of hawking, coursing was becoming still further divorced from hunting. In 1776 the Earl of Orford established a Coursing Society at Swaffham, in Norfolk, limiting membership to the letters of the alphabet. Each member was to name his dog with a word beginning with a different letter, and it was a firm rule that not until a courser died or retired could another be elected in his place. The night before a coursing was to take place two stewards would be chosen to superintend the meeting, and, under the rules of the society, anyone who absented himself from two such meetings in a year "without sending what shall be judged a sufficient excuse by a majority of not less than 13 members shall be deemed out of the society, and another chosen in his place."

As Lord Lieutenant of the county, the Earl of Orford experienced no difficulty in arousing widespread interest in his meetings. Consequently other societies soon came into being at Ashdown, Amesbury, Altcar, Newmarket, Deptford, and one or two other places. Of these the most important was the Ashdown Park Club, if only for the fact that in 1828 it formulated a completely new set of rules to take the place of those compiled by the Duke of Norfolk in Tudor times.

From some of these it would seem that the compiler had a thought for the spiritual as well as the technical. A member who

failed to appear at table in the uniform chosen by the patroness, for instance, was liable to a penalty. A steward who failed to attend a meeting was to "forfeit a dozen of port wine," as also was "any gentleman who, after judgement given, arraigns the decision or finds fault with the judge, to be awarded a gallon of wine at the pleasure of the subscribers." Among the most prominent members of this society were the Earl of Craven, Lord Sefton, and Lord Ashbrook.

The rules of the Ashdown Park Club were not, however, adopted universally. Although many societies based theirs upon them, each preferred to have its own peculiar code, which was perfectly understandable, since each society coursed their dogs on their own ground. It was not until 1836, when the proprietor of the Waterloo Hotel in Liverpool conceived the idea of running an eight-dog stake on Lord Sefton's Altcar estate, thus giving birth to the Waterloo Cup, that mixed meetings were even tried.

Sport of every kind and description, on land, sea, and river, was bettering itself in this gay and beautiful Golden Age. Every one became a sportsman of some kind. Throughout the ages the people of England had devised first one game and then another, until gradually they had formed one great snowball of sport which just rolled steadily on from one generation to the next, from one century to the next, increasing in size all the while. By now that snowball had reached enormous proportions and was gathering impetus. Not only did men gamble higher than ever, but when they were unsuccessful in finding anyone to compete against in the field they would simply set themselves the task of performing a stated feat in a given number of hours or days.

This was particularly so where athletics were concerned. Not content with taking part in the sports meetings of the various towns, many now adopted the practice of setting themselves some such feat to perform, and then finding another to bet against their prospects. These gambles were by no means kept secret. As soon as the news got round, and the time and place of the event were known, sure enough the 'fancy' would be there to chance their luck.

When, for instance, in June 1788 a man named Evans backed himself for three hundred guineas to run ten miles at Newmarket in the space of one hour men, women, and children turned out in their thousands to watch. Up and down the country odds were being laid on the result, and it is said that at Newmarket alone

more than £10,000 changed hands. How tense must the excitement have been when Evans just managed to accomplish his feat with four minutes to spare!

Not all these challenges were over so quickly. In 1809 a Captain Barclay declared that he would walk a thousand miles in as many hours, while two years later Thomas Standen undertook a rather similar feat that occupied 1100 consecutive hours. The nature of the challenges was richly varied. A fish-hawker, we are told,[1] once backed himself to run from Hyde Park Corner to Brentford in forty-five minutes, carrying fifty-six lb. of fish on his head, while another enthusiast is recorded as having trundled a coach-wheel eight miles round a platform in St Giles's Fields within the space of an hour.

The majority of these competitors were men with a sudden 'inspiration'—men who made their mark once, but who were never seen or heard of again. Only a few, like Foster Powell, who in 1764 walked fifty miles along the Bath Road in seven hours, and who later performed the remarkable feat of walking from London to York and back in just under six days, and Captain Barclay, whose real name was Barclay Allardice, were enthusiastic sportsmen of the best type. These men, by their frequent and widespread appearances, and by their undoubted personal skill, proved the powers of human endurance to be so infinitely greater than anyone had hitherto imagined that others were soon smitten with an ambition to test their own endurance. Before long men of all classes began holding races against each other over immense distances at Newmarket and on such highways as the Great North Road, the Uxbridge Road, and the Bath Road.

Even those whose powers of endurance genuinely proved unequal to some of the longer walks or cross-country runs tried to improve their speed over shorter distances, and so helped to hasten the approach of modern athletics. Not that the fairs were a thing of the past. At Windsor, where the local bachelors possessed their own sports ground, we hear of all kinds of entertaining events, like a blindfolded wheelbarrow race, when a number of benevolent spectators elected to brighten the proceedings by guiding the unfortunate competitors headlong into a pond. At Margate we read of pig-racing, when

> the pig's tail having been duly soaped, in order to render it more slippery . . . the noble animal was turned out of a wheelbarrow into a large field. The shouts of an admiring populace immediately

[1] *Athletics* (Badminton Library).

> induced it to start at full speed curvetting round and round, and grunting triumphantly. Soon afterwards, six gallant youths in white . . . whose limbs had been anointed . . . rushed forward in pursuit. The sight was truly grand!—the noble pig, with high contempt, ran before his swift-footed pursuers, while his slippery tail disdained their grasping fingers. For some minutes victory was doubtful, the pig defeating his opponents in all attempts. At length the heat of the sun began to dry his tail, and his hunters renewed their efforts. A fine young fellow . . . at last succeeded in lifting the animal from the ground, and with a look of triumph appealed to the spectators. . . . That human beings are subject to reverses of fortune, is a sad sentence . . . for the pig being rather above the common size, it was too heavy for the tail, and the skin unfortunately slipped off; the body fell to the ground, and the pig again set off, wagging the stump of his dismembered extremity, and most vociferously exciting, by his squeaking, the compassion of the pitying by-standers.

At Kilmersdon, near Bath, too, the annual sports fair in Ammerdown Park was still a feature, with running, leaping, throwing the discus, "and other games of activity" forming the main part of the programme, and "implements of husbandry, articles of dress, and presents in money" constituting the prizes. At Stepney a "jack-ass" race for a Cheshire cheese attracted "weavers, sailors and their doxies" in hundreds. At Maidenhead a Holland smock, that had first been suspended from the branches of a tree, was run for by "five damsels under 20 years of age, handsome in person, and chaste in principle; bandy legs and humped backs not being permitted to start"; while a pair of pumps remained a great draw for the hundred-yards race between "the round-frock fraternity of agricultureans."

Fairs were still widely held, with each district endeavouring to introduce certain peculiarities into its programme, but they were assuming more the atmosphere of a modern fête. Serious athletics were becoming divorced from such joyous gatherings.

Meanwhile archery, which had practically died out, despite Charles's efforts, was on the upgrade once more. A certain Mr Waring, we read,[1] tried to soothe a serious chest complaint by shooting with the bow. So encouraging were the results that Sir Ashton Lever, also something of an invalid, who had been watching the experiment with no little interest, decided to follow his friend's example. The couple devoted more and more of their time to the pursuit, until by 1781 they had both become so

[1] *Archery* (Badminton Library).

enthusiastic that they proceeded to carry the sport farther afield by collecting together the remnants of the once flourishing Finsbury Archers and so forming the Toxophilite Society, with headquarters in Leicester Square. For a time this society held its practice shoots in the grounds of Leicester House, while shooting its match targets at Vauxhall, Islington, Canonbury House, and Highbury Barn. After a while these archers obtained permission to use the Artillery Ground of the H.A.C.

By 1791 they had obtained the patronage of the Prince of Wales, and had grown so strong in numbers that they were able to acquire a ground and pavilion of their own. Whereupon not only did they stage magnificent targets, where, with almost Elizabethan splendour, bugles would be sounded each time a competitor lodged his arrow in the 'gold,' and where the winner would invariably be crowned with laurel-leaves, but they also arranged elaborate dinners at the many fashionable taverns. Alas for splendour! Within two years membership declined, funds ran low, subscriptions had to be raised, money borrowed. Even the support of such wealthy individuals as Mrs de Crespigny, wife of the celebrated Claude Champion de Crespigny, could not arrest the downward trend. Yet by 1833 the tide turned once more, and the Toxophilites found themselves in Regent's Park, backed by William IV —an altogether more stable body.

The Toxophilite Society was not the only active concern. At Arden, where bows and arrows had been fashioned for centuries, the woodmen had formed themselves into a single community, and, as part of their annual woodmote, had elected to promote an open archery contest each year. Soon, too, a body of archers from all over Britain began holding regular meetings, first at Blackheath, and then, in later years, at Dulwich. An increasing number of people were now deriving pleasure from drawing the bow, women as well as men. However, to judge from the report of a meeting of the Royal British Bowmen held at Eaton Hall in the early nineteenth century, there is reason to suspect that a convivial evening may sometimes have proved as much a draw as the sport itself:

> When the shooting had terminated, the company retired into tents, where a sumptuous dinner was provided for the guests, who amounted in number to 197. One rule of the Society enacts, "that the dinner to be provided in the tents shall consist only of cold meats (bacon and beans, and vegetables excepted), and in order to reduce the expense of the table as much as possible, that there be allowed only

one row of dishes, and those dishes placed lengthways along the table; and that the wine be confined to port and common white wine only." A penalty of five pounds is annexed to a breach of this rule. It is hardly necessary to add, that the munificence of the noble host subjected him to the above fine, and would, of course, tend to the augmentation of the Society's funds. This part of the entertainment was sumptuous beyond description. All the dishes were served up in massive plate; and upwards of forty gold cups, won by his Lordship's horses at different places, ornamented the tables. Soon after six o'clock, tea was served up, after which the company retired in different directions to dress for the ball and supper, which concluded the festivities of the day. The dance was kept up until four in the morning.

Rather more serious were the parties of Irishmen who now frequently occupied the fields behind the British Museum, playing a strange game with a quaint kind of bat, "flat on both sides and broad and curving at the lower end."[1] A peculiar business, it bore a distinct resemblance to the hurling game of the West Country or the camp-ball of the Eastern Counties, except that in neither of these was a bat used. On the other hand, it was not altogether unlike the bandy once played in the cobbled streets of Tudor England.

Yet this was not the lethargic affair we witnessed in those now far-off times. It was altogether more lively. Though quite likely nurtured from the seeds of all three of these sports, this 'hurley' was to all intents and purposes something quite new—hockey in embryo. Already the Irishmen had become quite proficient in both dribbling and passing, and Strutt found it amusing

> to see with what facility those who were skilful in the pastime would catch up the ball upon the bat, and often run with it for a considerable time, tossing it occasionally from the bat and recovering it again, till such time as they found a proper opportunity of driving it back amongst their companions, who generally followed and were ready to receive it.

These Irishmen were not alone in introducing something fresh at this time. In the open courtyard of Fleet Gaol a less worthy band were trying out yet another form of racket-play. A kind of cross between fives and tennis, it was eventually to assume the name of 'rackets,' although, like so many of the ball-games, it was first to join the swelling ranks of 'fives.' Some say that it was the debtors who actually invented the game, and that one of their

[1] *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England.*

number, a doubtful character named Robert Mackay, became, in 1820, the first champion. Though there are no authentic records of the game's exact origin or place of birth to enable us to form an opinion, the claim may well be justified, since we soon find this new pastime firmly established as one of the popular sports of the lower orders—of the prisons and public-houses. Indeed, we see it as a lowly, though skilful, affair, with no side- or back-walls and a ground surface that left much to be desired, before we are able to welcome it to the more aristocratic surroundings we know to-day.

But while the debtors languishing in the gaols were whiling away their time with ball and racket, and the 'fancy' were popularizing first one sport and then another, down in the country—particularly in Sussex, Kent, and Hampshire—something even more significant was happening. The villagers, whose ancestors of Tudor times had toyed with stool-ball and the like, had at last, through the process of centuries, devised a new game from the ashes of the old. Perhaps more glorious than them all, and certainly more English—cricket had been born.

Nor was that all. The sports of the water were beginning to assume different proportions, while in the hunting-field the fox was rapidly supplanting the stag and the hare as Beast of the Chase. Truly was this the Golden Age.

CHAPTER VIII

The Cricket-field

THERE was nothing really sudden about the arrival of cricket. Down in the country the common folk had been playing a game with characteristics distinctly resembling those of cricket at least since the reign of Charles I. In later years, when certain Royalists returned to London from their exile on rural estates, they had become sufficiently impressed to introduce it to the capital. Some of them went so far as to open, in 1666, a club at St Albans. But the cricket of those days was lacking in organization, and it is not until the eighteenth century that we hear anything of rules or come upon authentic records of scores. Yet by 1743 enthusiasm had reached such a point that "noblemen, gentlemen, and clergy were making butchers, cobblers or tinkers their companions"[1] in this once essentially rural pastime. Indeed, three years later, as Professor Trevelyan tells us, Lord John Sackville was playing in a Kentish team captained by the gardener at Knole—a team which, incidentally, succeeded in beating an All-England eleven. Later Lord Sackville's son, the third Duke of Dorset, showed his feelings on the subject by presenting "The Vine" to the people of Sevenoaks "to be a cricket ground for ever."

Not every one, of course, approved of such mingling of the classes; one critic likened it to "eating black pudding at Bartholomew Fair." Still, the critics were in the minority, and the Georgians instilled an atmosphere into the play that was delightful. It was so English, so democratic, this meeting of gentleman and common man, of employer and servant often, on common ground to share a common interest.

The south-eastern corner of England became the mainstay of cricket. As the headquarters of a new club known simply as "The London," the Artillery Ground of the H.A.C. at Finsbury soon enjoyed as wide a reputation for this pastime as it had once gained for archery. As early as 1730 we hear of Surrey enthusiasts competing against those of Middlesex here on a roped-off field, lined

[1] *English Social History* (Longmans, 1944).

with benches to accommodate perhaps seven or eight hundred spectators. The manager was the landlord of a local inn, and admission was at the rate of twopence per head for an ordinary match and sixpence for anything rather special.

As early as 1711 we read of Kent playing All-England, and of bets being laid on the result. In 1744 Kent again challenged "the Rest," and this time the challenge was taken up by one Richard Newland, a farmer in the Sussex village of Slindon, who put a team into the field comprising, besides his own brothers, John and Adam, two other Sussex men, three from Surrey, one from Berkshire, and two from the Artillery ground. If this match is memorable for nothing else it will go down in history as the game that was lost through a dropped catch. Kent's ninth wicket had fallen, leaving her but three "notches" for victory. But then came a moment as dramatic to those taking part as when Fred Tate dropped a 'sitter' at a crucial point in a Test Match of our own time, a moment vividly depicted by the poet comedian James Love in the following lines:

> The last two Champions even now are in,
> And but three Notches yet remain to win
> When, almost ready to recant its boast,
> Ambitious Kent within an ace had lost.
> The mounting ball, again obliquely driven,
> Cuts the pure ether, soaring up to Heaven.
> Waymark was ready; Waymark, all must own,
> As sure a swain to catch as e'er was known.
> Yet, whether Jove and all compelling Fate,
> In their high will determined Kent should beat;
> Or the lamented youth too much relied
> On sure success, and Fortune often tried,
> The erring ball, amazing to be told,
> Slipped thro' his out-stretched Hand, and mocked his Hold.
> And now the sons of Kent compleat the game
> And firmly fix their everlasting Fame.

So it was Kent's day; Thomas Waymark's match—Waymark "the immortal butterfingers" from Berkshire. Yet it was no more than an unlucky slip. Waymark, like Tate, was a good cricketer.

As far back as 1712 we hear of the Duke of Marlborough trying to win the support of the electors by publicly playing cricket with their children, while Horace Walpole, in a letter dated 1749, tells "of Lord Montford's making cricket matches and fetching up parsons from different parts of England to play on Richmond Green."

Yet if cricket belonged to the south-eastern corner, with Kent perhaps the 'cradle,' it was the little Hampshire village of Hambledon which, in the middle of the century, became the 'nursery.' To Broad-Halfpenny Down, with its little inn across the lane, to Broad-Halfpenny Down, some two miles to the north-east of Hambledon itself, remote and cut off, most of the patrons of cricket, both great and small, were sooner or later to journey from far and wide. What a part was Hambledon to play, what a triumph for rural England that dukes, earls, and peers should delight to become members of this essentially village organization, making the local inn their headquarters and the downs their play-ground! For it was here, in the heart of the Hampshire country-side, that cricket was to start on its great road to popularity as the national pastime of rich and poor alike—the crowning glory of a summer's day.

Of the start of the Hambledon Cricket Club we have, alas, no records. F. S. Ashley-Cooper[1] considers 1750 to be the most likely approximate date of its foundation. And this fits in with the general belief that the Rev. Charles Powlett, at one time curate of Itchen Abbas, may have been one of the prime movers in its formation.

The players at this time wore dark-coloured knee-breeches and stockings—silk for the gentlemen, sir—with vests of a contrasting shade and velvet jockey-caps. Later they blossomed out into sky-blue coats with black collars and buttons engraved with the letters "C.C.," turning at the same time to three-cornered hats in place of the caps, which later still gave way to top-hats.

As for the game itself, two wickets with but a single bail served as the target, and it was by no means uncommon for the ball to pass between the stumps without dislodging this bail. Bowling was underhand and mostly along the ground—'sneaks,' we should have called such deliveries—and the batsman defended his wicket with a curved bat, not unlike a hockey-stick, though considerably heavier at the base. There were, of course, no boundaries, and the players counted their score by 'notches,' which they cut into tally-sticks. To complete a notch a man was expected to pop the end of his bat between the two stumps before the wicket-keeper could whisk off the bail, a practice that gave birth to the term 'popping-crease.'

Such were the elements of the game in the early days. But time

[1] *The Hambledon Cricket Chronicle, 1772–1796* (Jenkins, 1923).

never stood still at Hambledon. 'Grubs' became increasingly wearisome, so that the Hampshire stalwarts started to deliver 'length' balls. Whereupon the curved bat proved entirely useless, and gradually gave place to the more modern type. There is a good story of how one opportunist, a man named White, who hailed from Reigate, tried to take advantage of the change-over by turning out with a bat that was wider than the wicket. He had his laugh, but it was a short one. In 1774 a "committee of noblemen," including the Duke of Dorset, the Earl of Tankerville, who frequently played for Hambledon, without, it seems, being a member, Sir Horace Mann, and certain acknowledged members, such as Philip Dehany and the Rev. Charles Powlett himself, met at the Star and Garter Coffee-house in Pall Mall, where the patrons of racing had conceived the idea of forming the Jockey Club not long before, to revise the existing laws, framed some thirty years previously.

The bat was now not to exceed four and a quarter inches at its widest part, while the stumps were to be "twenty-two inches out of the ground," with a popping-crease cut into the grass. The visiting team was to have choice of innings and decide upon the pitching of the wicket, which, however, was to be "within 30 yards of a centre fixed by the adversaries." When a match was played on neutral territory the bowlers were to toss for choice of innings. Apart from this, the rules were now not so far removed from those of our own time, except that two stumps remained the order of the day, four balls still constituted an over, while, of course, underarm bowling continued to be the only recognized form of delivery.

Three more seasons were to pass before the third stump was added, after "Lumpy" Stevens, gardener to the Earl of Tankerville, playing for Kent as a "given man," had had the aggravating experience of bowling the ball clean through the stumps of John Small no fewer than three times during a critical stage of a five-a-side match with Hambledon without once dislodging the bail.

By now the club was outgrowing itself. Thus five years later a second ground was added at Windmill Down, within easy walking distance. Richard Nyren, who was landlord in turn of the Bat and Ball on Broad-Halfpenny and of the George, down by the church, was at once their secretary and their "general." A nephew of Richard Newland, he was a left-hander, a splendid judge of the game, and a real tactician— "a good face-to-face, unflinching, uncompromising, independent man." On match-days Nyren

would erect refreshment booths on the ground, and then what a scene to behold—a scene such as only his son John could describe with anything approaching the right feeling:[1]

> Oh! it was a heart-stirring sight to witness the multitude forming a complete and dense circle round that noble green. Half the county would be present, and all their hearts with us. . . . Defeat was glory in such a struggle—victory, indeed made us only 'a little lower than angels.' How these fine brawn-faced fellows of farmers would drink to our success! And then, what stuff they had to drink!—Punch!—not your . . . modern cat-lap milk punch . . . but good, unsophisticated John Bull stuff—stark!—that would stand on end!—punch that would make a cat speak! Sixpence a bottle. . . . The ale, too! not the modern horror under the same name . . . but barley-corn such as would put the souls of three butchers into one weaver. Ale that would flare like turpentine—genuine Boniface! This immortal viand . . . was vended at twopence per pint. . . .
>
> Then the quantity the fellows would eat! Two or three of them would strike dismay into a round of beef. . . . There would this company, consisting most likely of some thousands, remain patiently and anxiously watching every turn of fate in the game, as if the event had been the meeting of two armies to decide their liberty.

What a scene, indeed! "Half the county" might not be present, but at least there would often be as many as 20,000 spectators, with stakes of £5000 or more for the winners. Only on the road to the prize ring was such a spectacle to be found in the procession of crowds that made its way up the hill to the ground. But this was better than the prize ring in that it was legal. Conveyances of every kind and description might line the sides of the field, while on the green itself would be booths and tents for all grades of society—tents for the "quality"; tents for the players; one special tent, complete with baize-lined seats, for the ladies.

Everything was done in style—not least the catering. Indeed, from a study of the club minutes[2] it would appear that food and drink played an important part at all times, from the annual dinner "at Nyren's" to the weekly meeting, once held on Tuesday, but later changed to Monday. There was no telling what to expect. At one time a pig might be prepared for a barbecue; at another a buck would be "dressed on the Down"; while invariably would venison—"on the Table at three of the Clock"—be supplied by the President for the annual dinner. Drink would

[1] *The Cricketers of My Time* (Gay and Bird, 1902).
[2] *The Hambledon Cricket Chronicle.*

flow freely at all times; too freely on occasion, it would seem, since quite early in the club's history the members had deemed it advisable to stipulate "that no Gentleman's health shall at any time be drunk as a toast after Dinner except the Presidents and the Kings." Not that that was any great hindrance: as Mr Ashley-Cooper points out, there seems to have been nothing to prevent all and sundry raising their glasses as often as they liked to these particular individuals. Yes, the drink flowed freely, just as the food tasted good. Port, sherry, punch, and wine, to say nothing of ale, were ever at hand.

Sportsmen to a man were these Hambledon cricketers. Few who prized the bat and ball could ever desert Broad-Halfpenny for long. One after the other they came, some to play, others simply to give it their blessing—the Earl of Albemarle, the Duke of Chandos, Henry Bonham (High Sheriff of Hampshire), the Earl of Darnley, the Hon. Henry Hood (later Lord Hood), Jeremiah Dyson (Deputy Clerk in the House of Commons), the Hon. Charles Lennox (later Duke of Richmond), Viscount Palmerston (father of the statesman), Lord John Russell (later Duke of Bedford), the Earl of Nottingham, the Earl of Winchilsea, the Duke of Dorset, the Earl of Tankerville, Sir Horace Mann, and many others besides.

No greater, though, was the spirit of these men than that of the more humble folk who turned out, time after time, to do battle for the honour of little Hambledon, the men who on practice days might expect to be paid "4/- if winners and 3/- if losers," provided always that they were on the field by midday.

Noah Mann, who, sad to tell, died at the age of thirty-three, thought nothing of jogging along twenty-seven miles on horseback from his Sussex village of Northchapel, where he was both shoemaker and innkeeper, and then covering the distance again the same evening. He would as willingly make the journey to attend the Tuesday practices as to compete in a match. But perhaps the trip never seemed irksome to Noah, for his agility on horseback appears to have been as remarkable as his play on the field. His arrival always caused something of a stir: no sooner was he seen in the distance, coming up towards the ground, than "one or more of his companions would throw down handkerchiefs, and these he would collect, stooping from his horse while it was going at full speed."[1]

[1] *The Cricketers of My Time.*

Then there was William Beldham ("Silver Billy"), father of thirty-nine children, it is said, and "the finest batter of his own, or perhaps of any age," who had learned his cunning from a gingerbread-baker at Farnham. There was David Harris too, a potter by trade and the best bowler of his time. "Woe to the man who did not get in to block them [the balls], for they had such a peculiar curl that they would grind his fingers against the bat." Many a time did Harris draw blood in this way. There were "Lumpy" Stevens, who liked to bowl downhill to increase the speed of his deliveries, and Thomas Brett, the Larwood of the eighteenth century. Nor must we forget Tom Sueter, England's first wicket-keeper; William Barber, who also was once landlord of the Bat and Ball, and who, among other things, "kept the Down in repair, collected empty bottles and returned them to Smith, the wine merchant"; William Hogsflesh; Richard Purchase, who with William Harding once made a first-wicket stand of 200; or John Small, as great a musician as cricketer.

Many were the victories little Hambledon won against All-England under the inspiring leadership of their "general," the immortal Richard Nyren. If the matches at home of necessity excited the most enthusiasm, there was usually a certain amount of laughter and merriment to be had as the players set off in their caravan for the away games. On one occasion the caravan itself provided the chief merriment by overturning in a country lane. All got—or were thrown—out, all save good-humoured Peter Stewart, nicknamed "Buck," who preferred to stay where he was, demanding that "one good turn deserved another." And "this repartee was admired for a week."

No one was ever bored at Hambledon: they were far too happy a crowd for that. The festivities seldom ended with the drawing of stumps. A concert at the Bat and Ball was considered the fitting conclusion to a day in the field. There was plenty of musical talent among the Hambledonians, who even boasted their own cricket song, especially written for them in 1767 by the Rev. Reynell Cotton. Fourteen verses there were—a good rollicking song, rising to a great crescendo for the last two verses:[1]

Then fill up your glass, he's the best who drinks most.
Here's the Hambledon Club!—who refuses the toast?
Let's join in the praise of the bat and the wicket,
And sing in full chorus the patrons of cricket.

[1] From *The Hambledon Cricket Chronicle.*

> And when the game's o'er, and our fate shall draw nigh,
> (For the heroes of cricket, like others, must die),
> Our bats we'll resign, neither troubled nor vex'd,
> And give up our wickets to those that come next.

Alas! by the end of the century those last lines were to come true. Twilight was falling o'er Hambledon; the wickets were soon to be given up. Broad-Halfpenny was to become meadowland once more, Windmill Down a fir plantation. The last entry in the minutes, that of September 21, 1796, records simply and pathetically, "No Gentlemen." The Marylebone Cricket Club—the great M.C.C.—had been founded, and the vast stream of traffic that for so long had climbed the hill leading out of Hambledon had changed its course. Lord's became its destination instead.

Ironically, it was certain of the Hambledonians themselves, led by Earl Winchilsea and the Hon. Charles Lennox, who were largely responsible for their own eclipse. The fact was that Earl Winchilsea, like most of the great cricket patrons of his time, had by no means confined his attentions to this one Hampshire village, but had played more or less wherever there was a suitable field. One of his favourite haunts was the White Conduit Fields, not far from the Artillery ground, where a number of the gentry had formed a club of their own. Here he met young Thomas Lord, a Yorkshireman of twenty-five whose family, owing to a mix-up in the Forty-five, had been forced to come south, and who had himself migrated to London. Impressed by his enthusiasm and ability, Earl Winchilsea at once gave him a job as a private coach. When, later, the ambitious Lord expressed a desire to rent a piece of ground a little to the north of the Marylebone Road the Earl and others immediately gave him their backing. Thus it was that in May 1787 the ground bearing his name was opened with a match between Middlesex and Essex, and the White Conduit Club became the M.C.C.

Thenceforward it was Lord's that attracted the pick of the cricketers. Even the Hambledonians began to transfer their affections. One after the other they set off on the road to London—John Wells, George Louch (gent), John Small, James Aylward, the brothers Tom and Henry Walker, William Fennex, the great William Beldham, to name but a few. Indeed, Fennex became so enthusiastic that he obtained the post of landlord of the Portman Arms in Marylebone, where he supplemented his living by employing men to smuggle tea. But then Fennex was really of Middlesex

FISHING BY THE LIGHT OF FLARES

The Sporting Magazine

ANGLING IN COMFORT

The Sporting Magazine

SKATING IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

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MARTHA GUNN, THE BRIGHTON "DIPPER," DIPPING A CHILD IN THE SEA

In Regency times even the most fashionable employed a dipper, including the Prince himself.

From a contemporary painting.

stock, and played for Hambledon only as a "given man." With the finest cricketers in the country now patronizing his ground, Thomas Lord, like Richard Nyren, left nothing to chance where the catering was concerned, and went to the extreme of buying an inn to provide the drink and refreshments.

With the arrival of Lord's cricket entered upon a new era in which clubs sprang into being far and wide. Well before the end of the eighteenth century there were the Montpelier at Walworth, the Thursday's Club at Marylebone, the Kennington, the Middlesex, and countless others. Even in the districts where there was no recognized club the inhabitants would now join forces to challenge some neighbouring town or village. Thus we read of the "gentlemen" of Tolleshunt Major competing against those of Tolleshunt Darcy; of Finchley and Hendon beating Whetstone and Totteridge on Barnet Common; of Stratford meeting Bow at West Ham, and being so exasperated at their defeat as to refuse to drink with their opponents. We read of matches between private teams, selected by two of the leading patrons, being played for one-thousand-guinea stakes on Dandelion Paddock, near Margate; of a side chosen by the Hambledonian R. Leigh, Esq., beating Sir Horace Mann's eleven by an innings and 98 runs; of "a grand alphabetical cricket match" between Earls Darnley and Winchilsea, when the former was to choose only players whose surnames began with one or other of the first eleven letters of the alphabet, while Earl Winchilsea was to select his from the last eleven.

Sometimes these matches would be single-wicket affairs, sometimes double. Even the number of players allowed to take part was not constant. Contests between single players were by no means uncommon, while games of two, three, or four a side had quite a following, Lord Frederick Beauclerk, a keen but irritable player, and Squire Osbaldeston, more famous as a huntsman, being particularly enthusiastic participants.

Nor was the technique by any means always orthodox. The Greenwich Pensioners, for instance, were wont to arrange a fixture between a team using only one arm and another relying on one leg. Yet such matches would be staged for stakes every bit as high.

The womenfolk too now loved cricket. The married women of Bury (Sussex) held frequent games against the spinsters and young maidens of that village, and were, in fact, "so famous at a cricket match" that they once offered to "play with any eleven in any village in their own county, for any sum." Nor were they alone in

the field: in the early years of the nineteenth century we read an interesting account of an "Amazonian" match between the heroines of Hampshire and those of Surrey in a field at Newington Green, Middlesex:

> The wickets were pitched at 11 o'clock. It [the match] was made by two Noblemen for five hundred guineas. The ground, which is spacious, was enlivened with marquees and booths, well supplied with gin, beer, and gingerbread. The performers in this contest were of all ages and sizes, from fourteen to sixty; the young had shawls, and the old, long cloaks. The Hampshire were distinguished by the colour of true blue, which was pinned in their bonnets in the shape of the Prince's plume. The Surrey was equally as smart; their colours were blue, surmounted with orange. . . .
>
> Very excellent play took place on Wednesday; one of the Hampshire lasses made forty-one innings before she was thrown out; at the conclusion of the day's sport the Hampshire lasses were eighty-one a-head—the unfavourableness of the weather prevented any more sport that day, though the ground was filled with spectators. On the following day the Surrey lasses kept the field with great success, and on Monday, being the last day to decide the contest, an unusual assemblage of vehicles of all descriptions surrounded the ground by eleven o'clock; tandems, dog-carts, hackney-coaches, etc., formed a complete ring; several handsome females, dressed in azure blue mantles, graced those vehicles. The Earl of Barrymore, in a single horse-chaise, was amongst the spectators. His little friend, who goes by the name of Tiger, was on his pony. At three o'clock, the match was won by the Hampshire lasses, who, not being willing to leave the field at so early an hour . . . they played a single game, in which they were also successful.

Cricket was now played universally—at the public schools no less than on the village greens—by all manner of people in all manner of ways, and for stakes varying from ten to a thousand guineas. Yet always Lord's was the chief attraction. All the principal clubs played there; dukes and earls gave it their patronage. And in 1805 Eton began her series of matches against Harrow.

But even at Lord's conditions were still far from ideal: there were not the pitches we know to-day. In an interview, recorded some sixty years later, John Bowyer, who played there for All-England in 1810, gives us an insight into the state of affairs in his time:

> It was no joke to play without pads and gloves on a bumpy down . . . for there were as many kinds of underhand bowling as there are now of round. One man would turn his wrist with his thumb right

out, another the reverse. One would run with his hand right up in the air and bring it down with a swing, like the fan of a windmill; and another . . . would send them in with his hand almost along the ground, and yet pitch a good length. . . .

The rough ground made the long hops so difficult. First you had to mind the shooter, and if the ball pitched short and rose she would be on your knuckles, and if you played her back point had a rare chance of taking her almost off the bat, if she popped up. And what was a man to do with a ball full pitch, all the way straight from the bowler's hand to the bails? One did not like to block it, and if you hit her you could only do it with a cross bat, and the chances were that she went up. . . .

We used to get our runs mostly by draws, little tips in the slips, and hard driving on or off.

Quite early in the nineteenth century Thomas Lord was to receive his first setback. Marylebone was fast becoming a built-up area, the value of land was rising, and the landlords decided to raise the rent when next the lease required renewing. Lord, refusing to pay the higher price, arranged for the entire turf to be lifted and carted to a new site at St John's Wood, and his original field grew into Dorset Square. Alas! scarcely had the turf been laid before Lord was forced to make a second move, when the Regent's Canal was designed to pass clean through the new field. Nothing daunted, Lord once more moved his turf—"the most-travelled grass in the city," the newspapers called it—to its present site.

But if the headquarters of cricket had at last found a permanent home, the cares of the M.C.C. were far from over. In 1825 Lord, discovering that his bank balance was rather smaller than he would choose, "virtually decided," as Mr Neville Cardus says,[1] "to exploit the ground as a building estate." Whereupon William Ward, a director of the Bank of England, who in 1820 had himself made the then record score of 278 at Lord's, bought the lease for £5000. But to add to the troubles, in the same year (1825) a mysterious fire completely destroyed the pavilion. The greatest loss, however, seems to have been not so much the pavilion as "a large and valuable stock of wine, the property of the subscribers." Still, Lord's survived.

At this point cricket underwent something of a revolution at the hands of a certain John Willes. So enthusiastic had he become about the game that he went so far as to rig up an old barn as a

[1] *English Cricket* (Collins, 1945).

practice-ground for the winter months, where, we are told,[1] he would spend hours batting against the bowling of his sister. His sister, however, by no means always stuck to the rules, and, instead of bowling the recognized underarm, would often raise her arm to her shoulder when making a delivery. John Willes found the new style extremely perplexing, yet considered it so great an improvement that he spent long hours practising the method himself.

Once he had bettered his sister's technique to his satisfaction, he decided to put the matter to a more serious test, and proceeded to introduce this new style to Lord's when opening the attack for Kent against the M.C.C. in 1822. As might be expected, he was promptly no-balled, but repeated the performance, not once, but several times. When the umpire continued to rule him out of order the exasperated Willes walked straight from the field, mounted his horse, and rode out of Lord's, declaring that cricket had seen the last of him.

Still, if Willes was to be seen no more, he had started a cricket revolution. Among the first to appreciate the new round-arm bowling were William Lillywhite and John Broadbridge. Lillywhite carried matters a stage further by raising his arm slightly above his shoulder, a practice which even Willes had never risked. In fact, his deeds of 1827 caused so great a sensation that bowling methods soon became the topic of the day. One critic at least went so far as to predict that if such methods were allowed there would be "no driving and no cutting to point or slip," while many openly called it dangerous. G. T. Knight, himself a member of the M.C.C., appears to have been almost alone in declaring that the real reason for such opposition was that the batsmen found themselves unable to make so many runs.

Yet Knight and his few followers eventually won the day: round-arm bowling was finally sanctioned in 1835. If Lillywhite, Broadbridge, and Knight were mainly responsible for bringing matters to a head, it was upon Alfred Mynn, a Kentish Yeoman, that all eyes were fixed once the new fashion had been accepted. "The first really great fast round-arm bowler (in a tall hat)," Mr Cardus has called him.

As might be expected, the new technique was not without its mishaps. Accidents were almost commonplace. Mynn himself was once so badly injured as to be confined to bed for a long period, in danger of losing his leg, before pads and, later, batting-gloves,

[1] *Cricket* (Badminton Library).

were worn to minimize the dangers. About this time the bat itself also assumed more modern proportions, although it was not until many years later that the sting experienced when making a hard drive was lessened by the introduction of the cane handle and rubber springing.

In the next three decades or so cricket made steady progress, with such men as Mynn, who once bowled 247 balls for only 3 runs, Lillywhite, William Clarke, and John Wisden, famous for his almanack, standing out among the bowlers, and Fuller Pilch reigning supreme in a list of batsmen that included, besides Mynn, Joseph Guy, E. G. Wenman, Felix, and, later, Hayward, George Parr, Daft, Carpenter, and Caffyn.

By the mid-century the game had become indisputably the most popular of all our sports and pastimes. The Varsity Match, begun in 1827 with a most disappointing draw, caused by bad weather, had been held annually ever since 1838, and had become like the Eton and Harrow match, one of the high lights of the sporting calendar.

Many noblemen too had taken to laying out private cricket-grounds on their country estates, and these noblemen, together with other amateurs, had joined forces to compete against the professionals in a series of matches at Lord's under the title of "Gentlemen *v.* Players." Nor was Lord's itself to remain quite so unique. The members of the old Montpelier Club had re-formed themselves into a county organization representing Surrey, and had rented a market garden from the Duchy of Cornwall, which they opened in 1844 as the Oval.

Then, in 1859, an English team, headed by George Parr, had crossed the Atlantic to win each of five matches in Canada and America.

Ever since the introduction of round-arm bowling play had become steadily more scientific. As the bowlers experimented with their twists, turns, and spins, and steadily quickened their pace, so the batsmen devised one new stroke after another with which to combat these new forms of delivery. So, too, fields were arranged with more purpose.

By the sixties, then, the popularity of cricket had become such that an enthusiastic writer in *Baily's Magazine of Sports*[1] was prompted to comment:

> Prince, peer, parson, peeler and peasant all participate in the game. It is professionally taught in schools. . . . The clergy award

[1] May 1864.

> it their support; nearly every shire in England has its county club. Heads of large mercantile firms shrewdly encourage cricket among their employees; factories turn out their elevens. The government patronise the game among their hard-working civil service men; and among the thews and sinnews of most large towns the Saturday afternoon during the season is now termed "the cricket afternoon."

In the 1860's also a further bowling controversy broke out. After an All-England XI had made the formidable total of 503 in a match against Surrey at the Oval in August 1862 Edgar Willsher, showing as little respect for law and etiquette as had John Willes, settled down to high-swinging overarm bowling. At this John Lillywhite, making his first appearance as umpire, cautioned him, before no-balling each of his subsequent deliveries. Whereupon Willsher, followed by the entire English team, with the exception of the captain, the Hon. C. G. Lyttelton, and E. Walker, walked off the field, refusing to return until it was time to draw stumps.

There followed something akin to a stampede, when more than five thousand angry spectators, protesting that they had been robbed of their money, stormed the pitch, and refused to leave until arrangements had been made for continuing the match on the following day. To end this ugly situation negotiations were opened on the spot, and Willsher was at last persuaded to apologize, but only on condition that he was allowed to continue with his methods. At this, however, Lillywhite decided that it was his turn to walk off, and he was replaced by George Street. But Willsher, like Willes, scored his point, with the result that round-arm bowling gradually gave way to overarm.

Lord's meanwhile was entering upon yet another crisis. In 1836 James Henry Dark had purchased the lease from William Ward, while the freehold had been bought in 1860 for £7000 by a man named Moses, who, it appears, was definitely out to make money. Consequently the M.C.C. found themselves in the extraordinary and unenviable position of being the controlling body of cricket without, however, possessing a ground which they could really call their own. All the principal matches might be played at Lord's, yet the M.C.C. were powerless to carry out even quite minor improvements without first obtaining the consent of their landlord.

Since such a position could no longer be tolerated, the M.C.C. decided in 1863 to sound both Dark—himself an enthusiastic patron of the club—and Moses on the question of selling out. While Moses indicated that he would be quite content to let at an

annual rent of £550—although, later, he was induced to sell at a profit of a mere £11,000—Dark agreed to part with his interest for a similar sum.

In the following April a meeting of members was held at Willes's Rooms under the presidency of Lord Suffield, then President of the M.C.C., and attended by the Earl of Sefton, the Earl of Aylesford, the Marquess of Ormonde, Lord Charles Russell, and Roger Kynaston, when it was agreed that in view of the fact that the value of land was constantly rising, negotiations should proceed, that subscriptions be raised, and that "the meeting be now adjourned till the anniversary dinner," due to take place a few weeks later.

Thus the M.C.C. became master within their own rights. Donations poured in from all over the world, especially from India; trustees were appointed to look after the financial side, with a committee to manage the life of the club. Improvements followed immediately. A large portion of the ground was returfed, and a flat-roofed pavilion built at a cost of £1000. One thing followed another, until gradually Lord's began to assume the shape and proportions we love so well to-day.

Play itself became more stringent in sympathy with the improved amenities. Whereas hitherto members had often been lax in their ways, now punctuality became the order of the day—punctuality over starting, lunching, and drawing stumps—while "that unpleasant sight (worthy only of the 'Hog and Swiggle' grounds) of players interrupting the cricket by walking off to liquour" also gradually became less apparent.

The scene was changing fast. Single-wicket, at which Mynn, Hayward, Carpenter, and many of the Hambledonians before them had shone, was now all but dead. Underarm bowling was a thing of the past, and even the round-arm style had been largely supplanted by overarm. Lord's had come into its own in a new light and with a renewed vigour.

And into this new environment walked a cricketer who was to outshine them all—the "Doctor," the "Old Man," the immortal W. G. Grace. Born at Downend, near Bristol, in 1848, it has been said that he had a bat in his hand before ever he could manage a knife and fork. Cricket undoubtedly ran in the Grace family. His father, the village doctor, was so passionately devoted to the game that he would sometimes steal out of the house at first light in order to get in some practice before surgery. W.G. and his brothers

were no less enthusiastic than their father. Indeed, E.M. had already made his mark as one of the leading bats of the day, while G.F. and Fred were never far behind. Even Mrs Grace possessed a knowledge and understanding of the game that were quite above the average for her sex.

In their Downend orchard, then, the Grace family would devote every available free moment—whenever the weather was suitable, and, doubtless, often when it was not—to practising bowling, batting, and catching. The ground may have been rough, the fruit-trees an encumbrance, and the pitch leaving much to be desired, but the Graces were not to be deterred.

It was in August 1862 when he was fourteen years of age that W.G. made his first public appearance, and from then until 1908 he was to dominate the scene. His first chance came at the age of sixteen, when he deputized for his brother E.M. (who was away in Australia) in a match at the Oval against the Gentlemen of Sussex. Batting first-wicket down he scored 170, and followed this up with a second innings of 56 not out. Young Grace at once became the talk of the day. Yet this was only a foretaste of things to come. Two years later he went close to beating the record of the great William Ward, when he scored no fewer than 224 not out for an All-England team against Surrey.

Then came the time for W.G. to follow a career. Like his father, he chose to go in for medicine, and the patrons of cricket feared that this already bearded youth might well be seen no more, or, at best, only spasmodically. Grace, however, decided otherwise, and actually played no fewer than 1388 innings, scoring 54,896 runs and taking 2864 wickets, before cricket had seen the last of him.

W.G. became the figurehead of cricket. Everything centred around him. Wherever "the Champion" was playing, there would the crowds go. It mattered not whether he was batting or bowling, although his batsmanship, of course, was always the greatest attraction, so long as they could but see him on the field. In Grace's reign Lord's, the Oval, and, indeed, cricket-grounds all over the country drew crowds never before dreamed of. To see him fielding was a thrill in itself, and in most matches he would be on the field in some capacity for most of the time. Once he was there from the beginning to the end of a match, carrying his bat in the first innings and remaining at the wicket in the second for just as long as was necessary to defeat his opponents.

Nor did "the Doctor" let age weary him. Even in his forty-seventh year he was still breaking records; in 1895 he achieved what seemed at the time to be the impossible by scoring a thousand runs in May. Not long afterwards he scored his hundredth century.

With W.G. at the wicket new tactics in bowling had of necessity to be tried out in the hope of removing the "Old Man's" bails. What had once been regarded as high scores became quite ordinary—except, of course, William Ward's, which was still a record—while the crowds became even denser. There were, of course, many other great cricketers in his time—R. A. H. Mitchell, A. N. Hornby, Arthur Shrewsbury, A. G. Steel, Daft, and Alfred Shaw, to name but a few. Yet Grace in his hey-day outshone them all, even though he was by no means always at the head of the batting averages.

It was while Grace was in his prime that the County Championships were inaugurated in 1873, Gloucestershire tying with Nottingham for first place. Though "the Doctor" held the stage, it is a strange fact that on only three occasions in the whole of the forty-six years up to 1908, when he finally laid down his bat, did his outstanding accomplishments carry Gloucestershire to the top of the championship table.

By the 1860's the spirit of cricket had infected other lands—India, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. In 1861 Australia requested us to send out a team to play a series of exhibition matches, in the hope of fostering interest there, and a Melbourne firm of merchants, Spiers and Pond, raised £7000 towards the travelling expenses. After a magnificent farewell dinner at the Bridge House Tavern a team, headed by H. H. Stephenson, set sail for Melbourne, where they were toasted in champagne and carried shoulder-high through the flag-bedecked streets of the city. When, on New Year's Day 1862, they commenced their series of matches it is recorded that as many as 25,000 people turned out to watch. Playing against sides sometimes double their number, and certainly always against odds, the English lost only two of their matches. Yet, although the results were nearly always a foregone conclusion, the tour proved sufficiently popular for a second team to set sail two years later under George Parr. This time the number of spectators attending the first match rose to 41,000 and the gate-money to £5000. Nine years later still W.G. himself took out yet a third side.

By now these exhibitions were having their effect. One or two of the English players had stayed behind to take up positions as coaches; enthusiasm was spreading throughout the length and breadth of the continent, with the standard of play improved accordingly.

In the season of 1876–77 James Lillywhite headed another eleven, when for the first time the "Aussies" met the English on level terms, and in March scored their first clear-cut victory by a margin of 45 runs. The following spring (1878) the Australians, paying their first visit to England, coming not as a Test team, but simply as a touring side, made cricket history by beating an M.C.C. eleven containing such names as Grace, Hornby, Webbe, Ridley, Shaw, Flowers, and Morley by the comfortable margin of nine wickets. It was a day not quickly forgotten, for few who assembled to watch the pick of the English players do battle had for one moment anticipated defeat. Yet Grace was caught off the second ball of the match, and Spofforth, a tall man with a fiery action, dumbfounded the crowds by taking no fewer than six M.C.C. wickets for but 4 runs in twenty-three balls.

Australia had at last proved herself the equal of England, and in doing so instilled an enthusiasm for Test Matches between the two countries such as has never waned. That enthusiasm was to be enhanced a hundredfold when, after suffering defeat in 1880 at the Oval in the first Test Match ever to be played on English soil, the Australians took their vengeance on their next visit, two years later, in a match that will ever remain famous. The scene once more was the Oval. The Australians had made 64 in their first innings, and England had replied with 101. Then came the rain. All through the night it deluged, until by next morning the pitch was little better than a quagmire, and the groundsman, Mr Cardus assures us, "was obliged to use a spade to clear away the mud" before play could be resumed. In such conditions the Australians had no alternative but to settle down to what is now termed 'stone-walling.' Even then their wickets fell like ninepins, leaving England only 85 for victory. Hornby, the English captain, was quickly dismissed, but, with Grace and the Yorkshireman George Ulyett at the wicket, the score slowly mounted, until at one stage England required but 20 runs with six wickets still to fall. The result seemed certain. But then Spofforth—"the Demon," they called him—got into his stride, and one after the other the English players were sent back to the pavilion. Mr Cardus recalls

that during the last half-hour the excitement was so intense that one spectator dropped down dead, while another gnawed large pieces out of his umbrella! Indeed, a man might have been excused for doing anything; Australia won by 7 runs. The match became the talk for days, weeks, and months. The Victorians shook their heads; the cricketers expressed disgust; the Press aired their views.

Next morning the following appeared in *The Sporting Times*:

> In affectionate remembrance of English Cricket, which died at the Oval on the 29th of August, 1882. Deeply lamented by a large circle of sorrowing friends and acquaintances. R.I.P. (*N.B.* The body will be cremated and the ashes taken to Australia.)

But English cricket had far from died. When, the following year, the Hon. Ivo Bligh (later Lord Darnley) crossed with his eleven to restore the good name of English cricket he returned with an unusual souvenir in the form of a small earthenware urn containing a heap of ashes that had been presented to him with all solemnity by the women of Melbourne—a token now in the possession of the M.C.C. As in the days of Hambledon, there was still humour in cricket. Thus was started the struggle for "the Ashes," a struggle that has been watched by hundreds of thousands of cricket-lovers with increasing ardour as the years roll on, and as great names have come forward to succeed one another in defending the honour of the Motherland—the very birthplace of cricket.

With the arrival of the Australians cricket reached its greatest glory, so that by the start of the twentieth century—when, incidentally, South Africa had also entered the field—we notice it becoming more scientific still under the influence of such masters as "Archie" Maclaren, C. B. Fry, Sir Pelham Warner (the great "Plum"), George Hirst, Tom Hayward, Tom Richardson, the Hon. F. S. Jackson, J. T. Hearne, J. T. Tyldesley, Gilbert Jessop, Wilfred Rhodes, and, of course, Ranjitsinhji—the inimitable "Ranji," cricket's conjurer.

And when these had passed their prime there was Jack Hobbs to take his stance at the wicket, so long defended by "the Doctor." Hobbs was to score more centuries even than Grace, and in his turn became the idol of the crowds. Yet who is to say that he was really the greater cricketer? His first-wicket partnerships with Sutcliffe against Australia provided brilliant examples of the mastery of the bat against the best bowling. But pitches had

become like billiard-tables by comparison with the rough-and-ready affairs that Grace had known. Then, too, W.G. was a bowler as well as a batsman, and was an amateur where Hobbs was a professional. It is invidious to make comparisons between the merits and demerits (some of Hobbs's achievements too have now been surpassed by those of Denis Compton) of the players of different ages; all we can say is that at no time in the history of cricket was scoring higher and faster, and batting more glorious to watch, than in the first decade or so of the present century. The Earl of Winchilsea himself would surely have rubbed his eyes at the sight of "Ranji" flashing the ball as if with Eastern magic to whichever corner of the field he wished; or of Fry and Maclaren taking the Gentlemen's score to 500 in a third-wicket partnership against the Players.

But the First World War was soon to cast its shadow over the cricket-field, so that on the return of peace we find, alas, a changing scene once more, an unenterprising age, with Hobbs, Sutcliffe, Tate, Larwood, Hammond, Hutton, Verity, and others appearing in turn as examples of the best in English cricket, as bright lights in an otherwise darkened atmosphere.

A second war has been fought since then, yet fundamentally cricket remains the same. The pace at Lord's may be slower than in the hey-day of "Plum" Warner, Maclaren, and Fry; drawn matches may tend to rob the spectators of the thrills and excitement experienced in the days when a man would go out for runs and prefer to risk defeat rather than face the possibility of reaching no decision at all. But this, surely, is but a passing phase. At heart it is still the same cricket—still the sport of rich and poor alike; of the village green no less than of Lord's; still so characteristically English.

CHAPTER IX

Down to the Water

If cricket was by far the most important legacy of the Georgian age, certain river sports also acquired rather more meaning by the last years of this period. While squire and peasant met in common accord on the cricket-field, up at the universities and at such public schools as were conveniently situated by a river many preferred to turn their attention to rowing.

Ever since Thomas Doggett had instituted his "coat and badge" race, and the Thames Watermen had held their regatta of 1775, rowing had slowly acquired higher status. It was quite a time before the gentry ceased to consider it beneath their dignity to take up the oars themselves, but as the skill of the professionals developed with practice and watermen from all over the country began to challenge one another to matches of £200 or more a side, and to institute regattas, they could no longer abstain from following their example.

Details of the early start of amateur rowing are but fragmentary. All we know for certain is that Eton had its "Captain of Boats" by 1812, that Westminster was maintaining a six-oared craft in the following year, and that no less than three amateur boating-clubs —the Star, the Arrow, and the Shark—had flourished in London in still earlier years. Old diaries tell, too, of students, wearing caps with tassels (a fashion that later gave way to high hats), rowing on the Isis at Oxford in eight-oared boats, and speak of Brasenose becoming "Head of the River" after defeating Jesus in the year of Waterloo. There are references in 1816 to a boat-club at the Temple, and it appears that about this time Eton challenged Westminster to a race from Westminster to Kew Bridge, but that the event was banned by one of the headmasters. We read, moreover, of men, after the style of the pedestrians, covering incredibly long distances in the most cumbersome of boats in races against time.

Though it would appear from these small fragments of information that the gentry took to rowing somewhere about the beginning

of the nineteenth century, it is not until the 1820's, when 'bumping' races were substituted for straight contests on rivers that proved too narrow for the boats to be lined up abreast, that the sport took on anything approaching organized form. Such races were conducted in a remarkable fashion, and proved popular on Oxford's narrow Isis:

> All the boats were shut together in the lock at Iffley, and on the gates being opened the head boat was pushed out in the following way. There was a long plank or "gang-board" down the centre of the boat, on either side of which the men sat. Stroke, standing in the bows, put his oar or a boat-hook against the lock gate, and ran down the gang-board until he arrived at his own seat, when he sat down and began to row. The other boats in succession scrambled out of the lock in the same way.[1]

Much depended upon the speed with which the stroke could get into position, for, as to-day, the boats then proceeded down the river in line. By bumping the boat in front a crew gained the right to exchange places with it in the following heat, and the winner of the final heat became "Head of the River" for the year. Although few of the colleges had taken to boating, this had already become so cherished an honour that the question of who occupied the seats in the boats appears to have been of secondary importance so long as the crews were strong. In 1824, for instance, Brasenose sought the aid not only of a man from Worcester College, but also of a professional waterman, whom, doubtless, they paid handsomely for his services. Such a farcical practice was obviated in the following year, however, when a ban was imposed on the inclusion of professionals. At the same time the system of starting was altered. Instead of the usual wild scramble to be off, the boats were now placed at posts a hundred yards apart, and the race commenced by the lock-keeper firing a pistol.

Soon after this Cambridge, who were equally handicapped by the narrowness of the Cam, also introduced a system of bumping races. Here the undergraduates treated the whole matter so seriously that the Monarch Boat Club, formed by Trinity College, went so far as to impose a system of fines on any who offended against their rowing code. On no account was anyone to absent himself without leaving a deputy oar, speak or give orders "on a racing day or any other day after silence had been called,"[2] or

[1] *Rowing* (Badminton Library). [2] *Encyclopædia of Sport.*

neglect to wear the recognized uniform. Even the unfortunate treasurer was to be "chastised twice a week" if he was unlucky enough to get into a muddle with his books.

In 1829, when rowing had become firmly established at both universities, Charles Wordsworth, of Christ Church, Oxford, and a Cambridge friend of his named Merivale suggested that the two should compete against each other in eight-oared boats on some neutral river, preferably within easy reach of London, later that summer.

By no means every one took kindly to the idea, but eventually it was decided to adopt the scheme. Hours before the crews were due to meet at Hambleden lock on that June evening of 1829 the critics were dumbfounded. Henley witnessed a scene unique in her history, with people arriving from far and wide in such numbers that "every inn was crammed to excess and horses stabled in the streets for want of space."[1]

A reporter of *The Sporting Magazine* describes how the day "was ushered in by the ringing of bells, which continued throughout the day with little or no intermission." Soon after one o'clock, he tells us,

> the town and all the roads leading to it were thronged with pedestrians, horsemen, and vehicles of all descriptions, from the bang-up down to the donkey cart containing the humble cottager and his family; yet the feelings of anxiety for the result of the match appear as powerfully depicted on the countenances of the latter as upon the faces of the more noble owner of the first-named equipage.

To him it seemed that there must be some twenty thousand people on the river-banks.

While the Oxford crew, wearing blue-and-white jerseys, canvas trousers, and black straw hats, turned out in a green boat, the Cambridge men sported a pink boat, some two feet longer in the keel than their opponents', and wore pink sashes to match.

Shortly after 7 P.M. the Oxford boat was launched and taken to the thatched cottage above the first lock, which was the agreed starting-point. The Cambridge crew, accompanied by London, Eton, and Oxford cutters, followed soon after. To the majority the Oxonians provided the more impressive turn-out, and the majority proved correct. After gaining an early lead at the second starting (the first having ended in a foul) Oxford proved the comparatively easy winners of the first of a series of races that have

[1] Sir Charles Mallet, *A History of the University of Oxford* (Methuen, 1924).

long since ranked among the most popular events of the sporting world. Though for the vast crowds assembled on the river-bank, as for the crews themselves, this was a memorable occasion which all enjoyed to the full, seven years were to pass before a second Varsity Boat Race was organized. Not until 1856 did this outstandingly popular spectacle become an annual event.

For the second of these races the course chosen was from Westminster to Putney, and there is a good story of how Cambridge came to choose her colours. The crowds were as dense as before, the excitement perhaps greater. Starting-time was approaching, and the Cantabs were in the act of getting out their boat when one of their number chanced to remark that they carried no colours in their bows. Heated discussion ensued, since this was deemed an unlucky portent, when a supporter, a certain R. M. Phillips, who, on hearing of the trouble, had quietly slipped away to a near-by shop, in company with an old Etonian, was seen running back waving a piece of light-blue ribbon. When the Cambridge crew went on to defeat Oxford by as much as one minute all agreed that they should adopt light blue as their permanent rowing colours.

If that race was historic in the matter of colours, those of 1845 and 1846 were notable in two other respects. By 1845 the volume of traffic around Westminster had become so dense that it was decided to row a new course from Putney to Mortlake instead, while the following year saw the first appearance of out-rigged boats.

Once the Boat Race became an annual event of the Easter vacation, the crowds that thronged the river-banks were almost outrivalled by those on the water itself. Indeed, a writer in *Baily's Magazine of Sports*, describing the scene at the Boat Race of 1864, tells us:

> The river itself on such an occasion was a highway. Every conceivable craft sought refuge on the bosom of the Thames. There were all the rowing-clubs in England, and the professional talent of three kingdoms was represented. There were washing-tubs with funnels and Lord Mayor's barges cheek by jowl; there were colliers and yachts, funnies and wherries, and, as a facetious friend observed, some very funny wherries indeed. Above, towering in their pride and might, were one-and-twenty steamers—huge, noisy, lumbering affairs, prepared to run down or into anything; and there was the *George Peabody*, which hoisted the Royal Standard and carried our gallant Prince of Wales.

AN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY COURSING MEETING

The Sporting Magazine

RIDING IN ROTTEN ROW IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Sporting Magazine

SHOOTING WITH AN EARLY GUN

The Sporting Magazine

PUNT-GUNNING

The Sporting Magazine

These steamers, it seems, were standing by expressly to provide an unpleasant swell at a critical moment should the wrong boat be in the lead. For betting on the Boat Race, as on anything else, was rife:

> There's the fast young curate who lays 6–4 in shillings, and the city man who does it in pounds; and that pretty girl peeping over the garden wall, with the dark blue snood, and the right colour in her bonnet and in her eyes, who does it in kisses; there are the masters from schools, looking over exercises in the moments of their leisure, for the sake of this one day's holiday, which they never miss.

Every one who could possibly get away now made the journey to the Thames, no matter what the weather or how far they had to travel. So fashionable had the Boat Race become that four years later another writer in the same magazine was prompted to describe it in the following glowing terms:

> There is no scene so thoroughly English as that which the banks of the Thames present on the morning of the University Boat Race. The excited, eager crowds which line the whole distance of the course, the eccentric fleet of steamboats, which seemingly defy all order and regulation, and the crowd of horsemen, good, bad, and indifferent, who endeavour to fight their way along the towpath; there is no other country that can boast of such sights as these; for, be it remembered, this is no pleasant picnic under a summer sky, such as to the many constitutes their whole pleasure in the uproarious Derby fair on Epsom Downs, or on the more decorous and fashionable gala days of Ascot and Goodwood. The pitiless east wind may ruffle the bosom of our mighty father of waters, yet not the less does the fairest bevy of beauty in the world brave its cold kiss.

Such was the scene at the Boat Race for years to come. Many close races were rowed; great fortunes hinged upon the results. The year 1859 was memorable for the Cambridge boat sinking in the shocking weather conditions, and 1860 for the incredibly slow time recorded, while in 1873 sliding seats made their first appearance. In 1877 an altogether excellent race ended in the first dead-heat, and the 1886 race was remarkable for the superb steering of each boat when the two crews found themselves compelled to row dead level, with but a few inches to spare, through the temporary archway of the damaged Hammersmith Bridge, previous trials having suggested that such a feat was impossible.

As decade follows decade we notice the boats gradually assuming a lighter and more graceful shape; we bid farewell to the

horses on the towpath, and watch with relief the disappearance of the steamers and other interfering craft with the introduction of the Thames Conservancy Acts compelling the closing of Putney Bridge to all traffic for about an hour before the race. We witness many changes of fashion, yet at heart it remains to this day the same Boat Race, attracting much the same crowds. The river had come into its own, and this was its crowning glory.

The Boat Race was not, however, the only event of interest, any more than did Oxford and Cambridge provide the only rowing-clubs. Many public schools besides Eton and Westminster, from whom the universities drew their finest oars, had by now formed clubs of their own—for example, Radley, Shrewsbury, Cheltenham, Winchester, and Bedford. In London and in the provinces similar organizations were coming into being. When, about 1820, the old Star and Arrow clubs finally petered out a rather more progressive concern emerged from their ruins in the form of the Leander Club. A somewhat exclusive body, confined for some years to only twenty-five members, who would "meet at Westminster once or twice a week, and row to Putney or Greenwich, and take dinner together,"[1] they proved themselves capable of defeating Oxford as early as 1831, and Cambridge in 1841. A year before Leander's Oxford victory a sculler's race—the Wingfield Sculls—was started as an annual contest from Westminster to Putney,[2] in which each entry would contribute five pounds, and the winner take the pool.

In face of this great progress the authorities at Henley, where the innkeepers and tradesmen had done extremely well out of the first Varsity Boat Race, decided in 1839 to establish a permanent regatta, which, so the resolution went, "would not only be productive of the most beneficial results to the Town of Henley, but, from its peculiar attractions, would also be some source of amusement and gratification to the neighbourhood and the public in general." Following a meeting under the chairmanship of Thomas Stonor, a number of stewards and a regatta committee of fourteen were appointed, a subscription was raised to provide two cups—one open to Henley amateurs in four-oared boats and the other for all amateurs in eight-oared craft—and, after consultations with boat-builders and certain members of the Leander Club, a complete set of rules was drawn up and published.

[1] *Boating* (Badminton Library).

[2] From 1849 to 1861 the course was from Putney to Kew, since when the race has been rowed from Putney to Mortlake.

On June 14 the first of these regattas was heralded with a pageantry even exceeding that at the first Varsity Boat Race. Special stands were erected on the river-banks, and so dense were the crowds that for reasons of safety it was requested that only the umpire should follow the race on horseback. Church-bells peeled throughout the day; pistols were fired on every conceivable occasion and, it seems, from every possible angle along the course; while from the water itself, where barges, bedecked with flags, carried further sightseers, two bands provided suitable music. The competitors too added gaiety to the scene by turning out in multi-coloured garments, brightened still further by gaudy rosettes of crimson, yellow, blue, green, purple—every shade of colour—and by caps with gold or silver tassels.

While Trinity College, Cambridge, beat the Oxford Etonians for the Grand Challenge Cup, the Wave Club won the local event—the Town Cup—from the Albion Club. But probably few of the great crowd cared very much who won. It was just a grand day, a day to be repeated. The hopes of the authorities had been realized, and Henley Regatta became year by year more fashionable and wider in scope. In 1840 the meeting was extended to two days, and a new event, the District Challenge Cup, was included for the benefit of clubs from Maidenhead, Marlow, Reading, Wallingford, and Henley. Many new contests were to find their way into the programme in the next quarter of a century or so—the Stewards' Challenge Cup (1841), the Diamond Sculls (1844), the Ladies' Challenge Plate and the Silver Wherries (later changed to Silver Goblets) (1845), the Visitors' Challenge Cup (1847), the Wyfold Challenge Cup (1855),[1] and the Thames Challenge Cup (1868).

Great champions were to leave their names in the history of rowing at Henley—A. A. Casamajor, who won both the Diamond Sculls and the Silver Goblets four times and the Wingfield on six occasions; Francis and Herbert Playford; the remarkable Nickalls brothers, Vivian and Guy, the latter of whom, besides rowing for Oxford on no fewer than five occasions, succeeded in winning the Diamond five, the Silver Goblets six, and the Wingfield four times—to name but a few.

And, as we near the end of the century, we greet the champions from other lands as well—from France, Germany, Holland, and as

[1] Though this event was established in 1855, a trophy, known as the Wyfold Cup, was awarded in 1847 to the best crew entered for the Grand Challenge Cup.

far off as America and Canada. Indeed, so fashionable had Henley become by 1886 that alterations had to be made to the course and the whole regatta extended to three days.

Still, the passage to popularity of this little Oxfordshire riverside town had not been as free of worry as might appear. By 1850 rowing in London had reached such a low ebb that membership of such clubs as the Leander, the Argonaut, Wandle, St George's, and the Thames had fallen to alarmingly low figures, while the few members left became in the main extremely lethargic. Though they would enter for Henley if they remembered to do so, seldom did any of them win. Victory became almost entirely the prerogative of the college crews. Happily, in the spring of 1856, just when matters were at their worst, certain patrons of the Argonaut Club, led by Francis and Herbert Playford, Casamajor, J. Paine, and J. Nottidge, gathered together some of the more enthusiastic members of these London clubs and founded an entirely fresh organization under the name of the London Rowing Club.

From that day onward rowing gathered fresh impetus. Peopled only by energetic oarsmen, the "London" set an example which imbued others with a fresh vigour. The Leander itself was not long in completely reorganizing, to become, eventually, an even larger club than the "London," while many other clubs, such as the Thames Rowing Club (not to be confused with the original Thames Club), the Oscillators, the Molesey Boat Club, and the Kingston, gave equal cause for recognition. Competition grew keener year by year. Henley itself, although continuing to reign supreme, was not to be entirely unrivalled as such regattas as the Metropolitan and those at Barnes, Mortlake, Kingston, and Walton assumed a new importance.

More and more foreign countries began to challenge the English crews, and this factor drove the "London," who had already been challenged twice, to take a remarkable step. Fearing that the day might dawn when her crew would not be sufficiently strong to meet such a challenge, the "London" approached the "Thames" in 1879 with the suggestion that they and the other clubs of the Metropolis should provide a combined crew to combat future threats of foreign domination. And so it was that, out of patriotic motives, the Metropolitan Rowing Association was formed, which, as the Amateur Rowing Association, was later to become the controlling body.

Rowing was not the only water sport to attract Georgian Society. Ever since the formation of the Cumberland Fleet, sailing had steadily gained such a hold that even Mr Smith's tea-gardens on the Surrey side of Vauxhall Bridge, where the gallant captains had dined and wined together at the end of their historic race, had been renamed Cumberland Gardens in their honour.

The spirit of pageantry engendered by the sailor Duke was not forgotten. Besides sailing and racing together, the yachtsmen were at pains never to miss any opportunity of displaying their skill in carrying out full-scale manœuvres whenever occasion justified them. Any anniversary afforded such an opportunity. The King's (George III's) birthday was invariably celebrated on the grand scale, and in 1793 members went so far as to devise a special set of signals in order that the Commodore might manœuvre his vessels as a fleet of men-of-war.

This was not so much a question of showing off as of patriotism. Napoleon was at large; England was constantly at war; privateering was rife. Thus, just as the archers of the Middle Ages had rallied to make the country secure in their time, so now those who took to sailing hoped to provide a formidable second line of defence should the country's danger increase. It was the same old story. In time of peace these sportsmen would enjoy their races, pageants, and manœuvres to the full. Yet when war broke out they would answer the call as readily as did the yachtsmen and owners of pleasure craft of our time when they made their way in the "little ships" down England's waterways and into the Channel in the "darkest hours" of the Second World War.

These early yachtsmen were never content with simply sailing on the rivers, but from time to time obtained the King's (later the Regent's) consent to carrying out full-scale exercises at sea in co-operation with ships of the Royal Navy. At such times the strictest discipline would be observed, and from an account in *The Hampshire Telegraph*[1] it would seem that on Lord Yarborough's yacht *The Falcon* matters were conducted in so rigid a fashion that the young enthusiasts willingly signed a declaration, before embarking, approving of the system of flogging and agreeing to undergo the experiment in the event of their own misconduct.

In face of so manly a spirit yachting acquired considerable prestige at the turn of the eighteenth century. In 1781 the Duke of Cumberland made an encouraging move in the presentation of

[1] August 5, 1826.

a silver-gilt cup for a race in which not only the members of the Cumberland Fleet, but also the proprietors of pleasure sailing-boats anywhere within the British Dominions, might compete. Since this was the first open race of the kind, the event drew the crowds in their thousands. We can picture the gaiety and the chatter; hear the music and the bells. It was the Boat Race or Henley all over again. A yachting vogue had now begun; private races in settlement of wagers became ever more common, while the pageantry and prizes grew in magnificence.

In 1786 one Jonathan Tyars took over the proprietorship of the Vauxhall Gardens, and, to celebrate the event—and, incidentally, the jubilee of the gardens—elected to offer a silver cup for an annual championship of the Cumberland Fleet and a wherry for a race among the Thames Watermen. A few years later sailing on the Thames became a true ceremony of the water, when the management at Vauxhall hit upon the novel idea of sending a queer sort of vehicle, elaborately bedecked, on to the river to accompany the races. Drawn by tritons and propelled by invisible oars, it carried not only bands of music, but Father Thames himself, complete with his retinue of river-gods.[1] Further prizes were frequently being added, while in 1809 another gardens, first called the Minor Vauxhall, but soon renamed the New Ranelagh, came into being to add its patronage to that already given by the older centre.

By the time of the Prince Regent's accession sailing had been shorn of its patriotic element and had been transformed into a sport pure and simple. In 1823 the Cumberland decided to celebrate the third anniversary of the accession by the promotion of a new race from Blackwall to Coal House Point, near Gravesend, and back again. Every description of sailing-vessel and boat lined the course. About ten o'clock "several steam vessels rode majestically off the stairs, crowded with company," and little more than an hour later the race began "amidst the thunder of cannon and the loud cheering of all within sight."

The ceremonies did not end with the race. Under the pretext of presenting the trophy to the winner, Captain George Keen, the members of the Cumberland Fleet met a few days later at the Ship Tavern off Tower Street. And then it was that they decided to change their name to His Majesty's Coronation Fleet, adopting at the same time as their burgee a white flag surrounded by a crimson

[1] *Yachting* (Badminton Library).

border and bearing a crown with the letters "G.R.IV" below it and the words "Coronation Fleet" in the fly.

Under this new name they staged their first race in July of the same year, and in doing so made sailing history of an unusual nature. After Captain Brocklebank had proved victorious in the *St George* Captain Bettsworth, whose *Spitfire* was second, lodged a complaint that, contrary to the sailing articles, Brocklebank had allowed two men, instead of only one, to steer his craft. It was a bad start for what was, at any rate by name, a new society, and on August 6 the members met once more at the Ship determined to thrash matters out. There seems little doubt that Bettsworth's complaint was justified, and after he had produced his witnesses it was decided, by a majority vote, to get over the difficulty by resailing the race on the following Monday. Next day, however, the Commodore, Edward Nettleford, received a further protest from other members, calling for a second meeting on the grounds that Brocklebank had not been present to state his case before the vote was taken.

By now the members were divided into two camps, and on August 8 those who had cast the vote met yet again, this time warning the Commodore of their determination to refrain from entering any further club races should their resolution be rescinded. When their warning was ignored and the resolution rescinded these members carried out their threat. Within less than a week they met at the White Horse Tavern, Friday Street, to form the Thames Yacht Club, and in September were staging their first race along the old Cumberland course, when, appropriately, Bettsworth himself carried off the twenty-five-guinea cup.

The remaining members of the Coronation Fleet continued to hold together for a time, and in 1824 instituted a rather novel sailing-race for the benefit of poor fishermen of the Thames and Medway, in which no fewer than thirty-two "Peter-boats" took part.

By 1827 the Duke of Clarence had given his patronage to the Thames Yacht Club, but when, in the following year, the club refused to arrange contests between the smaller craft a further rift occurred, with certain members breaking away to form the Clarence Yacht Club. The "Thames," however, was by now well established, and, on their patron ascending the throne as William IV in 1830, became the Royal Thames Yacht Club, which, in a matter of a few months, entirely absorbed the Coronation Fleet.

Meanwhile yachting was also gaining a hold down on the Solent, where since the early years of the nineteenth century it had become increasingly fashionable for the *élite* of Georgian Society to spend a few of the summer weeks at Cowes. As might be expected, these "fashionables" were soon holding impromptu races, which gradually took the form of a regatta. And they would round off the day in the usual style with a first-rate dinner at one of the island's smart hotels. At one of these dinners—in 1812—these enthusiasts decided to band together as a society, which, probably for lack of a better name, they called simply the Yacht Club. Their object was "to associate pleasure with profit, and to establish on a patriotic basis, a national and splendid festival, worthy of the brightest age of England."[1] Since they were not only set on furthering the cause of sailing, but were equally anxious to improve the standard of yacht construction, and since many were privileged to manœuvre with ships of the Royal Navy, they were fortunate in receiving every encouragement from both the Admiralty and the King. Indeed, we are told[2] that no fewer than thirteen peers and four knights were among the assembly who gathered at the Thatched House Tavern in St James's Street, London, when they met under the chairmanship of Lord Grantham to establish formally their club in the year of Waterloo. From the outset entry into this new society was exclusive. Only those owning a vessel not under ten tons were eligible for membership, while ten members were required to ballot for each new applicant. Furthermore, an election had to be carried almost unanimously, two black balls being sufficient to bar entry. Naval officers, however, were admitted as honorary members without such close scrutiny.

From the outset the society were out to impress the authorities with the scope of private enterprise, and in 1817 they boasted the Prince Regent and, soon afterwards, the Dukes of Clarence and Gloucester among their members. When the Regent became King the club was soon privileged to use the royal prefix.

Two years after this, we learn,[3] women began to take an active part in the sport, and regular meetings were organized at Cowes for the first and third Mondays of each month, when, weather permitting, a course would be held under the Commodore.

By 1825, when these sportsmen obtained their first real clubhouse, the Royal Yacht Club had become the virtual controlling authority, to whom all would turn for a ruling in times of dispute.

[1] *The Sporting Magazine.* [2] *Yachting* (Badminton Library). [3] *Encyclopædia of Sport.*

And this position, though unofficial, was strengthened considerably when the Admiralty granted them the right to fly the White Ensign, and again in 1833 when William IV, no less enthusiastic than George IV, decided to change the name to the Royal Yacht Squadron, having previously presented the club with an annual challenge cup valued at a hundred guineas. It was in every way the aristocratic head of an aristocratic sport, and so it has remained to this day, with Queen Victoria, Edward VII, George V, Edward VIII, and George VI each in turn granting it their patronage.

By the middle of the nineteenth century sailing had acquired a popularity second only to rowing where the water was concerned. Yacht-clubs had sprung up in most of the principal ports, as well as at many of the larger riverside towns along our inland waterways. Already there were the Royal Western at Plymouth, the Royal Victoria at Ryde, the Royal Mersey at Liverpool, the London (later to be known as the Royal London), and within a short period these were to be joined by others at Portsmouth, Southsea, Dover, Bristol, Dartmouth, Harwich, Lowestoft, and elsewhere. As the regattas grew more magnificent the science of yacht construction progressed in sympathy.

Even Queen Victoria, who was never over-enthusiastic about sport, was stirred to present an annual cup to the Royal Yacht Squadron, and a second trophy for a race between the various other clubs, a trophy which her son won no fewer than four times in his famous cutter *Britannia*, while also carrying off the Squadron's Cup on a number of occasions.

In the same year (1851) the Royal Yacht Squadron instituted a novel race round the Isle of Wight, in which an American schooner, *America*, the property of J. C. Stevens, defeated an English cutter, *Aurora*, owned by J. Le Marchant. Although it is some nineteen years before we hear of a similar race, this was the start of the famous *America's* Cup, the cup that was to bring forth the great tussles between the two *Valkyries* of Lord Dunraven and the American cutters *Vigilant* and *Defender*, and that was later to see the great efforts of Sir Thomas Lipton, spread over some thirty-one years from 1899, to win success in each of his five *Shamrocks*, and, after him, of T. O. M. Sopwith, with his famous *Endeavours*.

In face of these and other developments, the Royal Yacht Squadron set a magnanimous example by deciding to forgo her

position as *ex officio* leaders of the yachting world, and by approaching other clubs with a view to framing definite racing rules. As a result of this move the Yacht Racing Association came into being in 1875. When this association called an International Conference in London during the reign of Edward VII, under the presidency of the Prince of Wales (later George V), for the purpose of preparing a universal method of measuring and finding the tonnage of a vessel, yachting, with all its many class races, took on much the form we know to-day.

Meanwhile this steady advancement in both rowing and sailing was having a quite natural effect on a third water sport. With so many people now moving about the water at such alarming speeds, it became more than ever important that they should take up swimming. Eton had already made it a condition that every boy must first pass a swimming test before taking to the boats, and by about the middle of the nineteenth century it became increasingly fashionable for oarsmen everywhere to devote considerable time to practising the art. Riverside and seaside swimming-clubs were formed in many parts of the country, and these clubs soon enjoyed widespread popularity. The proprietors did all they could to provide attractions, and in 1864 we hear of no fewer than ninety people competing for a fifteen-guinea cup in a race from the Doves at Hammersmith to Putney, while on Christmas morning of the same year another club was able to arrange a series of handicap races on the Serpentine, in Hyde Park.

Nor was it only in the rivers and sea that people now swam. As early as 1828 the first public baths had been opened at Liverpool. Though this was no more than a local venture, by September 1846 Sir W. Magnay, one-time Lord Mayor of London, together with Sir Henry Dukenfield, had been instrumental in getting a Bill through Parliament for the purpose of "promoting the establishment of Baths and Wash-houses for the Labouring Classes."[1] Three years later the first of these new baths was opened in Leicester Square, soon to be followed by others at Westminster, Greenwich, Poplar, Hanover Square, Bloomsbury and Bermondsey. The idea met with such instant success that it was not very long before nearly every sizable town in the country began planning similar facilities for "the great unwashed," facilities that included, besides shower- and slipper-baths and wash-houses, both open-air and covered-in swimming-baths. Thousands of people

[1] *Swimming* (Badminton Library).

now braved the water for the first time in their lives; in the London area alone as many as 800,000, it is said, took advantage of the opportunity within the first few years of the passing of the Act. Since the greater percentage of these, once they had survived the first shock, found the exercise to their liking, swimming soon became a sport of the masses.

Many took so kindly to the pursuit that they even chose to earn their living at it. Indeed, so many entered the field of professionalism that in January 1869 the various amateur clubs in the London district met at the German Gymnasium at King's Cross to form a joint organization called the Associated Metropolitan Swimming Clubs, which in 1886 gave place to the Amateur Swimming Association. Rules were now drafted defining the position of an amateur, a mile championship race from Putney to Hammersmith was instituted, and within a few years clubs from all over the country had applied for affiliation to this new association. For all that, affairs remained far from orderly. The rules were unsound, finances low. An amateur, for instance, was not debarred from competing against a professional "for honour or for money," while, on the financial side, the story goes that Horace Davenport once found himself in the strange position of having more or less to buy his own trophy after he had won the "mile" for the third time in 1876!

It was not until the Amateur Swimming Association finally came into being that conditions improved in these respects. New and more stringent rules were drafted, and the Association virtually took over control of every amateur meeting in the country. Three years later open betting at swimming-races was abolished, and after a stormy fortnight, in which the northern clubs protested against the high-handed attitude of the new organization and threatened to break away, the Association divided into three divisions for the purpose of promoting good swimming in the North, the Midlands, and the South respectively.

Meanwhile, in August 1875, a somewhat sensational event had occurred that was to bring swimming into the limelight for weeks to come. A certain Captain Webb, who hailed from Shropshire, had succeeded, on his second attempt, in swimming, without any artificial aid, from Dover to Calais in 21 hours 45 minutes. The excitement was great. True, the American Captain Boyton had already swum the Channel, but he had worn a patent dress to aid him. Webb was a hero; indeed, to many his achievement must

have appeared wellnigh incredible, seeing that down at the seaside people were still braving the waves from machines.

Even then, however, they were becoming less timorous. Before Webb's sensational performance they had begun to play ball in the water. The London Swimming Association, as the Metropolitan organization was now called, had appointed a committee in 1870 to draft a code of rules for a new game, to be known, variously, as "football in the water," "water baseball," and "aquatic hand-ball."

While, more often than not, three players would constitute a team, it seems that there was nothing to prevent any number from competing. In one of a series of matches staged off the pier by the Bournemouth Premier Rowing Club some fourteen players took part. On this occasion, we are told,[1] four flags, moored fifty yards apart to the west of the pier, served as the goals, and the competitors set to work with such enthusiasm that it was not long before the ball, presumably the bladder of a football, burst. Not that anybody seems to have been greatly perturbed: the game continued with the tattered remains. Technique appears to have varied, for a week later twelve members of this same club turned out in rowing-galleys to play between goals laid out in the form of an oblong, some sixty yards by forty yards. The ball was placed in the centre between the teams, whereupon, at a given signal, "both crews sprang with commendable agility from their galleys and struck out for the ball of contention." Again the ball burst, but this time the game had to be suspended.

In the swimming-baths the game was played with a small india-rubber ball, four or five inches in diameter, while the two ends of the bath served as goals. To score a goal, we are told,[2] a player had to place the ball, by means of both hands, on the end of the bath, while the goalkeeper would almost throttle him under water or jump bodily on to him in his determination to frustrate him. A favourite dodge was for a forward to swim under water with the ball tucked into his pants.

In the 1880's aquatic football assumed more and more the proportions of water-polo, when, largely through the suggestion of Harry Fisk, secretary of the Portsmouth Swimming Club, a national open-air contest was arranged between an All-England team and the Birmingham Leander Club.

Special rules, designed to do away with the existing rough-and-

[1] *Swimming* (Badminton Library). [2] *Ibid.*

ready tactics, were drawn up for the occasion, and were closely studied. In 1884 a number of swimming-clubs, meeting at Burton-on-Trent, formed a Swimming and Aquatic Football Association for the Midlands, and in the following year the Metropolitan clubs took on the rôle of governing body and issued yet another set of rules. Three years later came the introduction of standard goal-posts and the start of inter-club championships. Experience of these revealed a need for further modifications in the rules. As a result, a "committee of experts" was at once set up, and this committee, after obtaining the views of all the leading clubs in the country, eventually produced yet another code, which at last met with universal approval.

Water-polo now acquired a popularity that sometimes even surpassed that of swimming. In 1889 league matches were started in London, and on September 18 of the same year we hear of Surrey and Middlesex competing against each other as part of the annual gala of the Tadpole Club, held in the latter's baths at Kensington. Not long after we hear, too, of the formation of county associations, and witness the leading players of Scotland making their way to Kensington to give the pick of the English players a sound beating by four goals to love. This encounter revealed further discrepancies in the rules. The Scots, by nature of their slightly different code, showed themselves less prone to wasting time with ducking and with tackling their opponents, and rather more anxious to get on to the ball. Though there was no great divergence between the two codes, after England had suffered her second defeat at the hands of the Scots delegates from the two countries met at Liverpool to formulate one general set of rules such as could be applied equally to swimming-bath, river, and sea; to private matches, league games, and international contests.

Another water sport to capture the imagination towards the end of the Georgian era was skating. Ever since the returning Royalists had first introduced the fashion from Holland at the time of the Restoration figure-skating had had its supporters, yet, although fairs and carnivals had been held on the ice at various times throughout the eighteenth century, little real progress had been made. The weather had not been suitable. When, however, the first quarter of the nineteenth century heralded hard winters once more ice-racing came into vogue again, with the Fen country, with its great levels occupying some 1300 square miles, and the

Norfolk Broads providing the favourite arenas. Wherever there was ice there would be skaters, and where there was a sufficiently long, unbroken stretch, as on the river Cam, men would now delight to hold distance races against each other, or perhaps against time. Large gatherings would accompany such meetings, and betting would be heavy.

How pleasing was the spectacle can be judged from this account of activities on the Serpentine:[1]

> Nowhere can be found such a company and such skating, in a motley throng, among thousands of persons assembled on such small spaces of ice, apparently huddled together, and yet indulging in all the gyrations and exercises that belong to sports on the ice. The peer and the pot-boy are often jostled one against the other; the squire and the flunkey cut their capers on the same arena; titles and distinctions are altogether disregarded; good humour and good fellow-feeling are predominant everywhere. Everybody tries to keep himself warm, and to make the best use of the fleeting frost; which, though hard and tough to-day, may be soft and tender to-morrow. The one desire reigns supreme—*viz.*, skating at all events, and leaving frolic, fun, vulgarity, and merriment to sport as well; but ever and anon mixing and commingling with the more stately throng, as the one and all are flitting to and fro; crossing and recrossing, curving, twisting, turning, racing, falling, and tumbling in one great mass of wild excitement, tumult, uproar, and confusion. And among them, too, or at least in some small ring, apart from the thronging multitude, are some of the most skilful skaters in the world—some whose performances unmistakably show, that, with them at least, skating is a science. . . . Every day during the frost the crowd and the rabble are there; but it is not every day that any of the perfect masters of the graceful art come out. When they do they are easily distinguishable from all others. Their performances attract attention at once; the perfect ease with which all their movements are made; the graceful poise of the body and facile motions of the limbs; the perfect bearing of the performer, and the unerring certainty and rapidity of all his movements, are a study that has often so riveted the attention of lookers-on, that they stand shivering on the banks of that beautiful lake until almost frozen with cold.

On the Mere at Diss, in Norfolk, close on two thousand people would often gather on the ice in the course of a single day. There stalls and booths would be erected for their benefit, while a race for a pig provided an added attraction. Even when, as on one

[1] *The Sporting Magazine.*

occasion, the ice "cracked like a map in all directions" few showed any inclination to leave, so lost were they in the thrills of the sport.

Skating came into fashion almost sensationally. As with swimming, many adopted it professionally, and began journeying from place to place, issuing and accepting challenges on such a scale that soon a spirited rivalry developed between the skaters of Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Huntingdon, and, to a lesser extent, Suffolk. By dint of the fact that their geographical position afforded them exceptional opportunities for skating, the men of these counties soon proved themselves to be in a class of their own, and became the objects of much admiration. Thus, when in January 1820, John and Charles Staplee, of Crowland (Lincs.), and John Gittam and J. Young, both of Nordelph (Norfolk), met at Crowland to race a number of heats over a course of two miles for a prize of but five guineas, not fewer than four thousand people turned out to watch, and many large bets were laid.

There were no official titles to be won. A skater simply assumed the right to call himself champion by virtue of having defeated all comers, and he would retain the honour just so long as he was able to prove himself invincible. For a period of close on forty years, down to about 1880, the scene was dominated in this way almost entirely by four men—W. Needham, Larmen Register, William ("Turkey") Smart, and William ("Gutta Percha") See. When at last champions were recognized George ("Fish") Smart ("Turkey's" nephew), who in two years skated fifty-five races without being beaten, and George See (son of "Gutta Percha"), together with James Smart (brother of "Fish"), held the stage for a few more years as convincingly as their relatives had done.

In 1879 a number of skating enthusiasts met at the Guildhall, Cambridge, under the presidency of the Mayor, Mr H. Rance, to decide upon some definite scheme for conducting championships over a standard course. Since all were in harmony on these and other points, they decided to form themselves into the National Skating Association, arranging at the same time to hold further meetings to draft a list of rules and a general code for the sport.

Thereafter the championships were held over a course of 1½ miles. Each competitor paid an entrance-fee of five shillings, and heats were contested in pairs, although the draw was arranged in such a way as to allow as many as six skaters to advance to the final. Prizes were awarded on a speed basis, and it became incumbent upon a champion to defend his title whenever called upon by

the committee to do so. Moreover, he was now expected to wear the badge and scarf of victor whenever competing for future titles, and to hand these back as soon as he eventually met with defeat. Altogether there were some seventeen rules to be observed, and these were revised in 1887 and again in 1891.

After a while the championships broadened out to include events of varying distances, while in 1881 the National Skating Association added a further attraction in the institution of a system whereby skaters might at any time qualify for certain badges of merit by passing recognized speed tests. A man who could skate a measured mile containing three turns in three and a half minutes, for instance, was privileged to wear a gold badge embroidered with a pair of running-skates and the letters N.S.A. Similarly, the skater who covered the same course in four or four and a half minutes could qualify for a silver or bronze badge respectively.

The Association were both enterprising and ambitious. After staging their first professional Championship at Thorney in December 1879, which "Fish" Smart had no difficulty in winning, they proceeded, next month, to promote the first of a series of amateur championships at the Welsh Harp at Hendon, when F. Norman beat Louis Tebbutt by three yards.

With these two events following so close upon one another, skating in general, and the achievements of Smart in particular, became the talk of the day. So great a hold did the sport gain that the following winter the English decided that the time was ripe to test their skill against the skaters of other countries. Significantly, the first country they challenged was Holland, whose people had taught the Royalists so many of their secrets in Charles II's time. The Dutch accepted the challenge, and, following a special trial race at Ely, George Smart, Alfred Hawes, Jarman Smart, and F. Bones were selected to represent England. Alas, the race was not to take place: the weather broke, and a thaw set in.

Yet the seeds of international competition had been sown. In 1885 George Smart crossed the North Sea to try his luck on Dutch ice, and two years later C. A. Tebbutt became the winner of the first International Amateur Championship at Slikkerveer (Holland), an honour that was to be crowned soon afterwards by George See and James Smart finishing first and second respectively in two races in the Professional Championships. See covered himself in glory by completing the mile in 2 min. 53 sec., and so setting up a world record. Already 'internationals' were proving so much

A SIX DAYS' PEDESTRIAN RACE AT THE AGRICULTURAL HALL, ISLINGTON

"Picture Post" Library

AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY UNIVERSITY STEEPLECHASE, OR "FOOT GRIND"

Badminton Library

FOOTBALL MATCH AT RUGBY SCHOOL

Where William Ellis sowed the seeds of 'Rugger' by disregarding the rules and running with the ball in his hands.

"Picture Post" Library

of a draw that the first world-wide contest to be staged in England took place at Cambridge on Christmas Eve, 1890. This, however, proved a complete fiasco when Joseph F. Donoghue (U.S.A.), the only foreign competitor, won at will.

In the summer of 1892 delegates from England, Germany, Austria, Sweden, and Holland met at Scheveningen to form the International Skaters' Union, under whose jurisdiction European and World Championships were now to be arranged, the latter title being awarded to the country winning three out of four races over distances of 500, 1500, 5000, and 10,000 metres.

Meanwhile on the long frozen rivers those amateurs who skated either in settlement of some private wager or purely for pleasure were achieving quite remarkable feats. J. M. Heathcote tells[1] of a run he made on the Cam, in company with two other Cambridge undergraduates, in the winter of 1854. Starting from Cambridge after breakfast, the party skated to St Ives, in Huntingdonshire, stopped there for lunch, and then set off on their return journey, arriving back at their college in time for dinner, having covered no less than 67½ miles. Yet that was not a record: C. A. Tebbutt and his three brothers once covered as great a distance as 73½ miles, from Earith to Wisbech and back again, in 9½ hours.

Skating enthusiasts were not to remain for ever dependent upon the weather. Roller skates had long been known, and in 1857 special halls had been opened in Covent Garden and the Strand, and these were soon followed by others, until by the seventies when an American, J. L. Plimpton, had introduced his skates, "there was scarcely a town of any importance in England that could not boast of its rink with a floor composed of cement, asphalte or wood."[2]

Since roller skating proved a poor substitute, attempts were made to produce a kind of synthetic ice. As far back as 1842 a certain Henry Kirk claimed a patent device which would revolutionize the sport. By means of salts, sulphur, and crystallized alum, mixed with hog's lard, he produced a 'rink' some seventy feet in length in Baker Street. Though the Londoners flocked in their numbers to this new centre, they soon went away again disappointed. Not only did this new 'ice' quickly churn up under the skates, but the people themselves found the ground uncommonly hard when they chanced to fall.

[1] *Skating* (Badminton Library). [2] *Ibid.*

Yet if Kirk's "Alpine Lake," as he called it, was a failure it certainly caused other people to experiment. Thereafter we hear of one new invention after another. In 1865 A. W. Parker claimed to have discovered another process for making artificial ice; five years later William Newton tried his hand at modifying an American invention; and then came Professor John Gamgee with his patent, whereby a vacuum and condensing pump were used to hasten evaporation, and new chemicals substituted for the abstraction of latent heat.

By Gamgee's process elaborate rinks were opened at Manchester, at a cost of approximately £20,000 in about 1877, and Southport, three years later, at an even greater expense. If neither of these was to enjoy a long enough life to merit such extravagant expenditure they definitely paved the way for indoor skating. So that when, at last, satisfactory rinks were devised we find men, women, and children alike appearing on the ice in steadily increasing numbers, until to-day London's rinks, like those of other large towns, offer an attraction which hundreds eagerly anticipate on leaving their offices and workshops at the end of a long day's work. Though the atmosphere is artificial, the rinks have brought skating within the province of thousands who otherwise might never have had the opportunity of enjoying the sport.

For all the progress, the Fens remained the skater's haven. Scope was so infinitely greater there. For instance, on Bury Fen they had been playing a form of hockey on the ice for generations. Although it was not altogether unlike the field hockey played by the Irishmen, the Fenmen nevertheless preferred to call it by the Tudor name of bandy, doubtless on account of the fact that the branches of the pollard willows which they fashioned into sticks with which to hit the bung of cork or wood, or rubber ball, were carefully selected by the players for their curved shape.

As C. G. Tebbutt says,[1] as soon as a frost set in on Bury Fen work immediately ceased so that squire, farmer, and labourer could make the very best of the opportunity. It was from the bargemen and fishermen of Earith that the bandy-players were mainly recruited, and it was the proud boast of the Bury Fenners, and of that redoubtable boatwright William Leeland, who captained them for something like a quarter of a century until 1850, that they "never was beat by any town and could do it with ease."

There were few things that appealed to these stalwarts more

[1] *Skating* (Badminton Library).

than a good game of bandy. The traditional prize was a leg of mutton (provided by local subscription), and there are men alive to-day who, though the meres have long since been drained, can tell of the "randy" at the "local," when, at the end of play, victor and vanquished would meet once more to celebrate their success or drown their sorrows in tankards of good English ale.

One after the other the towns would challenge the Bury Fenners. If Swavesey provided the most formidable opposition, Over, Willingham, Cottenham, Sutton, Mepal, Chatteris, Somersham, and St Ives were no less sporting.

But bandy was not to remain the exclusive preserve of the Fens. On December 27, 1860, we notice a number of players making their way to the ice at the Crystal Palace with a view to introducing the sport to the Londoners, and in 1864 hear of Hatfield playing Hoddesdon at Brockett Hall Park with eight players a side. And eventually the National Skating Association helped to spread the game still further. By then, as we shall see in a later chapter, field hockey was firmly established, able to boast clubs in many parts and a governing body of a kind. Some of these clubs, such as the Molesey, Kingston, and Surbiton, adopted the practice of playing hockey on ice whenever the ground was frozen hard. Some of the rowing clubs too found it an entertaining side-line when the rivers were frozen. Gradually these clubs began arranging matches against each other, with the result that in 1891, after a team of Londoners had surprisingly defeated the Bury Fenners on Virginia Water by nine goals to three, a general meeting was held, when a Bandy Association was formed and a set of rules framed.

Almost at once clubs were inaugurated in many parts of the country, until in time those at Virginia Water, Camberley, Winchester, and Northampton came to enjoy a reputation hardly less great than that of the Fenners themselves. In addition many of the gentry, as in the case of the Duke of Marlborough at his country seat, Blenheim, threw open their private lakes whenever weather permitted.

Not even the women could resist any longer the lure of bandy. Using a rather thinner type of stick and a lighter ball, they now arranged matches of their own.

In Canada meanwhile a rather different form of bandy had come to light under the more straightforward name of ice-hockey. When, as Mr J. F. Aherne tells us,[1] a number of resident Canadian

[1] *Lonsdale Book of Sporting Records* (Seeley Service, 1937).

students proceeded to amuse themselves at their version at the old Princes Skating Club in the winter of 1902–3 it gradually superseded the old-style Fenland game. An ice-hockey league was constituted in the succeeding winter, to be followed, four years later, by the inauguration by Great Britain, France, Belgium, Switzerland, and Czechoslovakia of the International Federation, and by the holding of the first international contest. Then, a few months before the outbreak of the First World War curtailed sport in England, the British Ice Hockey Association came into being to control the sport generally, since when ice-hockey has become more and more the game of the rink and less and less a game of the open.

Bandy was not the only game to be played on the ice. Well before the end of the Georgian era a sport that will always remain essentially Scottish—curling—had found its way to England. Quite possibly curling, like golf, crossed the Border with James I and his courtiers; more than likely certain Scotsmen eagerly introduced the game to some of the villagers of the North almost as soon as the two countries became united under the one crown. Yet it is not until 1795 that we hear of a 'bonspiel,' as the Scots call their contests, being staged between England and Scotland. The Rev. John Ramsay, who wrote a history of curling in 1811,[1] shows that the sport was known in London in his time, and, moreover, had gained such a following in the capital that on one occasion the ice began to crack under the weight of the spectators, and play had to be suspended.

An unusual game, not altogether unlike bowls, the Scottish had played it at least since the fourteenth century. In those faraway days, we read,[2] a player simply took a conveniently shaped stone from the river-bed and, sweeping his arm from behind his back, hurled it along the ice in the direction of some given target, perhaps at another stone. Gradually the stones became larger and larger, until before long the players were hurling great boulders, weighing anything up to 150 or 200 lb. Since, obviously, they could no longer swing such tremendous weights from behind the back, they inserted iron handles into their boulders to make propulsion easier. By this time eight players went to make up a 'rink' (the name given not only to the arena, but also to the composition of a team), and brute force rather than scientific skill was a deciding factor.

[1] Rev. John Ramsay, *An Account of the Game of Curling* (1811).

[2] *Encyclopædia of Sport.*

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the rough boulders had given place to neatly fashioned stones of a rounder and rather more uniform shape, while the play itself became correspondingly more skilful. Even so, it was slow to captivate the Englishman. The Grand Caledonian Club had been formed in 1838 as a controlling body, with the Prince Consort its patron, and Queen Victoria, following a visit in 1842, had granted this organization the right to substitute the 'Royal' prefix in place of the word 'Grand' before it made a favourable impression south of the Border.

Eventually, however, curling found its way on to the programmes of the various skating-rinks, and those who played it in these arenas found it enjoyable. So that when, in 1895, the Royal Caledonian Club decided to stage an International Contest between Scotland and England at Talkin Tarn, near Carlisle, the English, although defeated, were nevertheless able to hold their own. Indeed, since they still boasted only 38 clubs against Scotland's 501, their performance was creditable.

By now curling had become so skilful a game that a Scotsman would frequently devote almost as much attention to the choice of his stone as a cricketer of our time will give to the selection of his bat. Surface boulders, rather than quarried stones that might have been damaged in the course of blasting, would be carefully ground to shape, and these might cost anything from thirty shillings to five pounds a pair, or even more. Each stone was named according to its place of origin, and there were a whole variety from which to choose, from the Ailsa Craig to the Burnock Water; from the Crawfordjohn to the Carsphairn; and so on.

A complicated type of pitch, known as the rink, was now marked on the ice, forty-six yards long, with tees set down four yards from each end. Around each tee a circle of seven-foot radius would be drawn—sometimes two inner circles of two- and four-foot radii would also be made to facilitate scoring—while a straight line was cut into the ice down the centre from end to end. Some four yards behind each tee a 'foot line' would run at right angles to this centre line, and this, in turn, would be followed, at each end, by the 'back-score,' 'sweeping score,' and 'hog score,' with a 'middle line' dividing the two ends.

Matches were played by 'heads'; four players, each using two stones, made up a 'rink'; while the captains assumed the name of 'skip.' The aim of all, as to-day, was to get their stones as near as

possible to the tee. Each member of the two rinks would play after his opposite number, throwing to only one end at a time. While one man from each rink was allowed to stand at the far end to shout instructions, to direct his partners' shots, a second, armed with a quaint kind of besom, would slide the length of the course, sweeping away any loose snow or ice that might lie in the path of the stone. A stone that failed to reach the 'hog score' was at once removed, but one that passed it was allowed to remain. Though in its present position it counted as nothing, there was always the chance that it might baulk an opponent, or, better still, that an opponent, in trying to clear it out of the way, might instead knock it into one of the scoring circles.

If in England curling never acquired the same atmosphere as in Scotland it nevertheless provided yet another pleasing relaxation to add to the now formidable list of aquatic sports. The water—whether still, running, or frozen; natural or 'artificial'—had come into its own. It had grown into a Mecca where men and women, both young and old, would delight to assemble. For those who had no wish to indulge in the more strenuous forms of exercise, but who derived greater pleasure from being alone with Nature, there was always angling, which, too, was becoming more scientific.

CHAPTER X

The Fox supplants the Stag

ABOUT the middle of the eighteenth century hunting, so long the life-blood of English country life, began to undergo a complete transformation.

This land of England was changing. Hedged-in fields of grass now prospered where there had once been forest. The stag was being robbed of his cover. The bears, wolves, and wild boar were no more. The hare had taken their place in large measure. But now the hare too was to be challenged for pride of position by the fox, who would eclipse all others as beast of prey. And with his arrival we notice a change in the outlook of the people. Whereas the fox had once been regarded as vermin that must be taken by any means, now more and more were to appreciate its cunning and find in it good sport. Thus hunting lost all pretensions of being a quest for food but instead became a sport pure and simple, where all rode for the sheer joy of the run, the only useful purposes lying in the procuring of valuable furs and in ridding the farmer of a pest.

Not that the stag or hare, or, for that matter, the otter, was ever to be completely eclipsed. Plenty still preferred—as, indeed, some still do—to chase the hare, while otter-hunting actually gained an even greater following before it went into its decline in Edwardian times. No longer was the animal harpooned in mid-stream after nets had been laid to prevent it swimming into water that might prove inconveniently deep for the huntsmen. Instead the sportsmen learned the tactics of standing leg to leg across the river—a system known as 'forming stickles'—in an effort to 'tail' the otter —that is, catch it by the 'rudder.' Hounds too were employed in greater numbers, and, whereas before the season had lasted only from Shrovetide until about midsummer, it was later to continue until autumn.

With deer-hunting too the outlook was changing. In 1728 the deer-cart had been introduced, with the result that even in the royal forests men tended to hunt more for the sake of the ride. In

these new carts the deer would be taken to the scene of the chase and then let loose, and, while all would hunt with the utmost energy, no one any longer wished to see the creature killed. On the contrary, it became incumbent upon those at the head of the field deliberately to hold the hounds in check until such time as the animal could be lassooed and led safely back to his cart, to be driven home and preserved to hunt another day.

If the deer-cart was considered by some as a complete travesty of the real thing, a contemporary writer, describing the activities of a certain deer at a hunt attended by George III, shows that the newer methods by no means necessarily spoilt the run:

> He was turned out at New Lodge, (within five miles of Windsor) before his Majesty and a most numerous field, and going away over Waltham Common, passed through the parish of Binfield, and into the coverts at Easthampstead, here waited for the hounds, they pressing upon him, he topped the paling of the park, and passing through it, bid them adieu! facing the open country of near twenty miles in a line with undiminished fortitude, depending upon his speed only for extrication from impending danger. Without being once brought to view by his pursuers, he covered that immense barren tract to Sandhurst, and beyond Blackwater, where a stop was made a few minutes for his Majesty to get up; the hounds were then let loose, and passing through Hawley, Cove, Midley, Warren, and through a sheet of water called the Fleet, three miles in circumference, crossed the heath country to Ewshot, near Farnham, and back to Crondall, where he was taken unhurt after a run of five hours, and upwards of forty miles, not more than a sixth of the original field being present, the remainder having been left disconsolate in various parts of the country.

Well into the nineteenth century the stag continued to be prized above the fox, just as to-day he remains the beast of the chase in such districts as Exmoor, the New Forest, and parts of Westmorland. But the fox was beginning to claim more and more attention.

Sir William Beach Thomas expresses the opinion[1] that as early as 1580 there had been a sharp distinction between hunting the fox above and below ground, and that earth-stopping was practised in identically the same way as to-day. We know, too, that in Stuart times drag-hunts were organized, and that one of the Earls of Arundel kept a pack of foxhounds in the closing years of the seventeenth century. Even so, it is not until Georgian times that

[1] *Hunting England* (Batsford, 1936).

we begin to hear of recognized fox-hunters or of packs being maintained especially, if not necessarily exclusively, for this branch of the sport.

A certain Thomas Boothby, of Tooley Park, Leicester, had long been hunting the fox when he died in the early 1750's, and contemporary with him was Thomas Fownes, of Dorset. Then, too, there was Squire Draper, who at Berwick Hall, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, brought up eleven children and maintained carriages and horses and a stable of foxhounds on the modest income of £700. It is said that during the hunting season he would be up at four in the morning, and that his hounds knew every note of his voice. An accomplished horseman, he thought nothing of riding thirty miles home at the end of a run, and those who accompanied him he would entertain lavishly. So successful a huntsman was he that when he died they said that the foxes alone would rejoice at his passing.

And Squire Draper had a daughter, Diana, who helped her father in the field, "encouraging the hounds with her voice," and setting a pace and penetrating country that made even the most dashing of her male followers shudder. At her death the marvel was that her bones were still whole!

Yet we to-day would doubtless have considered the pace slow, just as we should have regarded the 'field' as small. For in such times a squire who owned hounds usually invited only his closest friends—and, perhaps, just a few whom he deemed it 'etiquette' to ask—to join him in the hunt. It is not until the second half of the century that the hunt begins to emerge in its full glory.

By then most country squires maintained a few couples of hounds, and it was a common practice for them to muster them into a pack of reasonable size at such times as a hunt was planned. Such hounds were normally left free to roam about and fend for themselves, thereby gaining the name of 'trencher' hounds. A hunt of these times usually started in the small hours of the morning, the sportsmen sometimes breakfasting as early as midnight and setting off just as soon as it was light enough to distinguish between stile and gate. As for the chase itself,

> a couple or two of steady old hounds were thrown in when the drag had led the pack up to the covert where he lay, taking his rest after his midnight rambles, and it was not until he was fairly on foot and away that the body of the pack was laid on.[1]

[1] *Hunting* (Badminton Library).

It was all very happy-go-lucky, all very slow and leisurely. Yet to those who took part it was also very enjoyable.

When Thomas Boothby died in 1753 hunting entered upon a period of complete revolution. Among his closest friends was Hugo Meynell, a young man of eighteen. To him Boothby left not only his hounds, but also the country over which he himself had delighted to chase the fox for something like half a century. At that time the hounds were kept at Great Bowden, on the Northamptonshire border, an arrangement which, though convenient to old Boothby, Meynell found so inadequate that in the following year he bought a stately mansion known as Quorndon Hall, previously used as a fashionable club by Leicestershire's 'quality.' Thereafter, with Quorndon as his headquarters, he devoted himself for close on fifty years to putting hunting on an altogether different plane, gaining for his pack the famous name of Quorn, and for himself the title of the "Father of Modern Fox-hunting."

It has often been suggested that it was one of Meynell's 'field' —a man named Child—who really brought about the revolution when in 1780 he proceeded to gallop rather than walk after the hounds, and took to making running leaps at the fences instead of jumping them from a standstill. Meynell, it has been asserted, was quite nonplussed, and even annoyed, by the exhibition! Such is far from the case. Meynell himself had long been galloping before ever Child did so, and earned no little fame for the ease with which he would clear the most difficult fences, hardly appearing to notice them in his determination not to take his eyes off his pack. Indeed, from the moment he moved to Quorndon Meynell's one idea was speed—speed in horses and hounds alike. He was always crossing fresh stock with his own in the hope of getting straighter and longer legs, his aim, as Nimrod (whose real name was Charles Apperley) tells us, being "a combination of strength with beauty, and steadiness with high mettle," coupled with "fine noses and stout running" in the hounds. Thoroughbred hunters too were to replace the heavy, lumbering creatures that Squire Draper and his kind had known. Speed became the very code-word of Meynell's doctrine.

Possibly the pace was a little exaggerated now and again. Harvey Ashton and Charles Windham must have caused Meynell many an anxious moment by their aggravating practice of over-riding the hounds by as much as two or three fields, and then settling down to a neck-and-neck race of their own. Yet Meynell

usually managed to call them to order "by the tone of his laughter," his jocular remarks, and his delightful personality.

At any rate, as the pace quickened, so did the numbers who would ride to hounds multiply. So that when at last Meynell, now well on in his sixties and dispirited by the fatal illness of his eldest son, decided, at the turn of the century, to hand over the Mastership of the Quorn to Lord Sefton, fox-hunting had become a fashionable sport. "Mr Meynell's pack," as it was first called, had so long been the talk of the country that many had grown to regard the hunting of the carted stag as more artificial than ever, and the hare as nowhere near so cunning as the fox. Added to this, the scenery of England was changing more now, and it was changing to the advantage of the fox and at the expense of the stag.

Throughout Meynell's long and glorious Mastership first one club and then another abandoned the stag or the hare in favour of the fox, and converted its packs to suit the changing conditions. In 1730, Sir William Beach Thomas informs us,[1] the Belvoir had been established by articles of agreement signed by the Duke of Rutland, the Earl of Cardigan, the Earl of Gainsborough, Lord Gower and Scope, and Lord Howe, who would "annually place in the hands of Alderman Child of Temple Bar, by two payments, the sum of £150 a piece towards defraying the expenses and all other incidental charges." Under this agreement no fewer than nineteen hounds, none of which was to exceed twenty inches in height, were to be maintained, while the personnel was to include a steward, a huntsman, six whippers-in, and two cooks. The five noblemen were to take weekly shifts of organizing the whole affair. The original object was to hunt the stag; yet by the last quarter of the century a pack of foxhounds had been established.

The Pytchley also, whose origin has been traced back at least to the time of Henry III, when a staff of one huntsman and three men were provided with but two horses and sixteen hounds, followed suit, every squire in the neighbourhood keeping open house whenever its members rode to hounds. Then, too, in 1762 the Duke of Beaufort converted his Badminton Kennels, while Sir William Lowther, who later became the first Earl of Lonsdale, made a similar move about 1790, thereby giving birth to the Cottesmore.

Thus, with these four hunts, the Quorn, the Belvoir, the Pytchley, and the Cottesmore, as the foundation-stone, there came

[1] *Hunting England.*

into being the great hunting centre that we have long delighted to call simply "the Shires," a country of verdant pastures comprising an area of Leicestershire, Rutland, and Northamptonshire, and including such names as Melton Mowbray, Leicester, Market Harborough, Oakham, and Loughborough, a country that has long been famous as the finest in the world for the pursuit of the fox.

Though Meynell was the "Father of Modern Fox-hunting," many others were to gain fame after him. Thomas Assheton Smith and Squire Osbaldeston were to become, in turn, Masters of the Quorn in the early nineteenth century; Dick Christian was to act as whip, and occasionally as huntsman, to the Cottesmore; while there was the great John Warde to lead the Pytchley, and form two countries, then known respectively as Althorpe and Pytchley, into one great hunting-ground. The list is too long to detail. Dukes, earls, and peers, Masters and hunt servants, all have played their part in building up the history and traditions of the hunt, as also have their historians and artists, from Peter Beckford to Nimrod; from Whyte-Melville to Bromley-Davenport; from Surtees—whose Jorrocks will ever remain a classic, if only for his one speech "'Unting is the sport of Kings. All the excitement of war without the guilt and only 25 per cent. of the danger"—to Charles Dickens; from John Leech to Alken. Great sportsmen those early fox-hunters; great Englishmen.

If Assheton Smith was the "heaven-born" huntsman whose courage in riding unschooled horses and whose refusal to regard any jump as beyond his limits won the admiration of all, the superb stamina of Squire Osbaldeston will be remembered for his historic race against time, when at the Houghton meeting of 1831 he rode two hundred miles round and round Newmarket in 8 hours 42 minutes, having set himself a limit of ten hours.

The Shires were not, of course, by any means the only counties in which the fox was now hunted on orthodox lines, any more than the Quorn, the Pytchley, the Belvoir, and the Cottesmore constituted the only hunts. There were the Atherstone, Warwickshire, and Bicester, the Heythorpe and the Whaddon Chase, the Oakley and the Milton. There were the Hampshire—commonly known as the H.H.—and the Hambledon; the Old Berkeley, the Tarporley, and the rather more social Charlton, and plenty of others besides. While in still greater contrast came the hunts of the Lake District.

And the Lakes were to produce a huntsman more famous than

any—the immortal John Peel. But then Peel, it seems, never was a huntsman! The late Lord Lonsdale tells in his memoirs that this world-famed hero was, in fact, no more than a humble shepherd on his ancestral estate at Caldbeck. The words of the song were written by a friend of his, John Graves, merely to fit a tune then popular in the fells. When, to his surprise, the song caught on Graves would laughingly chide his friend that his name would live long after he himself had been finally "run to earth." So it proved, for John Peel died in 1854.

By the early nineteenth century the fox was pursued throughout the length and breadth of England. Many who had never even sat a horse in their lives, let alone ridden to hounds, now took it into their heads to buy foxes from poachers and have them stuffed, so as to be able to display them in their halls in the hope of giving the impression that they were in some way connected with this new hunting fraternity. Nor was this snobbery always lacking among the sportsmen themselves. Several instances are recorded of men arriving at meets with their mistresses, only to be threatened with the horsewhip if they did not instantly remove the "offending ladies," whose mere presence was regarded as an insult to the wives and daughters of the members of the hunt.

By now fields were getting even larger. No longer were packs so often the privately owned affairs of the past. Even Meynell had called in the assistance of two of his friends to help him finance the Quorn, and later every one who followed his hounds agreed to pay a subscription for the privilege of doing so. Thus the once all-powerful Master of the Hunt gradually became its servant as the hunt club, or 'hunt,' began to emerge.

When a Hampshire landowner named Thomas Ridge, at one time a member of the Hambledon Cricket Club, experienced difficulty in maintaining a private pack while struggling to bring up twenty-one children, each of his followers at once rallied to his support by contributing £10 towards the expenses. And when, in 1795, Ridge at last decided to give up altogether those followers met at Winchester to form the H.H. Soon afterwards we find the Prince Regent heading the list of subscribers, with each member privileged to wear the plume-of-feathers on the buttons of his uniform. By now the club could boast two uniforms—a scarlet coat for "morning wear" and a blue one, together with a white kerseymere waistcoat, for the evening. Thus by 1825 this once private pack had become a flourishing hunt club boasting its own

list of rules, funds invested in some public security, and a committee of management. Under these rules the annual subscription was fixed at ten pounds, with an entrance-fee of twenty-five guineas. A challenge cup was provided for a race between members' horses, when those taking part were expected to pay five guineas. Dinner at the club was to cost half a guinea a head, and anyone failing to wear the club uniform at any meeting—unless he was in mourning, in which case he might be excused—was expected "to forfeit half-a-dozen of claret."

Delightful the rules of some of those early hunts. The Tarporley, whose members took to fox-hunting in 1769, had many quaint ideas. Anyone rash enough to take unto himself a wife, for instance, was at once expected to present each of his fellow-members with a pair of well-stitched buckskin breeches, costing about a guinea. It was ordained, too, that at their social engagements "three collar bumpers were to be drunk after dinner and the same after supper; after that every member might do as he pleased in regard to drinking."

After the General Enclosures Act of 1845 had dealt a further blow to the stag, fox-hunting became still more popular. Year by year the field grew larger and larger. Mothers and children took to the saddle, riding became steadily harder, and horses and hounds more 'racy.' The people not only hunted the country in which they lived, but, with the advent of the railway, began to travel to more distant parts, sometimes occupying suites in hotels for weeks on end. Visitors journeyed from other lands for the sole purpose of hunting in the Shires. And those who had no wish to ride to hounds themselves would follow on horseback or on foot, or, later, by bicycle or car.

Soon the old convivial dinner-party gave way to the hunt ball. Even the hunting cries and language began to change. The tail of a fox became known as the 'brush,' his head as his 'mask,' and his underground home as his 'earth,' while the first part of his run was his 'burst.' There was a correct term for everything; an appropriate tune for every eventuality. Yet, though some of these cries and tunes might sound different, they were but derivations from the language started by the medieval sportsmen.

CHAPTER XI

The Dawn of a New Era

WHEN, one night in 1837, the young Princess Victoria was awakened from her sleep to be told that her Uncle William was dead and that she was now Queen of England a new era was already beginning to dawn. Industrialism was well on its feet. Fine craftsmanship was, unhappily, giving place to mass-production, and the new factory owners were amassing untold wealth. An entirely new class of society was coming into being. And this class, if not the leaders of fashion, were nevertheless quick to become its followers. Just as, towards the end of the Georgian era, certain townspeople had bought themselves country houses and adopted shooting as a means to the acquisition of rural status, so these new-found gentry were at pains to see that their sons were educated at only the best schools.

When, therefore, Dr Thomas Arnold, with his wide appreciation of the trend of affairs and his well-balanced views on religion, started his educational reform at Rugby, and so gave birth to the more modern public-school system, these magnates of industry were quick to follow the lead of the aristocracy by entering their sons, hopeful that in time they would become the governing class.

Under Arnold games at Rugby not only became more organized, but they also occupied a rather higher place in the general life of the school. Furthermore, Arnold's influence was to spread as various of his pupils took on the headships of other schools, and as new public schools were founded. Under his new monitorial system boys were now taught greater discipline and responsibility, and how to behave like gentlemen. And they were taught it in their organized play as much as in any other way.

At the public schools, then, we can discern an entirely new spirit as the boys began to learn to play for the sake of the game, rather than for the sake of themselves, and to appreciate that it was better to lose with a smile than to win by underhand methods. It was the start of the team spirit, which, as they grew to manhood and passed through the universities or the military academies into

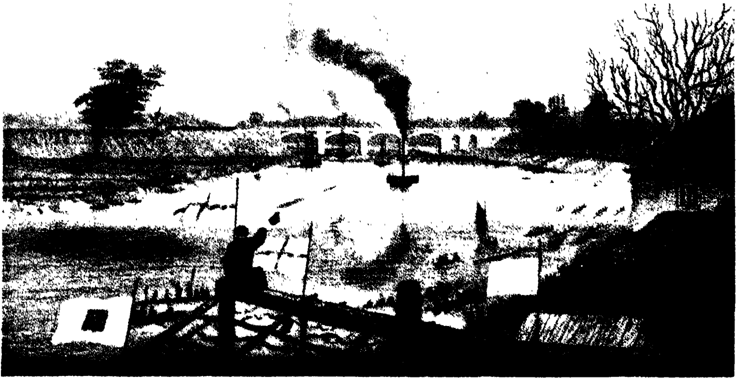
the outside world, they spread into the wider field of sport without. Since the new aristocracy had grown, their influence was by no means inconsiderable.

The wits who poke fun at the 'old-school tie' might remember that contemporary writers are generous in acknowledging the part played by the public schools, and that some of the finest and cleanest sport to-day is to be seen on their playing-fields.

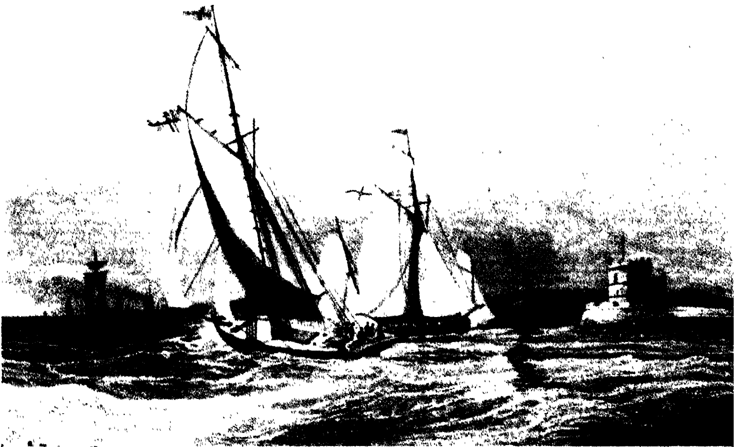
While Dr Arnold was busying himself at Rugby another significant event was taking place in the North and Midlands. The new factory system was causing an unprecedented demand for coal, and George Stephenson, in an attempt to provide an altogether speedier and more efficient method of transporting this fuel from the pitheads, had introduced his locomotive at Killingworth Colliery as far back as 1814. By Arnold's time his ideas had spread farther afield, until by 1830 a complete line had been laid down between Liverpool and Manchester, and 'the road,' until then in its greatest glory, was fast becoming eclipsed by the railway.

When the railway system, with all its dangers, horrors, and discomforts, burst upon England the great sport-loving public became some of its earliest passengers. The hunting fraternity might well protest that the laying of the tracks through open country would encroach upon their preserves and interfere with the game, yet once these new 'steam kettles' had got into their stride the critics began to find themselves in the minority. With speedier travel rendering it no longer quite such an undertaking to get from one place to another for but a few hours' amusement, the number of sporting events multiplied, and the crowds grew denser.

When Queen Victoria came to the throne, then, she was heralding a new era of sport, and, indeed, of life generally. With the sons and grandsons of this new society rapidly learning to become gentlemen, games acquired a new meaning everywhere. And, as the competitive spirit was enhanced by the new transport system, so the need for some central system of control became more urgent. Whereas, in the past, competition had been more or less on a regional basis, with the various localities adopting their own individual rules, now the position was different. As things stood no one knew quite where he was. For where two widely separated towns met for the first time, who was to decide which of the two codes to adopt? Indeed, in the absence of anyone qualified to make the choice, it was usually left for the players to argue it out between themselves. Naturally this proved most unsatisfactory,



FINISH OF THE 1865 BOAT RACE, WITH OXFORD THE VICTORS
The Sporting Magazine



YACHT RACING OFF THE ISLE OF WIGHT
Badminton Library

A NINETEENTH-CENTURY POACHER AND HIS DOGS

The Sporting Magazine

ANGLERS BY THE RIVER-BANK

The Sporting Magazine

since a losing team could, when applicable, make the adoption of their opponents' rules an excuse for their defeat. Even when they did not go so far as to complain openly the atmosphere was sometimes a little tense.

Thus throughout the Victorian era we hear of the followers of first one sport and then another getting together to exchange their views in much the same way as the "committee of noblemen" had met at the Star and Garter to decide the laws of cricket. We find them not only formulating new sets of rules for general adoption, but also setting up committees whose purpose was to better the play and provide a central authority to whom all might turn in times of doubt or dispute. Practically every pastime was to come under the control of some central authority before the nineteenth century was out or within the early years of the twentieth.

Even coursing, so recently confined almost entirely to the country estate, was now to be 'nationalized.' The introduction of the Waterloo Cup, with the entries increased to thirty-two in its third year, aroused such widespread interest that members of other clubs besides the Altcar were soon expressing a desire to enter their dogs. As the coursing societies began to widen their scope it became necessary to arrange a general code and establish the National Coursing Club to act in much the same capacity as the Jockey Club in the case of racing.

True, coursing was to have its ups and downs in the years to come, as, for instance, when the Ground Game Act of 1880 limited the sport to enclosures for a time, yet the setbacks might never have been overcome had there not been some recognized body with power to look after the interests of this sport.

Not all sports were to be governed in this way, though. While quoits became a popular pastime of public school and village green alike, the medieval practice of tilting at the quintain still lingered as a kind of side-show at country-house parties. Although there were plenty who enjoyed it still, its destinies were of but little consequence. In his description of the lamentable efforts of Harry Greenacre at the Ullathorne sports, organized by Miss Thorne as a means of entertaining her guests, Trollope, in his *Barchester Towers*, gives an idea of the depths to which this once noble pastime had descended by 1857:

> The quintain post stood right before him, and the square board at which he was to tilt was fairly in his way. If he hit that duly in the middle, and maintained his pace as he did so, it was calculated that

> he would be carried out of reach of the flour-bag, which, suspended at the other end of the cross-bar on the post, would swing round when the board was struck. It was also calculated that if the rider did not maintain his pace, he would get a blow from the flour-bag just at the back of his head, and bear about him signs of his awkwardness to the great amusement of the lookers-on.
>
> Harry Greenacre did not object to being powdered with flour in the service of his mistress, and therefore gallantly touched his steed with his spur, having laid his lance in rest to the best of his ability. But his ability in this respect was not great, and his appurtenances probably not very good; consequently he struck his horse with his pole unintentionally on the side of the head as he started. The animal swerved and shied, and galloped off wide of the quintain. Harry, well accustomed to manage a horse, but not to do so with a twelve-foot rod on his arm, lowered his right hand to the bridle, and thus the end of the lance came to the ground and got between the legs of the steed. Down came rider and steed and staff. Young Greenacre was thrown some six feet over the horse's head, and poor Miss Thorne almost fell off her tub in a swoon.

Cock-fighting was also on the downward grade. In 1835 the revolting practice of baiting animals had at last been legally suppressed, and, in the same year, William IV had taken the first step towards the prohibition of cocking by banning the sport within five miles of Temple Bar. In 1849, during the premiership of Lord John Russell, a further blow was delivered when the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act was passed rendering it illegal for a public cock-pit to be maintained anywhere in the country. This, however, proved to be only the beginning of the end, for there was still no ruling against masters matching their cocks in private, nor were the penalties sufficiently great to stamp out entirely even the public pits. Since the largest fine was only five pounds, which could be earned many times over by a successful entry, it was a risk that many deemed worth taking.

Admittedly, the foundations of cocking were shaken by these new measures, and its public began to dwindle, yet throughout the nineteenth century we continue to hear of both public and private mains, though their numbers lessened with each decade. Training a cock for battle still took pride of place in the daily life of the owners and breeders, some of whom continued to be held in higher esteem than Cabinet Ministers by the faithful adherents. The traditional devotion of the master remained so pronounced that it was said that some even went to the extreme of employing men to

walk in front of a coach-load of cocks bound for a main, to pick up the loose stones and thereby save the birds from undue jolting.

The aristocracy were as guilty of breaking the law when it suited them as the lower orders. We hear, for instance, of William Gilliver, whose uncle, Joseph, had been deemed the greatest breeder of all times, contesting a battle with the Earl of Berkeley and being given five pounds by his Lordship, who, incidentally, acted as his own setter, after Gilliver had defeated him. We come upon frequent cases like this, and when, as late as 1875, a motion was put forward in the House of Commons advocating an increase in the penalties, an irate letter was written to *The Times*[1] by the "Father of the Turf," Admiral Rous, protesting against these new steps to restrict further this "most ancient and royal amusement." Indeed, the Admiral appears to have been so completely overcome by this new move that he saw fit to imply that the pastime was capable of creating alliances such as might well add to the strength of the Empire. His pleas were not heard. Cocking was enjoying its swan-song.

Two other pastimes which the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act failed to stamp out at once were dog-fights and ratting contests. Both these continued to provide a great source of amusement, where almost as much care would be devoted to the breeding and training of the dogs as was displayed in the preparation of the game-cocks for the mains. Bulldogs would be crossed with terriers to obtain the best strain, while the 'fighters' were trained so finely that it was necessary to blanket and muzzle them during their exercise lest they should eat anything harmful in the streets. A fight might last anything from two to six hours, and would end only when one of the dogs was dead or unable to 'scratch'—that is, walk across the pit to resume the contest. Only 'clean' dogs were permitted to enter the arena, and, to prove them so, the owners were required publicly to lick their bodies with their tongues!

Though the crowds that made their way to witness these disgusting performances were fast diminishing, here, too, there were always plenty who would champion them as manly. This streak of cruelty did not tone in with this otherwise mannerly and courteous age.

Probably it was simply that the old ways died hard, for even the apparently obsolete archery was to enjoy a measure of popularity at this time. The Toxophilite Society had survived its rocky start,

[1] June 18, 1875.

and, once the battles of Trafalgar and Waterloo had begun to recede into the background of the peoples' memories, archery societies began to spring up all over the country, with the womenfolk becoming so enthusiastic that on occasion they displayed even greater skill than the men. A writer in *The Sporting Magazine*, describing a meeting of the West Essex Archery Society on Harlow Bush Common, gives a picture of the scene at an average meeting, and shows something of the esteem in which women were already held in the years immediately preceding Victoria's accession:

> The Ladies were dressed all in the same costume—white and green satin, with white hat and green feathers, green shoes, etc., and their bows and quivers full of arrows slung in an elegant position on their shoulders. The Gentlemen were chiefly dressed in green coats, with emblematic devices on their buttons, and with either green tassels or a miniature target suspended round their waists, denoting the various exploits of the wearers. There were eight targets placed opposite each other, with four flags of various colours—red, blue, yellow and green, signifying to which the various parties belonged. The elegance and superior feats of the Ladies were the theme of universal admiration. The company consisted of the principal families in the county and the members of the Archery Club. At four they retired to the dinner room, where a sumptuous collation was provided, with excellent wines, the whole on a most liberal scale. After dinner the archers resumed their sports, and did not cease till past eight o'clock.

Most archery meetings were held on private estates, although a few, like the one described, were staged on common land. One after another the owners of the 'stately homes' threw open their grounds to the sport, and often, as at Stowe House, an air of pageantry would be introduced, when the victors were carried triumphantly into the presence of the Duke of Buckingham as the band struck up *See the Conquering Hero Comes*.

Whereas such meetings were in the nature of local affairs, in May 1844 the reviving popularity caused archers from all over Britain to meet at the Black Swan at York to formulate plans and rules for staging a more general contest. This move led to the holding of the first Grand National Archery Meeting at the Knavesmire, close by, in the following August, for prizes amounting to £125. If showery weather marred the proceedings to a certain extent, the day was significant in that archery was being revived in an altogether different light. The flippant ceremonies and the sumptuous feasts that had accompanied the meetings of the

past gradually gave way to a more serious study of shooting, until the 'York Round,' comprising the shooting of 72 arrows at 100 yards, 48 at 80, and 24 at 60, became a household name. So successful did this York event prove that after three years it was decided to hold the Grand National in a different town each year. Among the towns patronized were Derby, Leamington, Shrewsbury, Cheltenham, Bath, Aintree, Worcester, Richmond, and Tunbridge Wells.

In 1847 the Toxophilite Society was granted the right to use the royal prefix, and about this time a number of regional meetings, the chief of which were the Leamington and Midland Counties, the Crystal Palace, the Grand Western, and the Grand Northern, were inaugurated. A new pride was fostered among the sportsmen.

Yet, if the bow and arrow had found favour once more, the gun by now enjoyed infinitely more supporters. Colonel Peter Hawker had been gazetted out of the Army in 1813, and, since writing his *Instructions to Young Sportsmen*, had devoted practically his entire time to the study of guns and punts, to designing newer and better models, and to devising more sportsmanlike methods of shooting. Under his stimulating influence every one who lived in the country and who prided himself on being a sportsman delighted more than ever to take what game he could. Those who were entitled to shoot under the various Game Laws took it by approved means; those who were not simply poached, occasionally resorting to murder in doing so. In 1833 we hear of no fewer than forty-one game-keepers meeting their death in this way, whereas ten years later the position had become even more acute, the number of people convicted for various gaming offences rising to 4529. Nor were the magistrates themselves always above breaking the laws that it was their duty to enforce.

In Hawker's time, then, shooting became a premier pastime of the English countryman, and well before his death in 1853 it had developed into a field sport in which practically every form we know to-day, from wildfowling to punt-shooting or deer-stalking, had its followers.

While the fowlers, clad in waterproof garments, would crawl on their knees over the mud, according to Hawker,[1] and push their punts just near enough to the birds to enable them to take up an aiming position clear of the stern, whence they could pull the trigger by means of a long string, many were practising shooting

[1] *Encyclopædia of Sport.*

at potatoes, tossed into the air by small boys on the far side of a hedge. Down on Lord Huntingfield's estate at Heveningham, in Suffolk, too, somewhere about 1845, others were testing the wisdom of driving partridges instead of shooting over dogs.

Those who took to the gun shot at anything that came their way, but they were no longer content to take their game at any price. Sitting targets were now definitely frowned upon; indeed, the more difficult the aim the better did the Victorian sportsman enjoy his day. Not only was he learning to study the ways and habits of the various wild life about him, but he was also growing to realize that there was a great deal to be said for choosing the day to suit the bird.

The landed gentry began rearing game on a scale hitherto unknown; new tactics were being tried out, including the use of sewins or kites as decoys where these were needed. The gunsmiths too were busily perfecting old patterns or devising new ones. As Joseph Manton, Westley Richards, Purdey, Greener, Woodward, and other craftsmen brought out one new model after another at varying intervals throughout the century the standard of shooting steadily improved. So that when the somewhat precarious muzzle-loading gun gave place to the breech-loading variety round about 1865, heralding the 'pheasant era' of about 1880, the day of big bags could be said to have arrived.

In face of these changing conditions the moneyed townsman began to pay rather more frequent visits to the country. In the meantime, however, he had been availing himself of the attractions of London's pigeon-shooting centres. These centres had long been popular. As far back as 1828 a certain Captain Ross tells of an annual shoot at a club of which he was president. Here five traps were set at thirty yards' distance from the starter, and each competitor was allowed to fire at twenty birds on each of four days. Both barrels could be used, and no restrictions were imposed as to the quantity of charge employed. The prize was a piece of plate valued at two hundred guineas, and on one occasion Ross himself succeeded in knocking down no fewer than seventy-six of his birds, although he claims to have shot three more.

These pigeon-shoots were not confined to the townsman. Centres were opened later in many parts of Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Surrey, and Hampshire. A popular shoot was that of the Old Hats club, on the Uxbridge Road, near Ealing, to which many would journey from as far afield as Reading or Wokingham. This club

boasted a list of rules concerning both methods of shooting and general etiquette. Some of these make strange reading. For instance, a member who attended a meeting, but absented himself from the dinner that invariably followed, was held in the worst odour as having caused a "breach of the true spirit and convivial intention of those meetings." The secretary of this particular club was required to keep a complete record of the shooting achievements, both of members and of guests, thereby making sure that all shot to the best of their ability and in a clean, straightforward manner. Such precautions were not out of place, for, according to an account written by a sporting journalist, it seems that the patrons of such centres were in possession of much cunning:

> Experience has too truly told that there is no trick or cunning which some or other of the 'professors' would not resort to. . . . As instances of some of these disreputable proceedings may be mentioned that of the cheating trap. This occurs when they have got a stipulation inserted in the articles that each person shall provide his own trap; and, by means of a cheating trap, a bird may be started on the wing in a peculiar manner. Other tricks are those of using an unfairly large-sized gun; putting in an extra charge of powder and shot; using loaded gun-waddings; bribing, or attempting to bribe, the man who takes the birds out of the hamper, by obtaining of him larger and heavier birds, or pulling out a few feathers of one wing so as to impede the flight; and many other such disreputable attempts at gaining an unfair advantage.

Though such dishonesty nearly spelled its doom, pigeon-shooting became so popular that, besides shooting at live birds, many later took to firing at dummies. In 1893 they formed an Inanimate Bird Shooting Association, later substituting the word 'clay' for 'inanimate.' In this fifteen traps would be concealed from the shooters by means of a bank of earth. The 'birds' were arranged in such a way that, whereas those in the right-hand trap always quartered to the right on being released, those in the centre moved forward, and those at the other end veered to the left. Since the sportsman was in complete ignorance as to which of the traps was being opened, speed and skill were essential. Not all shoots were conducted in exactly the same way, however; the Association's code contained no fewer than thirty-seven different points.

Among those who took advantage of the improved travel to bring about a certain revival of their respective sports were the boxers, wrestlers, and fencers.

Fencing classes proved an attraction not only in the more fashionable towns, but at the public schools and universities, and, a little later, in the Services. Members journeyed from club to club to compete with one another, and in 1898 the Amateur Fencing Association was constituted and the first championship staged.

So with wrestling. Cumberland, Lancashire, and Westmorland, like Devon and Cornwall, continued to foster their own peculiar styles, and, once travel really became easier, they delighted to send their sons to other districts to prove their superiority. Rivalry became more pronounced than ever. Many fierce contests were fought between the Cornishmen and the Devonians; there was great excitement in the North whenever 'the sports' were to be held at Grasmere, at Windermere, or in any other Lakeland district. Men, women, and children would—and still do—journey far to see the fun, while those, like the members of the Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling Society in London, who had long since left their native towns and villages, if they were unable to make the journey themselves, followed the results in the newspapers with the keenest interest.

Where boxing was concerned, the improved facilities did not prove wholly advantageous, as it turned out. Though the railways brought the crowds in their thousands whenever a fight was imminent, they were not the same high-spirited crowds of Georgian days. The vast sums of money now wagered, coupled with the greater ease with which they could reach the venue, began to attract such undesirable elements that many of the Ring's former patrons hesitated to be seen among this new rabble. The champions, too, were different. None, with the possible exception of "Deaf" Burke and "Bendigo"—whose real name was William Thompson—possessed the dash of the old-time bruisers. The scene was changing: fisticuffs was about to give way to modern boxing. The gloves that Broughton had introduced for the training spars were soon to cover the bare hands in public bouts as well. And when fisticuffs were finally supplanted by gloves boxing took on a different complexion.

But the prize ring was first to have its swan-song, when in 1853 a body known as the Pugilists' Association drafted an entirely new set of rules for the London Prize Ring, just as, in equal desperation, the Fair Play Club had done earlier in the century. Twenty-nine rules now took the place of Broughton's seven, and these were

designed to cover glove-fights and fisticuffs alike. Though prize-fighting lingered on for a few more years under the guidance of this new association, the end was inevitable. It was speeded eventually by one of the pluckiest and most memorable contests in the whole history of the Ring.

A certain Tom Sayers, who, in his childhood, helped to haul in the fishing-boats at Brighton, and who later became a bricklayer's mate, had come to Camden Town, where he had long been winning the admiration of all, even of many of the Ring's severest critics, by his superb courage for so small a man. Though scarcely 5 feet 8 inches in height, he had defeated first one and then another. Nat Langham alone, who, like Bill Richardson and Jem Shaw, kept a knuckle-fighting establishment of his own, had been able to prove his master. Langham himself admitted that he had succeeded in winning only through his opponent's over-confidence, and had deemed it wise to refuse to fight a second time. So that Sayers, with his plaid shooting-jacket, tight trousers, laced boots, and fur cap, became the very symbol of British courage. Those who watched him shook their heads and came to the conclusion that it could only have been his early practice of heaving bricks that had given him such phenomenal strength.

With no one left to fight, Sayers was on the point of retiring when an American, John Camel Heenan, hearing of the champion's successes, decided to cross the Atlantic to try to wrest the title from him. The contest caused such widespread interest throughout the country that after it was over the Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, was moved to get up in a stormy House of Commons to commend a certain railway company for providing special facilities to transport an extremely mixed gathering to the scene of the fight—and this despite the fact that boxing was still illegal. Even the most sternly critical forgot their harsh words, and donned their top-hats and morning coats to watch; the countryman turned out in his bowler and breeches; the 'underworld' arrived to make their fortunes. Thus when Sayers and his opponent, who stood some five inches taller and weighed two stone more, entered the ring at Farnborough on April 17, 1860, rich and poor, honest and dishonest, all rubbed shoulders. Nobody any longer gave a thought as to what sort of rabble he was among, for an Englishman was being challenged by a foreigner.

Those who turned out in a spirit of patriotism were, however, to be at once proud and disappointed. Hardly had the contest begun

before Sayers broke a bone in his right arm. The fight appeared to be lost almost from the start. Yet, despite his pain, the Englishman refused to admit defeat, and for something like two hours steadily hammered away at his opponent's face with his one sound arm, ever hopeful of eventually blinding him, while himself sustaining devastating blows which he had no means of defending and which continually brought him on to the turf. By the end of two hours it began to look as if, after all, Sayers might be rewarded for his courage. By now one of Heenan's eyes was completely closed, while the other was also showing distinct signs of strain. Moreover, since the American had neglected to take the elementary precaution of 'pickling' his hands in order to harden the skin, they were becoming too puffy and swollen for his punches to be so effective.

Taking all in all, then, the odds seemed definitely to be turning in favour of Sayers, and the motley crowd grew more hopeful. But then—"Why, shame, sir! Foul! Foul!" The American had driven the champion on to the ropes and was deliberately holding him there with all his weight. Sayers was turning black in the face . . . he was being strangled—"Foul, sir, foul!" The crowd went mad; pandemonium broke out. Top-hats fell and were trampled under foot. Everybody shouted, cursed, or swore. In the heat of the moment some one cut the ropes, thereby causing the two contestants to fall to the ground. Whereupon the referee, like the ring itself, disappeared. Even so the fight was to continue for several more rounds, before, at last, after some two hours and twenty minutes, the referee, who had by now returned, reached the inevitable conclusion that the best thing was to call a halt and declare the contest a draw.

For courage and endurance the fight was unequalled, but it was the beginning of the end. The critics got into their stride again, and this time they had their way. Sayers was pensioned off by his admirers, and, although other champions continued to come and go for a few more years, enthusiasm was lacking. Besides, there were rumours of underhand methods. It was said, for instance, that Heenan himself had been given a dose of poison before entering the ring to fight Tom King. Though nobody could prove it, there were plenty only too willing to believe it. So the prize ring, once the glory of the Georgians, gradually faded out.

In 1865 the Marquess of Queensberry, appreciating some of its finer points, and holding the view that boxing could be raised to an altogether higher plane by the adoption of gloves and the

abandonment of wrestling tactics, drafted his set of rules, which have become famous the world over. As was to be expected, these rules enjoyed a mixed reception. While the champions of the prize ring decried them as effeminate, the more stubborn declared adamantly that fighting should be abolished entirely. When, however, the Marquess proceeded, two years later, to organize an amateur championship to prove his case—just as Broughton had staged his exhibition more than 120 years before—and presented prizes to the winners, people began to alter their views. Boxing, quite suddenly, was deemed an honourable sport, with Queensberry Rules the code-words of clean play. Amateur clubs started up throughout the country; the public schools and universities began to regard boxing in a new light. The professionals too soon adopted the glove—although some still clung to fisticuffs—and, instead of fighting one another regardless of size, professionals and amateurs alike paid greater attention to weights.

Tournaments became an attraction where the nobility were once more proud to take their place at the ringside. Those who could afford it travelled to the ring in style; those who could not did their best to get there somehow. Whenever a good programme was arranged to take place in London, or in some other fashionable centre, the employees of business houses and factories for many miles around would raise funds among themselves to enable at any rate some of their number to make the journey, afterwards drawing lots to decide who were to be the lucky ones.

Meanwhile the boxers themselves began to enjoy world-wide reputations. For, despite its disappointing ending, the contest between Sayers and Heenan had left so deep an impression not only in England, but across the seas, that, once the Marquess of Queensberry proved the value of his new code, and so virtually gave birth to modern boxing, many other countries adopted this new version of an age-old sport. Before the century was out the great era of international boxing had begun.

The first recognized authority to give the Marquess of Queensberry its blessing was the Amateur Athletic Club, founded in 1866 by John Chambers in company with a number of university athletes. The longer hours that men were now working in this new industrial age, coupled with the reactions to the volunteer movement, were bringing about a greater feeling for some form of definite training. The rather happy-go-lucky sports of the past were no longer considered adequate for the occasion, and so were

giving place to organized meetings of an altogether more serious character, where all types of events would be arranged to suit all types of men, and where all would train seriously beforehand.

In 1849 the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich decided to stage an athletic meeting, and in the following year Exeter College, Oxford, followed suit. A good story is told[1] of the origin of the Oxford gathering. The annual steeplechase—loosely termed "the college grind"—had just been held, and some four or five of those taking part were leisurely "sipping their wine" after Hall, discussing the event. All were agreed, it seems, that the Oxford hacks were quite unsuited to the country, when one of their number, Halifax Wyatt, whose horse had landed on its head in a road, declared that another time he would sooner run two miles across-country on his own feet than attempt to sit such an animal again! Whether or not Wyatt was joking, the others took him seriously, so that it was at once decided to organize a "college foot-grind" the same autumn, which, it was felt, should include a number of events. One afternoon was to be given up to a two-mile steeplechase of twenty-four jumps—for which there was to be a one pound entry-fee and ten shillings forfeit—while a second was to be set aside for flat and hurdle races of varying distances.

Notices announcing the forthcoming meeting were posted up in the porter's lodge and elsewhere, and entries were good. The site, however, was not so good. While a meadow was selected for the flat events, the course chosen for the all-important steeplechase was a low-lying marshy farm at Binsey, much of whose grounds were then under water. The competitors themselves appear to have been a somewhat motley lot, turning out in varying states of both garment and wind, some of them even sporting cricket-shoes and flannels.

Yet, despite the weirdness of the scene, the occasion drew crowds, both on horseback and on foot, and proved so successful that within ten years organized athletic meetings had become a common feature up and down the country.

As these and succeeding undergraduates came down from both Oxford and Cambridge, so the vogue spread. The H.A.C. added athletics to their growing list of activities, and in the winter of 1861 the West London Rowing Club adopted it as a means of keeping its members in trim for the coming season. In the following year a certain W. Price, already famous as a promoter of walking races,

[1] *Athletics* (Badminton Library).

organized a meeting at Hackney Wick for a silver cup, while not long afterwards the Civil Servants were entering the field, and Oxford and Cambridge had held the first of their inter-varsity meetings. Then, about the same time as Chambers started up his organization, certain of the rowing fraternity got together under the name of the London Athletic Club. The formation of some new club became an almost commonplace announcement, but when the Amateur Athletic Club opened its own ground at Lillie Bridge in 1868 this grew to be regarded as the principal authority, even though the "London" could boast the largest membership.

Up to now athletics was essentially a sport of the gentry, many of whom attached the greatest importance to the eating of dry bread and undercooked beefsteaks, followed by frequent sweating and the taking of laxatives, as the best means of training. Soon, however, something of a sensation was caused when it was suggested that athletic clubs should be open to men of all walks of life. The Amateur Athletic Club decried such a proposal on the grounds that their social status debarred men of the artisan and mechanic types from being classified as amateurs. This at once brought about such ill-feeling in the provinces, where the athletes were mainly of that class, that soon the Northern and Midland counties set up rival organizations of their own.

By 1880 dissension had become so great that a number of Oxonians and Cantabs decided to invite clubs from all over the country to send delegates to Oxford to try to reach some agreement. Twenty-seven accepted the invitation, and on April 24, 1880, under the presidency of the Earl of Jersey, those twenty-seven founded the Amateur Athletic Association, which remains the controlling body to this day.

Henceforth anyone, regardless of social status, who could prove that he had never received money from the sport was to be admitted as an amateur. Money-prizes were strictly barred, and any trophy valued at more than five pounds was to be engraved with the name and date of the meeting for which it was offered. Betting too was to be 'put down.'

Thereafter athletics gradually occupied a greater place in the life of the people. By the end of the century it had become an international pastime, with the Olympic Games the crowning attraction.

Another sport had appeared at Lillie Bridge by now. Back in 1869 a group of officers of the 10th Hussars, feeling somewhat

bored with life, had settled down to reading the papers in their tent at Aldershot. After a while one of them, "Chicken" Hartopp by name, who had become increasingly absorbed in a copy of *The Field*, leaned forward excitedly in his chair and proceeded to read out a description of a certain kind of hockey they were playing in India—"hockey on horseback," they called it. Always ready to try out something fresh, they immediately put down their papers, mustered a number of their brother-officers, and, giving orders for their chargers to be saddled, unearthed a number of long sticks with curved ends and a few old billiard-balls and made their way to a suitable field.

Though the game did not go with the swing they had anticipated—the chargers proved altogether too big for the job—every one was agreed that there were possibilities. In fact, one of their number, a man named Chain, was so impressed that he arranged to cross over to Ireland to search for more suitable mounts.

It was not long before news reached other regiments, and the Hussars were playing against the 9th Lancers on Hounslow Heath, where the latter were then stationed. Two sets of posts, placed opposite each other at a distance of just under 200 yards, served as goals, while the ball comprised "a small sphere of white bone." The 10th turned out in blue-and-yellow jerseys, and the 9th in blue-and-red shirts, both sides donning 'mob' caps with coloured tassels. As soon as the players—eight on either side—had taken up their positions in front of their respective goals the ball was tossed into the centre of the ground by a sergeant-major, and "each side immediately galloped for the ball at the best pace of their ponies." The game lasted for an hour and a half, with periodic intervals of ten minutes, during which time, it appears, nobody succeeded in hitting the ball very often, but all proved themselves adept at swearing.

In the first few years, we are told,[1] ponies of less than thirteen hands were used, while the players contented themselves with ash hockey-sticks and cricket-balls painted white. When, however, Captain F. Herbert, having left the 9th, started a club of his own in Monmouthshire in 1872 the happy-go-lucky hockey on horseback gradually blossomed into polo, soon to spread to the provinces and the universities. Encouraged by the march of events, Captain Herbert then decided to form a second club in the Metropolis, adopting Lillie Bridge as his headquarters.

[1] *Polo* (Badminton Library).

Meanwhile a certain Frank Heathcote had taken over the lease of a stately Georgian mansion, known as Hurlingham House, from a banker named Naylor, who, incidentally, was said to have won as much as £100,000 when his horse Macaroni won the Derby, and was busy organizing pigeon-shoots in the grounds. Though the pigeon club was proving reasonably successful, there were some who considered such a pastime rather dull. Among them was Lord de L'Isle, who made bold to suggest that polo should be played on the precious shooting enclosure! To many the idea was outrageous, but a special committee was appointed to investigate the matter, and eventually it was decided to obtain further land for the purpose.

No time was lost in laying out this new ground, and in June 1874 the Prince and Princess of Wales (later Edward VII and Queen Alexandra), together with the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, came to watch the first match and declare the new club open. Whereupon Hurlingham, with Captain Herbert elected to the committee, became the acknowledged headquarters of polo.

The old rough-and-ready rules were soon discarded and new ones drawn up. Then, in 1876, the Challenge Cup was instituted at Hurlingham, to be followed, two years later, by the starting of an inter-regimental tournament, the staging of the first of the university matches, and the formation of a second important club, Ranelagh. As time went on the teams were reduced in numbers from eight to four, while the ground, on the other hand, was lengthened from 200 to some 250 to 300 yards. Balls made of willow soon took the place of the old rubber ones, which by now had succeeded the painted cricket variety, while the sticks became gradually more as we know them to-day. And, as the pace grew faster, due, largely, to the hard hitting of the Peat brothers, so the old starting system of throwing the ball into the centre and leaving the players to dash for it gave way to the less dangerous method of crossing sticks over the ball.

With each fresh improvement polo acquired a steadily larger following among the more wealthy members of the community. Hunting men, as Colonel E. D. Miller says,[1] saw in it a means of obtaining all-the-year-round riding; polo weeks were inaugurated at Rugby, Stratford, Cirencester, Warwick, and Leamington. After a while Ranelagh moved its site to Barn Elms, on the Surrey side of the Thames, and then, in 1902, the Miller brothers opened

[1] *Modern Polo* (Hurst and Blackett, 1930).

an important centre at Roehampton. Though Hurlingham, Ranelagh, and Roehampton were to prove the most fashionable, polo clubs sprang up in many parts—at Wimbledon, the Crystal Palace, Eden Park, Kingsbury, and Cricklewood, and in many provincial towns. What is more, the sport also spread to America.

A second game made its way from India about now. A number of Army officers had become increasingly absorbed by a pastime known as Poona, which they had been playing while on foreign service, and, on their return home, had brought back to try out in their own gardens. Hearing of this, the enthusiastic sportsman the Duke of Beaufort decided to introduce this game at one of the many house-parties he was giving at his famous Gloucestershire seat of Badminton. The year was 1873.

Played with long-handled rackets, shuttlecocks, and high nets, it appealed to this aristocratic gathering, many of whom bought sets of their own, changing the name of the game at the same time to badminton, in honour of the place where they had first seen it played. Badminton was not to gain the same publicity as that enjoyed by some of the other sports of this time, however, and for several years was confined to the country house and private garden. It was not until towards the end of the eighties, as more and more men retired from Indian life and elected to settle in such towns as Bath and Cheltenham, that badminton clubs began to be formed to any extent. Even then it was 1895 before badminton had its controlling body, and a further five years before it could boast its championships, now such a popular feature of the sporting calendar.

Meanwhile yet a third pastime had been brought from another country. Groups of white men travelling among the North American Indians had become increasingly absorbed by an extraordinary tribal pursuit, which from start to finish seems to have occupied close on the full twenty-four hours. At midnight, we are told,[1] several hundred men from two tribes would move in solemn procession to pre-selected goals in the prairie, where they then spent the entire night dancing, shouting, and yelling. Somewhere about nine o'clock in the morning the whole gathering would settle down to beating a "tightly bound bundle of raw hide" by means of a stick containing a circular head that had been partially strung with gut. The contest was as between tribe and tribe, and the goals

[1] *Encyclopædia of Sport.*

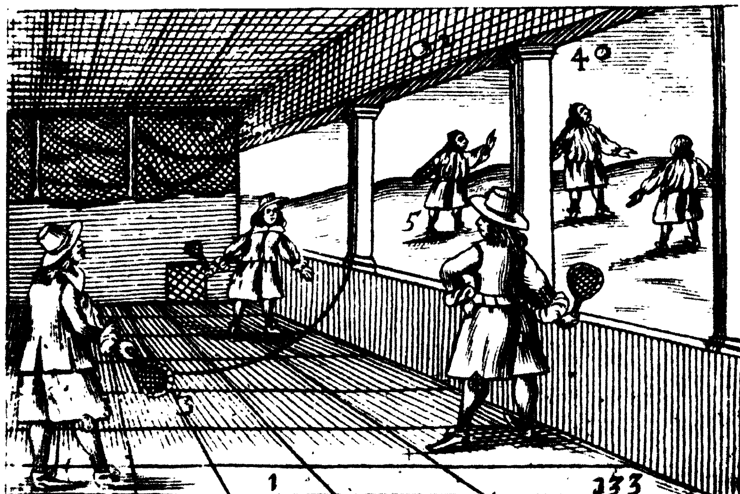
RACKETS IN THE COURTYARD OF A DEBTORS' PRISON, THE REPUTED BIRTHPLACE OF THE GAME

Badminton Library

A WALKING-RACE AGAINST TIME

George Wilson walking 1000 miles in twenty consecutive days.

"Picture Post" Library



TENNIS IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

"Picture Post" Library

TENNIS: THE OPENING OF THE NEW PRINCE'S CLUB, KNIGHTSBRIDGE, IN 1888

A. Lyttelton is playing C. Saunders.

"Picture Post" Library

might be anything up to two miles apart. Horses, dogs, and robes were offered as prizes, and, in their determination to win such treasures, it was customary for the wives of the tribesmen to run down the prairie whipping their husbands to greater exertions. In such manner the game would continue until sundown.

When, later, these Indians began to move into the towns certain of the white population devised a less strenuous method of play, which in time they brought to England under the name of lacrosse. Its reception was not encouraging. Admittedly, a few towns formed clubs of their own almost at the outset, yet in the main the game enjoyed a small following, and, indeed, might well never have become established but for the support accorded it by the Leys School and its bursar, C. T. Isard, who later succeeded in introducing it to Cambridge University. It is not until 1890 that we hear of any official championship, and even then there was to be an interval of five years before a second was staged.

By contrast hockey—the game that the Irishmen had played in the fields behind the British Museum—was now steadily growing in favour. The public schools had been dabbling with it in unscientific fashion for some time, and those leaving school had started up various clubs of their own in London and elsewhere. But it was still very lacking in uniformity. There was, for instance, still no limit as to the number of players who might compete. No one cared greatly as to which kind of ball he hit, or, indeed, with which sort of implement he endeavoured to hit it. The "finesse" that Strutt had witnessed among the Irishmen was entirely lacking. In the autumn of 1875, however, methods started to become more orthodox when a number of supporters banded themselves together into an association and framed the first set of rules. Although this body petered out while still in its infancy, a certain Wimbledon club gradually assumed such power that by 1883 others automatically turned to it for a lead. The number of players was then restricted to eleven a side, of which eight were to be forwards, two half-backs or backs, and one goalkeeper. With this set-up strength through might became the principle, and no tactics were frowned upon that proved successful in getting the ball through the goal.

By 1886 the number of followers had multiplied so greatly that it was decided to set up a recognized Hockey Association, and the game gradually took on its present dimensions. Sticks became standardized; the make-up of the team took the form we know

to-day; dribbling, short hitting, and passing began to take the place of long drives and wild rushes down the field. With each new improvement further clubs started up to add to the rapidly swelling list. Women entered the field for the first time; schools found in hockey an excellent alternative to the now popular football as a recreation for the spring term; and within four years the universities had begun to compete against each other. Soon, too, England had been divided into regions. Finally, in 1894 a picked team of English players decided to test their skill against the decendants of the very men who had first brought 'hurley' to England a hundred or more years before—the Irish.

Still, popular as it had now become, hockey was held as naught by comparison with croquet, which also came to us from Ireland. When pall-mall finally died out in England it lingered for a while in varying forms in other lands. In France, for instance, the peasants of the eighteenth century made themselves arches of cane through which they would knock their boxwood balls by means of home-made mallets. They cared little for the driving element, but considered the latter stages of pall-mall a game in themselves. Later the Irish, possibly through some traveller having seen these peasants at play, devised a not dissimiliar form of the game.

Somewhere about the middle of the nineteenth century John Jaques visited Ireland and watched some of these peasants. Although their rules seemed scanty and their implements rough-and-ready, their play appealed to him. He made a note of such regulations as there were, and, on his return to England, set to work publishing them and making hoops and mallets from the patterns he had obtained on his travels. Even with the improvements he saw fit to make, nobody could have called it a good game, played, as it was, with only one hand in order that the womenfolk might be able to hold up their parasols to guard their complexions from the sun. It was altogether too flippant—a spiteful business, where a brother would delight to put his foot on his own ball and drive his sister's to the far corner of the lawn; a game of frills and fancies, of petticoats, giggles, and maidenly blushes. "*Tight* croquet," they called it.

Yet, strange to say, croquet was not without its male supporters. In the Gloucestershire village of Moreton-in-Marsh, where his invalid brother was squire, Walter Jones Whitmore, a clerk in a Government department, found considerable pleasure in competing against some of the women neighbours on his brother's lawn.

To him it seemed to be fascinating and futile—a meaningless game as it stood, but one that offered promise. Thus in the hope of fostering it he decided to organize in August 1867 a sort of trial tournament on a near-by bowling-green. When he became the winner he was not unnaturally proclaimed England's first croquet champion.

As Mr Arthur Lillie tells us,[1] this tournament provided a great fillip, and throughout the autumn and winter Whitmore busied himself with writing and publishing a book on suggested tactics, afterwards being instrumental in setting up a "committee of experts" to form new laws upon which to conduct an altogether more elaborate tournament in the following summer. Under these rules the lawn was restricted to 100 yards by 60 yards; 'loose' croquet took preference over the spiteful 'tight'; such phrases as 'dead ball' and 'live ball' made their appearance; while the players were now permitted to use both hands if they wished.

Whitmore obtained the consent of Lord Redesdale to hold his second tournament on Moreton cricket-ground. A guinea entry-fee was charged; lunch was provided on the ground by a certain Mr King, who was 'mine host' at the White Hart; and the tournament was played in pairs, "the first set of pairs being drawn, and the winners afterwards coming together as in coursing." Whitmore, although himself beaten in the second round by Walter Peel, who went on to win the whole tournament, realized his ambition. Crowds came from far and near, and so successful was the tournament that before long it was decided to form an All-England Croquet Club.

Four acres of land, laid in terraces at Wimbledon, provided the headquarters, and Whitmore, supported by many of the nobility, became its first secretary. The effect of this new move was far-reaching. Many regarded croquet as the most popular sport of the era. Old clubs that had been started even before Whitmore's venture, such as Harry Hargood's at Worthing (1865) and the University Club at Oxford (1867), took on a new lease of life, while new ones began to spring up like mushrooms. Hargood himself opened a second on the lawns of the Royal Pavilion at Brighton (an annual ball, complete with music provided by a band of the Grenadier Guards, becoming one of the 'attractions'), while those who had taken part in the Moreton tournaments also set up centres at Bognor, Eastbourne, Cheltenham, and elsewhere.

[1] *Croquet* (Longmans, 1897).

In 1870 the secretaries of some forty of these clubs held a conference at the Charing Cross Hotel in London to frame the famous Conference Laws prior to the official opening of the All-England Club later in the year.

Alas, in the midst of these developments Whitmore became involved in a dispute with a colleague, J. H. Hale, and resigned from Wimbledon to form a travelling club, setting up his headquarters in Gloucestershire, where he proceeded to organize tournaments in some of the more remote parts. With these two influences—Wimbledon and Whitmore—at work, every town soon had its club; every private house with a garden worthy of the name had its 'lawn.'

About 1882, however, croquet, quite unexpectedly, went completely out of fashion. All of a sudden it was deemed so effeminate that even the few faithful adherents preferred not to reveal their true feelings lest they be laughed at. The trouble was that another game had come to take its place—'lawn tennis,' they called it, to distinguish it from 'real tennis.' In the first place it had been included in the programme at Wimbledon as a side attraction, but now it was proving the main interest.

Croquet was saved from complete extinction, however, when in 1894 a Maidstone man, Barlow by name, levelled a large area of land at a cost of more than £3000. On this a Mrs Hill, who had been one of the original members at Cheltenham, proceeded to organize a kind of 'come-back' tournament for a challenge cup presented by F. H. Ayres. Her efforts were rewarded. Three years later the number of entries had swollen to over 160, the championships took their place in the sporting calendar once more, and in 1900 the Croquet Association was formed.

Another game with a similarity to pall-mall to gain favour about this time was golf. For some reason its progress to popularity had been slow. The old Knuckle Club at Blackheath had, admittedly, enjoyed a certain following from early days, but that, it seems, was due largely to its social attractions. As Andrew Lang says,[1] the old minutes record bets in the form of "gallons of claret," whereas, on the sporting side, it is doubtful whether a round of 132 would have been considered bad play. That the game was still something of a rarity in this country in the early years of the nineteenth century can be seen from the fact that well into the Victorian era writers in the various sporting journals were still

[1] *Golf* (Badminton Library).

giving 'newsy' descriptions of how the game was played in Scotland. And even these informative people were by no means always certain of their ground. Few reports were published without some one finding at least one technical error to correct.

Not until the eighties could golf in England be described as established. Improvements began in 1822, when the Knuckle became the Blackheath Golf Club, an altogether more stable body. Almost at once a number of innovations were made, both here and in Scotland, to help speed the rise to more universal popularity. Clubs grew lighter in weight and more numerous in shape. While the wooden putter gave place to one of iron, the balls, once made of boiled leather, stuffed with feathers and then sewn up, were by mid-century fashioned of gutta-percha, painted and well hammered. One idea followed another, each designed to lengthen and improve the flight of the ball. Finally, in 1888 the Royal and Ancient Golf Club at St Andrews, for long the fountain-head in Scotland, decided to draft a code of rules for general adoption.

There was nothing revolutionary about this code; the old order hardly changed. Yet the effect was instant. One by one new clubs came into being throughout the length and breadth of England, with Blackheath, Westward Ho!, Sandwich, Hoylake, and Wimbledon proving the main attractions. Within a short time golf had become the sport of prince—Edward VII when Prince of Wales was a keen exponent—and common man alike, the sport we know to-day. Not only that; certain of the English clubs began to share with the Scottish the privilege of providing the venue for the various championships.

Nevertheless, despite its great and almost meteoric rise to popularity, it was not really so very different from the golf that James I's courtiers had played more than 250 years before; only in the finer points of play, and, of course, in the matter of implements, did it show any very marked change.

Everybody who had wind enough in his lungs now played some kind of game, and those who had not at least became enthusiastic spectators. Every pastime, however great or humble, had its quota of followers. Even real tennis, the one game to show a marked decline during the Georgian era, bore distinct signs of revival. One after the other the old courts had either fallen into decay or else been pulled down; Henry VIII's court remained almost the only survivor of a bygone age. Yet at various intervals throughout the Victorian age we hear once more of courts being built, until before

the end of the century we find in London alone two at Queen's Club, two at Prince's Club, and one at Lord's, while in the provinces we come upon others at Brighton, Leamington, Cambridge, and Manchester. Moreover, whereas in 1604 a court had been built at Jesus College, Cambridge, for a mere £8 7*s.* 6*d.*, now they thought nothing of spending £2000 or more on such an enterprise.[1]

It was as a rich man's sport that tennis now made its appeal. While the vast majority never even graced the inside of a court, the enthusiasm of the wealthy and of the professionasl was such as would have gladdened the hearts of both Henry VIII and Charles II. Many hard matches were played by the professionals against the French and Americans, with George Lambert, Charles Saunders, and Peter Latham standing out as the leading lights of their time. In the amateur field the universities, always loath to be left out of anything, started their singles and four-handed contests in 1859, and eight years later the M.C.C. inaugurated their Gold Racket and Silver Racket tournaments, both of which were to become highly coveted titles. While Julian Marshall was the first to carry away the latter, John Moyer Heathcote proved himself the undoubted master of the age by winning the Gold no fewer than fifteen years in succession, and seventeen times altogether, before eventually falling to the Hon. Alfred Lyttelton, who himself went on to secure no fewer than twelve victories.

By 1889 the revival had become so complete that the Queen's Club Cup, for which the players had competed spasmodically for several decades, gave way to the first official Amateur Championships.

Tennis was not the only game to become the almost exclusive property of the well-to-do. Rackets had risen from one extreme to another, from the debtor's prison and low drinking-houses to the public schools and universities.

As early as 1822, two years after the celebrated Robert Mackay is said to have proclaimed himself first "champion," the boys of Harrow School had started playing a similar game in an open court not unlike that formed by the gaol-birds in the Fleet prison. It is said that when Sir William Hart-Dyke, who himself learned the game at Harrow, won the championship in 1862 he was the first man bred outside prison gates to do so.

Harrow's lead was soon followed by Rugby and Eton, and not

[1] *Encyclopædia of Sport.*

long afterwards the Royal Artillery built a special enclosed court at Woolwich containing both side- and back-walls. Mr John Armitage tells us[1] that the turning-point came in 1853 with the building, in Hans Place, of Prince's Club, now known as Old Prince's to distinguish it from the more modern building that has come to take its place. With this aristocratic centre as its headquarters, rackets became, for good and all, "the sport of an educated and more wealthy minority," and left for ever the taverns and other less worthy institutions. Not only was Prince's the headquarters, but its centre court, measuring some 60 feet by 30 feet, became the standard upon which all others were to be modelled.

In 1868, thirteen years after the inauguration of the inter-varsity contests, the public schools added considerable impetus by holding the first of a series of championships that have steadily gained in importance with the march of time, as more and more have added rackets to their regular curriculum. These and many other matches were all played at Prince's. But, alas, by 1886, when rackets was really gaining favour, 'progress' was on its way, and Prince's had to be pulled down to fit in with certain town-planning schemes. Far from proving detrimental, however, this accident of fate, strangely enough, was accompanied by a considerable broadening of scope. Within quite short time a court had been built at Lord's, and Queen's Club, already famous for its tennis, became the new headquarters. A modern Prince's was constructed close to the site of the old, while such of the universities, military centres, and public schools as were not already in possession of at least one court soon boasted courts of their own.

Two years later the amateur championships were started, and in just under twenty years rackets joined hands with tennis under a central administration. This was a not inappropriate move, seeing that the two games had long been steering parallel courses, often sharing the same clubs and the same players. If Sir William Hart-Dyke and the remarkable six Gray brothers, who almost entirely dominated the field from 1863 to 1887, preferred to confine their attentions to rackets, Peter Latham, H. B. ("Punch") Fairs, the Hon. A. Lyttelton, and others built up almost equally fine reputations on both courts.

Ball-play of many forms was now emerging from the public schools in its new coat. While the Harrow boys also devised

[1] *Rackets, Squash-rackets, Tennis, Fives, and Badminton* (Lonsdale Library).

squash-rackets as a cheaper alternative to rackets that might be played with a rubber ball and a less expensive implement, Eton and Rugby were to introduce two quite independent versions of fives. By the latter part of the century many of the public schools had built courts of their own, and had even begun playing matches against each other. Since, however, few of these courts were alike, each school adopted a technique to suit the local conditions. At Eton, for instance, the boys had previously played the game on their chapel steps, where they had been compelled to hit round, or dodge, a buttress in much the same way as the hand-ball players of the Middle Ages had been obstructed by certain architectural features of the village church. To the Eton boys this buttress became so much a part of the game that when they built their courts they imitated the whole make-up of their original play-ground, bringing in a step and a dummy buttress, or, as it has since become known, 'pepper-box.' At other schools conditions were entirely different. Unaccustomed to playing among such natural hazards, the Rugby boys contented themselves with a rather large but more straightforward court, set on one level, while Winchester in turn preferred yet a third variety. Once the schools started to challenge one another, this wide diversity of both court and technique became altogether too confusing. Thus the fives-players tended to fall into two categories, with some, like Harrow, Charterhouse, and Westminster, favouring the Eton idea, and others, such as Winchester, Marlborough, and Repton, preferring to follow the Rugbeian system.

While out of doors one game after another gradually acquired more order, inside the billiard-rooms, where the "sponging cater-pillars" of Cotton's time had once swarmed, matters also began to mend. Even before Victoria's time Jack Carr, who was marker at the billiard-room kept by a Mr Bartley at Bath, had learned from his master the secret of scoring his ball by striking it slightly to one side, and had immediately set to work turning his discovery into dividends. After devoting considerable time to perfecting this new stroke he decided to display his skill to the many customers who came to the rooms. When pressed to divulge his secret he would modestly attribute his success to a new kind of chalk—a "twisting chalk," he called it—which he had discovered. This he would willingly sell to anyone at half a crown a box.[1] But if Carr was a 'twister' in more senses than one he was also a good player, so

[1] *Billiards* (Badminton Library).

that, even after his swindle had been detected and the true secret discovered, this new stroke found its way into the play.

Then affairs were improved by a certain Edwin Kentfield, popularly known as "Jonathan," who was the generally acknowledged champion, and John Thurston, who supplied him with his equipment. To Kentfield the present tables, with their warped wooden beds, cushions, and rough baize covering, seemed crude and hindered good play. Thurston agreed that something better was needed, and before long was able to replace the tables at the Brighton rooms with new ones containing slate beds and rubber cushions, and covered with a finer baize. Thus somewhere about 1839 Kentfield's saloon became the talk of the day, and Kentfield himself was able to remain the figurehead of billiards for ten more years, before, rather than risk being defeated by John Roberts, who had introduced the 'spot' stroke and had come from Manchester to challenge him, he elected to retire.

Such was the custom of those days. No one contested a championship: he just assumed the title after the holder had rejected his challenge. It is not until 1870, after Roberts himself had held the title for twenty years, that we come upon anything in the way of a recognized contest. A pupil of Roberts', William Cook, encouraged by a number of spectacular victories, elected to challenge his former master to a match for £500 a side. When, after a certain amount of hesitation, Roberts decided to break with precedent and accept the news spread throughout the country. A group of professionals held a special meeting to frame new rules, improvements were made to the tables, and, as with so many other sports, the coming championship became the main topic of conversation. So that when, on February 11, the much-talked-of match eventually took place at St James's Hall even the Prince of Wales was moved to attend, and billiards assumed a new importance.

Of the vast crowd that thronged the hall to watch Cook defeat his former master but a small percentage had ever seen a game of billiards before; fewer still had played it. Yet this was a hey-day in the annals of billiards, and but a foretaste of things to come. John Roberts had a son to redeem the family fortunes, and many keen matches were played between Cook and the younger Roberts in the next sixteen years, the title frequently passing from one to the other. And when, in 1888, the amateurs too entered the field by introducing an event of their own, billiards began to travel even faster along its road to popularity.

It was a crowded road that wound its way through this mannerly Victorian Age; a road that led sport of every description in proud procession towards a new century. When, at last, the Royal Standard was lowered to half-mast at Osborne House to announce the end of a great and record reign a new era in sport could be said to have dawned. Rich and poor, old and young, men, women, and children, now played games on a greater scale, and in a finer spirit, than ever before.

Taking its place along that road, moving rather quickly, though sometimes haltingly, and, in many people's opinion, not a little dangerously, was a new class of vehicle. The motor-car had arrived to supersede the buggies, phaetons, and other horse-drawn vehicles beloved of the Corinthians.

In May 1900, shocking to tell, these new enthusiasts set out from Whitehall in no fewer than sixty-five vehicles on a trial that was to take them over a thousand miles of British roadways on a route that included such towns as Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, Carlisle, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Leeds, Sheffield, and Nottingham.

There had, of course, been motor-racing in France for some time, and in the previous year James Gordon Bennett had presented a trophy for one of these Continental races. But for England this was something quite new, and it was the idea of Claud Johnson, secretary of the recently formed Automobile Club. It was not really so much a race as an endurance test, designed to prove to the public the importance of this new branch of the engineering industry. No one was allowed by law to travel at a greater speed than twelve miles an hour, since to exceed such a rate would be dangerous. Yet even that merited criticism, it seems. Anyone who ventured along the roads in such a machine was all but despised, while the innkeeper who trusted a motorist to pay his bill was considered rash. Such a venture as holding a trial upon the open road was unthinkable, and could not help but end in death and destruction. So said the critics.

But once more they were to be confounded. The trial was a success; the foundation-stone of motor-racing in England had been laid. "Hundreds of country gentlemen and well-to-do people began to realize the utility of the motor vehicle, and to press it into daily service."[1] Contests were arranged in various parts. Storms raged in the House of Commons between the supporters and the opponents of this new sport, but the speed-limit increased to

[1] *Encyclopædia of Sport.*

twenty miles an hour. Moreover, in 1904 women entered the field with the formation of the Ladies' Automobile Association, and two years later H. F. Locke King conceived the idea of laying out a race-track, at a cost of some £150,000, on his private estate near Weybridge, thereby providing a spot where motorists could hold their tests unhampered by thoughts of speed-limits and free from the prying eyes of the police. In 1907 eighty truck-loads of material, handled by six locomotives over seven miles of railway track, arrived to reconstruct this estate. "Over 2000 labourers, aided by ten steam grabs, toiled for a year, 200,000 tons of concrete were laid, and one of the first ferro-concrete bridges in the world was constructed, and, lo, the first, and our only, Motor Course came into being."[1]

Brooklands had been born; the age of speed had dawned; the way had been paved for Sir Malcolm Campbell, Sir Henry Segrave, and others to dumbfound the world with their records on both land and water in the new era that was at hand.

[1] *Motor Sport* (February 1946).

CHAPTER XII

Two Games from One

ONE of the first games to find its way on to the school curriculum under Dr Arnold's new educational-reform plan was football. This does not imply that it had been shorn entirely of its roughness in other places, however. As may be seen from a somewhat racy description in *The Sporting Magazine*, the Shrove Tuesday contest at Kingston, for example, remained as lively as ever:

> . . . even the windows of the first and second stories were all barricaded. . . . Some houses displayed the handicraft work of the carpenter, some of the hurdle-maker, some of the currier, some of the carpet vender, and others of the sail-cloth manufacturer; in short, all vulnerable parts, such as windows, fan-lights, lamps, and the like, were promptly converted into a shape of resistance. . . .
>
> [The ball] consisted of a large bullock's bladder well filled with air, and secured in a stout leathern case. . . . The moment for starting being announced by the tolling of the town bell . . . the task devolved upon Mr Redford, of the Castle Hotel, to give the starting kick, which he executed in a lofty and effective manner. By this time an immense concourse of persons, of all denominations, had assembled in the grand market street. . . .To describe the immense noise and cheering that followed the first mounting of the ball would beggar description. . . . A simultaneous motion and rush followed . . . and the scene that presented itself by the alteration of the apparel of many who had fallen to the ground, and in consequence got well bedaubed with mud, was truly ludicrous.
>
> The competitors at the ball were divided into two classes—namely, the inhabitants at Thames-street end of the Castle, and those of the Town's end; and the utmost energy and exertions were resorted to by the partisans of one and the other districts. . . . No obstacle appeared to daunt the anxiety of either side. To surmount the roofs of houses, scale the walls, and to plunge into the creek or river, were comparatively trifles; for wherever the object of attraction happened to be cast, whether in or out of doors, there were persons at hand ready to dash after it, regardless of any ceremony. Had a mad bull been let loose it could not have afforded greater satisfaction to the Kingston people than this leathern ball . . . and by the time the

hour of victory approached (five o'clock), the appearance of almost every person was altered, either by being mud-spattered, apparel all disordered, or otherwise being soundly ducked in the creek, or river Thames.

After the inhabitants of Thames Street had been declared the victors a sumptuous dinner, consisting of "the very best of fish, flesh, fowl, and game, as well as wine of the first quality," was arranged at the Griffin.

A lively scene, but the old brutality had disappeared, even in the traditional town games. A badly bruised body or, perhaps, a broken limb or two was the worst that any need fear now.

Yet, strangely enough, as football became more orderly, so it declined in popularity. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the public schools were virtually its only supporters—other than the few towns like Kingston who kept to their one customary game—but from them it was to emerge in many different forms. As with fives, a great diversity of style and technique was brought about at these schools, not through the mere whims of individual boys or groups of boys, but through sheer force of circumstances. The governing factor was the size and shape of the playground.

While one or two schools, like Rugby, possessed spacious fields, others, such as Charterhouse and Westminster, had to content themselves with their cloisters and, perhaps, a small flagged playground. Each, then, had to adopt, discard, or modify the various features of the old style of play to suit its peculiar circumstances. Thus, whereas the rushing tactics of street football remained practicable at Rugby, they were obviously entirely out of the question at both Charterhouse and Westminster—assuming, that is, that a single window was to remain intact, and that the boys themselves were to survive their youth! Collaring and throwing, therefore, had to be abolished, but in their place was devised a system of dribbling the ball at the feet, whereby it could be kept low and the risk to both life and architecture minimized. So it was that the Carthusians and Westminsters gradually sowed the seeds of Association football.

On the other hand, at Eton, Harrow, and Winchester, where such drastic alterations were not necessary, still further variations were found necessary. Whereas at Winchester the boys were lucky in owning an area of grassland, known as "the Meads," this was nevertheless somewhat limited in size. So the centre of the field was reserved for cricket and the surrounding edge for football. By

dividing this piece of ground into pitches some 80 yards long by 25 yards wide it was found possible to hold four different games at the same time. "To keep the ball within the prescribed limits, the ancient custom is generally believed to have been first to mark out the space with stakes and ropes, then outside the ropes to place a line of shivering fags."[1] In time the fags gave place to wattle hurdles, which in turn were replaced by nets.

Unlike the London schools—Charterhouse had not yet removed to Godalming—the Wykehamists found it unnecessary to resort to dribbling. On the other hand, their limitation of space rendered it imperative to place some sort of curb on the old traditional methods of play. Thus we find them introducing rules banning kicking the ball higher than five feet, forbidding two players on the same side to touch the ball in succession, except in special circumstances, stipulating when it was to be punted and when drop-kicked, laying down when a player might be collared, and so on. In short, they developed a version that remains to this day entirely their own.

Harrow too was to adopt her peculiar style for an entirely different reason—to overcome the handicap of possessing low-lying clay fields in days before land-drainage had reached its present standards. With the fields often a slimy quagmire, a heavier ball was needed, and this called for certain modifications in the play. Though eleven players constituted a team (nine of them being in the forward line), a compromise between the old methods and those of Charterhouse and Westminster was reached in which kicking and catching were allowed, but running and collaring were banned.

So also the Etonians developed their Field and Wall Games. The great event in the Wall Game is the annual St Andrew's Day match between Collegers and Oppidans, and Mr John Rodgers assures us[2] that the game is so difficult that "goals are scored on an average about three times in a hundred years."

At each of these schools, then—Eton, Harrow, Winchester, Charterhouse, and Westminster—entirely new and individual varieties of football evolved quite naturally from the one common origin. Only at Rugby did the old game survive in anything like its traditional form. There the field was so large that the whole school, numbering perhaps three hundred, were able to take part

[1] *Football* (Badminton Library).
[2] *The Old Public Schools of England* (Batsford, 1938).

together, and often the boys would dodge about among the trees for two hours, forming scrummages of such vast proportions that often the ball would entirely disappear from sight for quite long periods.

But even at Rugby it was more of a kicking game than anything else. True, a player might catch the ball, but he was not allowed to run forward with it. Should he find himself unable to kick it at once, he could go back as far as he pleased in the direction of his own goal, and the opposing players were not permitted to advance beyond the spot where the ball had been caught until he had either punted it himself or had placed it for some one else to kick. It was by means of these place-kicks that most of the goals were scored. In the latter half of 1823, however, a boy named William Webb Ellis caused something of a sensation by totally disregarding these rules. Catching the ball in his arms, he made straight off, as fast as he could go, in the direction of his opponents' goal. What happened afterwards is not known, but it seems that his behaviour, although at first condemned as unfair, left an impression, for by 1830 running forward had become the order of the day, and the seeds of Rugby football were sown.

A granite slab in the "Doctor's Wall," facing the principal Rugby pitch on the historic "Close," serves to remind us of the far-reaching consequences of this "ungentlemanly action":

THIS STONE
COMMEMORATES THE EXPLOITS OF
WILLIAM WEBB ELLIS
WHO WITH A FINE DISREGARD FOR THE RULES OF FOOTBALL
AS PLAYED IN HIS TIME
FIRST TOOK THE BALL IN HIS ARMS AND RAN WITH IT,
THUS ORIGINATING THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURE OF
THE RUGBY GAME
A.D. 1823

In 1923 the Rugby Unions of England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland celebrated the event by sending the best players from the four countries to play a centenary match on the very pitch where Ellis had excelled himself.

From somewhere about 1830, or perhaps a little later, football at Rugby, with its famous Bigside, began to assume more modern proportions, and was recognized and encouraged by Dr Arnold. By 1857, when Thomas Hughes, himself a Rugbeian, eventually gave the game to the world at large through his classic description

of "School House versus School" in *Tom Brown's School Days*, it was fast approaching maturity. In fact, despite the great number that still constituted a team, and despite the bevies of fags who were deputed to keep goal, another Rugbeian, Mr Arthur Guillemard, who was at one time President of the Rugby Union, assures us[1] that the game

> did not differ materially from the present style as regards the placing of the players, the three divisions of forwards affected by Old Brooke corresponding with the centre and wing players of modern times, the "dodgers" being our half-backs, and the boys "in quarters" the three-quarter-backs and full-backs. Nor from the account of the struggle do we judge that the leading principles of the game have been in any way altered.

The many changes that have taken place since then have not affected the *character* of the game.

By now many other schools were beginning to take up football. While some chose to adopt the dribbling tactics of Charterhouse and Westminster, others preferred to follow the lead of Rugby, their choice often being influenced by the arrival of some master who himself had been educated at one or other of these schools. In much the same way were these two forms to be popularized at the universities—where, as we have seen, the traditional game had been played at least since Charles II's time—by the arrival of new undergraduates. And when these men passed from their public schools and universities into the outside world they began to form clubs in their home towns.

Thus before the sixties we find football definitely falling into two camps, leaving the games as played at Eton, Harrow, and Winchester to remain as purely local affairs. 'Dribbling' clubs sprang up in London, Sheffield, and Hallam; 'Rugby' clubs at Blackheath and Richmond.

Not every one took kindly to this parting of the ways, however. In 1863 an attempt was made to unite the two camps under one uniform code, when the various London clubs endeavoured to formulate a common system of play. One proposal, we are told,[2] was "to allow running either when the ball was caught on a fair catch or caught on a bound"; another was that hacking and tripping should be sanctioned at times when an adversary was actually running with the ball.

[1] Rev. Francis Marshall, *Football: The Rugby Union Game*, edited by L. Tosswill (Cassell, 1925).

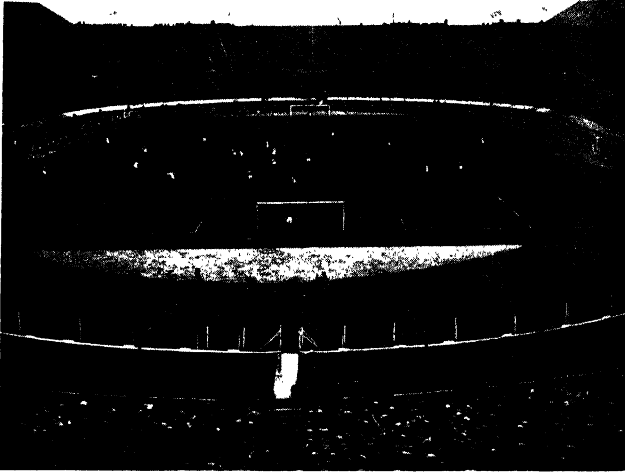
[2] *Football* (Badminton Library).

A WOMEN'S STOOLBALL MATCH AT HORSHAM

"Picture Post" Library

ALL-ENGLAND CROQUET CHAMPIONSHIP AT WIMBLEDON IN 1870

"Picture Post" Library



A CUP FINAL AT WEMBLEY
Fox Photos

SKATING AT THE EMPIRE POOL, WEMBLEY
Fox Photos

A committee was formed to go into the matter, but negotiations broke down before any concrete decisions could be reached. For up at Cambridge a fraternity of 'dribblers,' apparently unknown to the others, had been equally busy working out means of overcoming the few slight divergencies that existed even among themselves. Under their code tripping, hacking, tackling, and running with the ball were definitely taboo. When news of their action broke, efforts at appeasement were at once made by the London committee, with the result that it was agreed to hold a joint conference.

Since, however, the Cambridge enthusiasts were largely men from what are now termed the "soccer schools," the outcome was a foregone conclusion. As soon as they appeared on the scene the members of the London 'dribbling' clubs, always prejudiced against the Rugby tactics, found their courage and withdrew the approval which they had already given reluctantly to the clauses governing running and tackling. This proved the breaking-point, and in 1863 the soccer patrons formed themselves into the Football Association, a move which was followed eight years later by the supporters of the Rugby game uniting under the Rugby Football Union.

Up to now soccer had been a somewhat disjointed affair, in which everything hinged upon the performance and achievements of individuals rather than upon team-work. The fact that it was illegal to pass the ball forward left little alternative but for a man to dash down the field on his own. Nor was any very intelligent attempt made at placing the field. One or two players might be detailed to support the goalkeeper, but the rest moved about more or less as they thought fit. This caused a tendency for the majority to bunch together as forwards, leaving only one or two players to hover in the background for defensive purposes.

Four years after the formation of the Football Association it was decided to waive the ban on forward passing and allow a player to kick the ball to one of his own side so long as at least three of the opposing team stood between him and the goal at the time. This led to the field being placed more on present-day lines. Dribbling was accompanied by passing, and, in short, team-work began to take the place of individual runs.

By 1872 so many amateur clubs had been started that the Football Association decided to hold a competition to test their relative skill, and in doing so gave birth to the famous 'Cup-ties.' The

final of this championship was held on Surrey's cricket-ground at the Oval, when a meagre crowd grumbled at having to pay an admission-fee of a shilling to watch the Wanderers beat the Royal Engineers by one goal to nil. In the same year the first 'international' was also staged, when England and Scotland drew at Glasgow without either side scoring. Seven years later England met Wales for the first time, while in 1882 Ireland also entered the field.

In the early days of competitive play the Wanderers were remarkably successful, winning the Challenge Cup no fewer than five times in the first seven years. It was not long, however, before 'old-boys' clubs had been formed by the various schools, and when these got into their stride the Wanderers tasted defeat so consistently that they gradually disintegrated and left the Old Carthusians and Old Etonians to reign in their stead. Momentous were the matches fought between these and other amateur teams; fine, straightforward games where money held no sway, and where every one played solely for the love of the game, and the spectators would turn out as much to see Arthur (later Lord) Kinnaird's flaming red beard, ridiculous little cap, and enormous white trousers as for any other reason. For football was acquiring something of the glories of the cricket-field, with Kinnaird, who took part in no fewer than nine Cup Finals, its "W.G."

As more and more clubs began to enter, it was soon found necessary to play off the preliminary rounds for the Challenge Cup by districts. Then, in 1885, came professionalism, to be followed shortly by the formation of the Football League, with, later, its second and third divisions and its 'transfer system,' whereby a player might at any time be bought up by another club for a sum which to-day often runs into many thousands of pounds.

With the rise of professionalism the scene of the Cup Final was to shift in turn to Manchester, Everton, the Crystal Palace, and Chelsea, before eventually finding its present home at Wembley. But professionalism did far more than simply cause a change of venue: it divided soccer into two camps—the paid and the unpaid. With the professionals free to devote as much time as they liked to the game, those who, by virtue of having to earn their livings in other ways, had only the week-ends available soon found themselves unable to hold their own. Thus the Challenge Cup gradually became largely a professional affair, while three further events were introduced from time to time for the benefit of the amateurs

—the F.A. Amateur Challenge Cup, the Arthur Dunn Cup (in which, appropriately, the Old Carthusians have gained the most successes to date), and the Amateur Football Alliance Senior Challenge Cup—to say nothing of the various inter-Service matches or the university contests, first staged as far back as 1874.

If Association football was the first of the two games to boast a controlling body Rugby was nevertheless quicker to gain popularity. By the end of the sixties Rugby clubs had been formed in many parts, with those at Blackheath and Richmond held in particularly high esteem. A match between these two invariably drew the crowds, who, in their enthusiasm, had no hesitation in mixing with the players on the field. While most players naturally resented this intrusion, some, according to Mr Guillemard,[1] found their presence a distinct advantage at times:

> The clear field of play was often not more than some thirty yards broad. Then did the wily half-back see his opportunity, and dive into the thick of the shouting throng as soon as the ball was in his hands. No wood-cock flushed in cover is more wary to keep a tree between itself and the gun than was the said half-back to dodge amongst the flying spectators in such a way as to have one or more of them between himself and his would-be tacklers. The post of a full-back who could see nothing but the occasional flash of a coloured jersey nearing him at hundred yards' speed was no enviable one, and so persistently did some of the least civilised of the crowd stand between the full-backs and the ball that on one occasion at Blackheath my colleague, whose zeal sometimes outran his discretion, after vainly expostulating with a burly blacksmith, 'dashed out his left' and knocked him several yards in the direction of the touch-line.

It was at the instigation of the Richmond and Blackheath players that they and the representatives of eighteen other clubs —the Marlborough Nomads, Wimbledon Hornets, West Kent, Civil Service, the Gypsies, Clapham Rovers, Law, Guy's Hospital, Wellington College, the Harlequins, the Flamingoes, St Paul's School, Lausanne, Addison, the Mohicans, Belsize Park, Queen's House, and King's College—met in January 1871 at the Pall Mall Restaurant in Regent Street, London, to frame a set of rules for general adoption, forming at the same time the Rugby Football Union, with Edwin Ash, of Richmond, as its first secretary.

This proved an auspicious meeting, for in the same season the first 'international' was held between England and Scotland under

[1] *The Rugby Union Game.*

these new rules, when the latter won by the margin of one goal. In the following year Oxford and Cambridge started their series, and soon Ireland and Wales had joined the fray.

As for the game itself, Mr Arthur Budd, himself a prominent player, tell us[1] that when he was at Clifton in the mid-seventies a team comprised twenty players. To put one's head down in a scrummage was frowned upon, but hacking and tripping were both condoned:

> There were extraordinary formalities to be gone through in taking the ball out for a place-kick at goal. The kicker used to pick up the ball and make a mark at the place where the try was gained. He then went to the goal-line, and, having made a second mark opposite the former one, he and the placer proceeded parallel with the goal-line to as far away from the goal-posts as they liked.
>
> The defending sides were allowed to stretch forward to their utmost, provided they kept the hindmost foot on the second mark. The kicker, facing the placer and a few feet apart from him, gently punted the ball to him, and he made another mark as far inwards and towards the goal-line as he could manage to do with safety.
>
> The defending side endeavoured to frustrate this manœuvre, either by spoiling the catch, if they were able to reach the ball, or by seizing the leg of the placer while he was attempting to make . . . his mark. If they were successful in either, the kick at goal was lost.

After a while the number of players was reduced from twenty to fifteen, and the pace quickened accordingly. Soon 'heads down' became the order of the scrummages, while hacking in any circumstances gradually came to be held in bad odour. Umpires and referees next made their appearance. Then came the technique of passing and, later, of 'heeling' and 'wheeling.' As the pace grew steadily quicker with each innovation, so the placing of the field slowly took on its present form.

Though Rugby made rapid strides throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it was not until the arrival in 1905 of a New Zealand team glorying in the name of the All Blacks that it received its greatest fillip. Soon after this visit a new system of scoring came into being, the field goal was abandoned, and the bouncing of the ball from touch banned. As Mr Tosswill says,[2] the New Zealanders "demonstrated to perfection the overwhelming importance of team-work, fitness, and good backing up," and their visit, followed the next year by one from the South African Springboks, at once "stimulated all Rugby players to new efforts,

[1] *Encyclopædia of Sport.* [2] *Football: The Rugby Union Game.*

with the result that the general standard of play became higher, and has remained higher than it was before." Thus by the time the Rugby Union took possession of its headquarters at Twickenham in 1907 modern Rugby can be said to have arrived in its full glory, to undergo no more than minor changes in the years to come.

By now, however, certain of the Rugby clubs in the north had broken away from the controlling body to form an organization of their own under the style of the Northern Rugby Football Union, later to be changed to the Rugby Football League. The split occurred on the question of whether or not players might, in certain circumstances, be financially compensated for time lost at matches. In many northern clubs it had long been customary to reimburse members to the tune of a few shillings now and again, and these and other clubs, anxious that such a practice should be recognized, rather than be carried on surreptitiously, approached the Rugby Football Union on the matter. When, however, their suggestion met with an unqualified rejection twenty-two clubs from Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cheshire organized a meeting at Huddersfield in 1895, and decided to withdraw their affiliation and set up on their own. And so the road to professionalism was laid open. The new League rulings decided to allow expenses of anything up to six shillings a day per player, but it was not long before such remuneration was increased. Even the ruling that no man might earn his living from the game and continue a member appears soon to have been forgotten. The tide of professionalism rolled on, and rugger, like soccer, fell into two camps. The rules of Rugby League football, however, differ in several instances from those of the Rugby Union game.

CHAPTER XIII

The Sport of Garden and Arena

At the same time as football grew to be regarded as the principal sport of the winter months lawn tennis was beginning to take its place with cricket as one of the national pastimes of the summer.

As we have seen, a form of tennis, quite distinct from court tennis, had been played out of doors in haphazard fashion from earliest times, and in February 1874 a certain Major Walter Wingfield applied for a patent "for a new and improved portable court for playing the ancient game of tennis." An enthusiastic player both of this and the now aristocratic rackets, he devised a game that can best be described as a cross between the two, but one which could be played out of doors by men and women of all incomes.

This 'Sphairistike,' as he called it, was played on an oblong court some 60 feet long and 30 feet wide at each base, but tapering down to 21 feet in the centre to form the shape of an hour-glass, and divided in the middle by a net, at right angles to which would be arranged two further small triangular nets at either end to serve as short side-walls.

The two ends were marked out in entirely different fashion. While one, known as the 'in' court, contained simply a diamond-shaped space in the middle, the other, called the 'out' court, was divided into three sections. A line running parallel with the net, at a distance of several feet, constituted the service-line, and from the centre of this to the centre of the base-line ran a second line, forming a 'right' court and a 'left' court of equal dimensions. One player stood in each of these two courts, while the server took up his position in the diamond at the other end, and proceeded to deliver the ball alternately to each. The whole set-up was the reverse of that in vogue to-day.

Sphairistike was never adopted in its intended form, for when put to the test there were too many features that merited criticism. Nevertheless the germ of an idea had been born, and it was not long before modified versions of "Sticky," as it was at once termed

by its opponents, were being played in light-hearted fashion on the lawns of private gardens all over the country. There was no recognized version at this stage. Those who tried the game laid out a court of dimensions to suit their gardens and varied the rules as they went along. The whereabouts of trees and flower-beds played an influential part.

Yet if Major Wingfield personally was to be disappointed in his ambition, the idea of playing tennis on a private lawn at so small a cost proved so popular that in 1875 the M.C.C. placed matters on a more stable basis by drawing up a set of rules which, it was felt, might meet most conditions. The court, it was decided, was to be divided into two equal parts by a net 4 feet high in the centre and rising to 5 feet at each post. Each end was to have a base- and service-line at distances of 39 and 26 feet respectively from the net. Procedure was in many ways similar to rackets, the players, known as 'hand-in' and 'hand-out,' serving in turn for just so long as they continued to win points, and the scoring being fifteen up until such time as they reached fourteen all, when the present deuce and advantage method was adopted. About this time J. M. Heathcote discovered a method for improving the bounce of the rubber balls by covering them with flannel.

This move by the M.C.C. came at a time when the All-England Croquet Club was at about its lowest ebb. No sooner had the committee spent more than £1000 on the purchase of new grounds in Worple Road, Wimbledon, than croquet entered upon its great decline. As a last resource the All-England Club decided in this same year of 1875 to swallow their pride and give up one of their twelve lawns to badminton and this "new-fangle tennis," hoping thereby to provide a novel side-show that would help to draw the crowds to the annual tournament.

It was a happy experiment—happy, that is, from the point of view of lawn tennis. Membership increased almost overnight, but those who joined did so in order to take advantage of these new facilities. Indeed, so great was the response that in the following year it was found necessary to add a terrace of four courts to the experimental one, while the name 'lawn tennis' soon crept into the title of the club. To many this new trend came hard, but the march of public opinion was quickening against them, and it was a case of accepting lawn tennis or facing ruin.

One of the first to realize this was the club's secretary, J. H. Walsh, who was also editor of *The Field*. Unlike many of his

colleagues, he was a man of vision who advanced the cause of the new game still further by persuading the proprietors of his paper to offer a silver challenge cup as a prize, and then convincing the rest of his committee of the wisdom of organizing a separate tournament for the exclusive benefit of the swelling number of lawn-tennis players.

Since this was the first tournament of the kind ever to be held, and since, virtually, the club's future depended upon its success or failure, it was decided that no pains were to be spared in its promotion. A point upon which all were in agreement was that the M.C.C. code should not be adopted in its entirety, but that a tournament sub-committee, comprising Henry Jones, Julian Marshall, and C. G. Heathcote, should frame a new set of rules for the occasion. Under these new rules the court was to be rectangular in shape—26 yards long by 9 yards wide—while the net was to drop to 3 feet 3 inches in the centre. Scoring was to follow the same line as that used in real tennis, and, as to-day, the server was to be allowed to make two deliveries, if necessary, into each court.

Thus were the first Wimbledon Championships held on the grounds of the All-England Club in July 1877 before about two hundred spectators. Twenty-two competitors took part, and, with Henry Jones acting as referee, Spencer W. Gore, an old Harrovian and a rackets-player of no mean repute, became the first champion. It was largely his proficiency at this game that brought Gore his success, one of his greatest assets being his wrist-work, which enabled him to volley and drive at a speed which, though slow as judged by modern standards, was then considered quite exceptional.

Though the tournament was generally acclaimed a success, there was still room for improvement. It was noticed, for instance, that the rules as they stood definitely favoured the server. So in 1878 the All-England Club and the M.C.C. took the only sensible course of meeting to exchange views and frame a joint code. As a result the height of the net was lowered a further three inches both in the centre and at the posts, while the service-lines were brought nearer to the net. These and one or two other modifications were put into effect in time for the second championship, when P. F. Hadow won the singles from a field now swollen to thirty-four, beating Gore, who unfortunately was suffering from a sprained wrist, in the final.

By 1881 the lawn-tennis vogue had spread throughout the length

and breadth of the British Isles. A doubles event had been added at Wimbledon three years previously, and the crowd that came to watch had risen to close on 1500; the energetic Walsh had been succeeded by Julian Marshall in the secretaryship of the club; balls were becoming more and more standardized and rackets lighter; technicalities of rules were one by one giving way to those in vogue to-day. Moreover, clubs and associations were springing into being in many parts, and with them came further tournaments.

Even so lawn tennis was still a pat-ball affair, patronized mainly by people of middle age. The volleying technique adopted by Gore in the first championship had not been practised by others, for, as Gore himself explained later,[1] his success had been helped by the fact that most of his opponents were exponents of real tennis, who returned the ball over the net at an extremely convenient height, whereas in the following year Hadow had countered the volleying by lobbing the ball inconveniently over his head.

In 1881, however, Wimbledon was to awake to a new era of hard hitting as two young brothers, neither of them, I believe, over twenty, proceeded to smash their way to victory. Their names were William and Ernest Renshaw, and they hailed from Cheltenham. Already in the previous year, they had given a foretaste of their skill, when together they had carried off the doubles at both Wimbledon and Oxford, while William had also won the singles in Dublin. Yet, apart from remarking on the fact that their pace was rather faster than they would choose, few had then paid any great attention to them.

Few there were who remained unimpressed by them now, for not only had their pace grown faster in the intervening twelve months, but they were also successful in developing a new technique, which paid them remarkably good dividends in singles and doubles alike. By standing on or near the service-line, rather than up at the net, as Gore had done, and, in fact, as they themselves had previously done, and then volleying almost every ball that came their way, they soon discovered that they could drive with considerable accuracy all over the court, and tire out their opponents in very short time. And when these brothers went on to perfect the somewhat feeble attempts at overarm serving, first started by A. T. Myers, they were at once in a class of their own. Together they won the doubles at Wimbledon on no fewer than

[1] *Lawn Tennis* (Badminton Library).

seven occasions, while, by gaining the singles championship a similar number of times, William set up a record that has yet to be beaten.

By no means every one approved of these boisterous methods! While the pat-ball exponents condemned such methods as unfair, the croquet enthusiasts simply shrugged their shoulders and grumbled that things were going from bad to worse, and even the most ardent supporters of this new sport wondered at first whether the brothers were not perhaps really going a little too far with their "Renshaw smash."

Once again the critics were to be confounded, as within short time it grew to be realized that the Renshaws were building a new Wimbledon from the ashes of the old, and setting lawn tennis on the road to prosperity and infinite greatness. Mr Gore himself described them[1] as "a new race" of player who were able to bring about improvements because they had taken up the game in their youth. With the arrival of the Renshaws lawn tennis divided into two schools of thought—the volleyers and the base-liners, with William Renshaw the greatest exponent of the former and H. F. Lawford of the latter.

As the brothers gained one victory after another the game began to enjoy a following hitherto unknown. Since the weather was so often inclement, people demanded other types of court than grass. So we hear of frequent experiments being made at building courts of brick-rubble, brick-dust, asphalt, concrete, wood, and various other substances. In 1883 an attempt was made at Borrie Blair's court, near Stockton, at playing indoors by means of 3000-candle-power bulbs, and two years later Lawford won the first covered-courts championship on the newly opened Hyde Park courts in Dorchester Square, about the same time as a new system of tournament draws, drafted by R. B. Bagnall-Wild with the idea of bringing all byes into the first round, was beginning to be adopted.

Then, in 1884, women made their first appearances at Wimbledon, when Maud Watson secured the new title and set the tongues wagging once more. Though perhaps no great harm could come of their playing the old style pat-ball on their private lawns so long as they took plenty of rests, tournament play was all too tiring for the weaker sex, they would declare. Even those who were not openly opposed to their entry were at pains to think out means of

[1] *Lawn Tennis* (Badminton Library).

simplifying the business for them. And, needless to say, when men and women found themselves playing together it was deemed only honourable for the males to give them every possible advantage, such as allowing the lady to stand as near as she liked to the net when serving. On no account would any man hit the ball too fiercely in the direction of a woman, or if perchance he did so by mistake he would certainly allow her another shot. Chivalry was called for at all times.

The critics talked, but the women forgot to listen. By 1890 they were playing in tournaments all over the country. Only in the matter of their dress do they appear to have displayed any great concern. Lottie Dod, who won five times at Wimbledon between 1887 and 1893, found that the costumes worn in her time restricted her every movement, even to the extent of making breathing difficult.[1]

With the advance of lawn tennis quickening year by year, it soon became evident that the Wimbledon club was no longer sufficiently representative of the country as a whole to remain the game's controlling power. As a first step towards centralization it was agreed in 1883 that representatives of clubs from all over the country should meet once a year under the presidency of the secretary of the All-England Club to discuss their problems and put forward any suggestions they cared to make. Since this suggestion, though feasible, was wholly inadequate, Harry Scrivener and G. W. Hillyard decided in 1887 to send out a circular to the various club secretaries, seeking their views as to the advisability of establishing an entirely new and representative body. As the response proved encouraging, a general meeting of patrons and players was held at the Freemasons' Tavern in Great Queen Street, London, in the following January, when, with William Renshaw as its first president (a post which, incidentally, he held for eighteen years), the Lawn Tennis Association was formed.

Under the influence of this new organization the laws we know to-day gradually superseded the old, just as the court itself shook off the last vestiges of its earlier make-up. Regulations governing the conduct of tournaments, international play, and prize meetings generally were soon framed, while an inter-club competition was later added to the annual programme, though this was to be supplanted in 1895 by the Inter-County Championships, when experience had proved the remarkable superiority of certain clubs,

[1] *Lawn Tennis* (Badminton Library).

and the high cost of travel to be two drawbacks to the existing system.

By now lawn tennis had reached other countries. In 1900 Dwight F. Davis, one-time United States War Secretary, offered to put up a challenge cup for a contest between the leading men players of Britain and America. And when an American team secured the first victory in this new contest against such players as A. W. Gore, E. D. Black, and H. Roper Barrett, it was realized that for the first time the Englishman had found a rival in a game that was essentially his own. Though the tide was to turn in our favour in the fourth year of the competition, when the remarkable Doherty brothers—R. F. and H. L.—held the arena at Wimbledon with as much success as had the Renshaws before them, it was realized that Dwight Davis had established a competitive medium that appealed to the imagination of the world.

Soon Australia, New Zealand, Germany, France, and many other countries had taken up the racket, and lawn tennis spread as rapidly through the Continent as it had done through England, and France was to produce such players as René Lacoste, Henri Cochet, Jean Borotra, and Suzanne Lenglen—Suzanne, that superbly graceful player who was to reign supreme at Wimbledon on six occasions and hold the crowds spell-bound by her magic. Was she the greatest woman player of all time, or should that honour fall to Helen Wills (later Helen Wills-Moody) of America, who won the title eight times? It is a question we cannot answer. What a thousand pities that their difference in age prevented them from testing this on the court with each in her prime! No finer match, surely, could have been staged?

As the game spread it was decided to open the Davis Cup to all nations—the Wightman Cup, instituted in 1923 as its counterpart for women, remains an Anglo-American affair—and in 1912 the International Federation was inaugurated in Paris to govern the sport throughout the world. Eleven years later the L.T.A. ceded to them the right to frame and amend the laws while continuing as the controlling body in this country, a move which did much to promote the adoption of the same code in every corner of the earth where the game is played.

Yet, in spite of these great developments in the international sphere, Wimbledon remained, and is to-day, the greatest arena of all. But the grounds of the All-England Club, where the Victorians had got into such low ebb, and where croquet had once been

popular, were no longer adequate for the occasion. The game had outgrown itself, and a move was indicated. Thus in 1922 a new Wimbledon was born; the Wimbledon of Fred Perry and H. W. ("Bunny") Austin, of Dorothy Round, Kay Stammers, and Peggy Scriven, to say nothing of the many overseas competitors whose names have become as well known in our country as in their own; the Wimbledon where from 1934 to 1936 the English were to prove victorious in the much-cherished Davis Cup, having already won the 1933 contest in Paris; Wimbledon with its most famous of all courts throughout the length and breadth of the world—the Centre Court.

CHAPTER XIV

The New Era

As one game after another formed its own controlling body in the latter half of the nineteenth century, or in the early years of the twentieth, sport in England gradually assumed altogether different proportions. Rules became more stringent; equipment more slender; play faster and more scientific. Year by year the crowds of spectators steadily multiplied, while the players themselves became still further segregated into the two classes of amateurs and professionals. Scarcely had the new century taken the place of the old when practically every town, and many a village too, in England could boast its quota of sports clubs.

First one country and then another adopted our various games, and turned to our controlling bodies for a lead. The Englishman, in short, became the undisputed master-sportsman of the world.

Probably the standard of play was never higher than in the first decade of the present century. All that was good in the previous age was blossoming forth into a rich and healthy flower, when the outbreak of war against Germany caused the first real break since the Commonwealth, and sport came to a five years' virtual standstill.

When the last shell had been fired in Flanders and the time came to pick up the threads again the character of England had changed. Many who had raised sport to so high a pitch in the years before had given their lives for their country or else had passed their prime. Besides, the atmosphere was different. The days of manners were ending; the public schools were beginning to be ridiculed as the "temporary gentlemen" endeavoured to exert their authority in civilian life. What is more, the Englishman was becoming steadily more commercially minded. And he was becoming so in his play as well as at his work.

Yet, if the tone of the playing-field declined in many cases, once the thread had been picked up again the forward march only quickened, until soon the panorama of sport in England had

become more vast than at any time in its whole long history of two thousand years.

By the nineteen-thirties the annual sporting calendar had assumed such immense dimensions as to draw all sorts and conditions of men, women, and children—from the frock-coated peer to the roadsweeper—to the many arenas up and down the country. It mattered not whether they were players themselves, or even whether they had any appreciation of the rudiments of the games they chose to patronize; they would still turn out to take their place among the tens of thousands who came with a greater understanding to watch.

Of the long stream of events that went to make up those pre-1939 calendars racing and football probably found the greatest number of followers. If Ascot and Goodwood remained the fashion centres where racing was concerned, and if the Derby provided the strangest medley of humanity, with the nobility in their high hats contrasting oddly with the gipsies on the Downs, there were race-courses to be found far and wide. In the immediate post-war years these race-courses became the haunts of the highest and the lowest in the land, with gangs of ruffians doing their utmost to lower the tone of racing. As a result my father, the late Major G. P. Wymer, was appointed by the Jockey Club to organize a private-detective force for the purpose of 'cleaning up' the race-courses. Thanks to his 'secret service,' manned largely by former policemen, the hooligans, sharpers, and cut-throats gradually disappeared, until, as the newspapers declared at the time of my father's death, the race-course had become a cleaner and safer place for racegoers and bookmakers alike.

With the tone of racing restored by the thirties, and with the introduction of the Totalisator, we find the sport enjoying a greater following than ever, both on the flat and over the sticks. While thousands would attend the meetings, countless others maintained an active link with the Turf by betting in sums ranging from shillings to pounds on races they never saw, held at courses of whose geographical position they were often completely hazy.

So with football. While the Cup Final would draw nearly 100,000 people to Wembley, and call for special police to line the route out from London, the League matches, with their pools, gained a fireside following that included anyone from bedridden spinsters to typists; from gouty octogenarians to butchers' boys.

Soccer had long become the sport of the masses, while rugger, with its internationals at Twickenham and elsewhere, remained more the pastime of the public schools, the Services, and the amateur clubs.

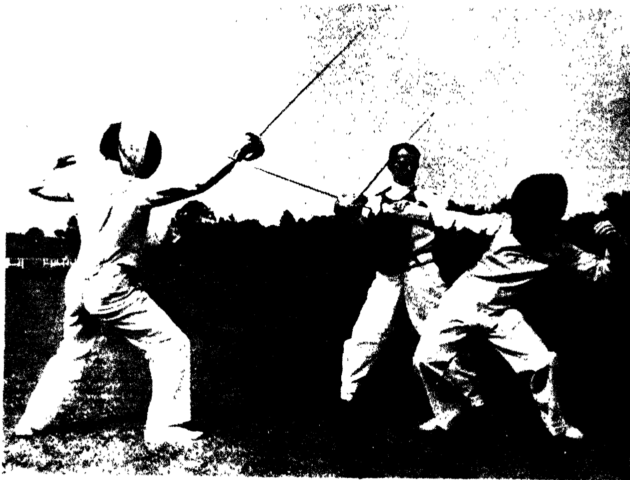
But if football provided the main outdoor attractions of the winter months, hockey, athletics, cross-country running, lacrosse, baseball, and coursing, with its Waterloo Cup perhaps more popular than ever, all found their supporters in plenty, while all over the country men, women, and children continued to hunt the fox, stag, hare, and otter with all the fervour of old. Though the Shires remained the principal Mecca, the meet outside the village 'pub,' or in the grounds of one of the "stately homes," was an occasion that would attract many from miles around, in cars, on bicycles, or on foot, according to their circumstances and according to their own estimate of the most enjoyable way of following the hunt in the rôle of spectators rather than as participants.

Even in the dark winter evenings the Englishman was now able to witness an outdoor entertainment in the form of greyhound-racing, a sport brought to us from America by Charles Munn, and first started at Belle Vue, Manchester, in 1926.

Indoors too there was always plenty going on in the "years between," with badminton, table-tennis, billiards, rackets, squash-rackets, real tennis, boxing, fencing, ice-hockey, skating, and many other sports providing an all-the-year-round programme to meet the various tastes. If rackets and real tennis, like fives, remained more or less the exclusive preserve of the public-school fraternity, each had its quota of championships, both amateur and professional, which were followed with the keenest interest by all who had ever been fortunate enough to learn the intricacies of these two great games. The number of spectators who went to Queen's or Prince's to witness these contests might be small, yet each one of them would argue that these were the finest of all games, just as the crowds at the skating rinks, whether themselves accomplished performers or members of that group who still felt safest near the edge, would sit in spellbound admiration and envy at the figure-skating of Sonja Henie or Cecilia Colledge, declaring that there was no sport like it.

Nor was the programme any less complete for the spring and summer months. Almost every sizable village in England had its cricket-pitch where men of every class and creed continued to play

POLO AT HURLINGHAM
Fox Photos



FENCING IN PRESENT-DAY STYLE
"Picture Post" Library

LAWN TENNIS:
F. J. PERRY PLAYING
AT WIMBLEDON
Fox Photos

BADMINTON:
PAUL HOLM, OF
DENMARK, PLAYING
IN THE ALL-
ENGLAND
CHAMPIONSHIPS
"Picture Post" Library

together. By no means all take kindly to cricket, yet few could resist displaying some sort of interest in either the county championships or the 'Tests,' while to thousands a Saturday at Lord's, the Oval, or Old Trafford, or at any of the other great centres, had become as much a ritual as was the Eton and Harrow match, one of the principal social events of the season.

Many preferred lawn tennis, with its tournaments up and down the country, its Hard Court Championships at Bournemouth, and, above all, its Wimbledon, with its unique setting where men and women of many nationalities would meet under a June or July sun to contest the most-cherished titles in the world. Wimbledon in good weather is sport at its best.

Yet the 'wet bobs' might declare that neither the cricket-field nor the lawn-tennis court could hold a candle to the river or the sea, and that the Boat Race, Henley, and Cowes Regatta were in a class of their own.

Likewise to thousands golf would mean more than anything else, while bowls, beloved by the aged perhaps even more than by the more youthful members of the community, the once-despised croquet, polo, swimming, angling and sea-fishing, wrestling, and shooting, either target or wild life, still hold greater sway with many.

Sporting events of every type and description, staged in places far and wide, went to make up the pre-1939 calendar. And in the midst of this truly vast panorama of sport we find, here and there, some small town or village clinging affectionately to an age that is past by playing some game that is long since dead or else has become submerged in another. For the most part such games have survived simply as country customs.

Shrovetide hurling matches still take place at St Ives and St Columb Major, in Cornwall, while street football is played on occasion at Chester-le-Street and Sedgefield, in Durham, Atherstone (Warwickshire), Ashbourne (Derbyshire), Alnwick (Northumberland), Corfe Castle (Dorset), and, no doubt, in other places as well. Though at Alnwick the game has been transferred in recent years to a field on account of the destruction it caused, in other parts it maintains much of its traditional character.

At Ashbourne the goals are some three miles apart, and the match, which may well last the greater part of the day, is between those born on one side of the village stream and those born on the other. At Atherstone, where street football is said to have been

practised since the reign of King John, the field of play takes in part of the main London-to-Holyhead road, causing traffic to be especially diverted for the occasion. Here, as at Chester-le-Street, the windows of shops and houses are barricaded as of old, and the game is commenced by throwing a ball from the window of a local inn and leaving the players to get on with it.

By contrast, the villagers of Haxey (Lincs.) have their "Hood Game," dating back, it is said, to the thirteenth century, when on January 6 the "boggons" are led by a King Boggon, carrying a bundle of "thirteen willows bound by thirteen willow bands as a rod of office,"[1] to the stone outside the church, where the festival fool, with blackened face and wearing multi-coloured garments with strips of paper hanging down his back, stands and recites the story of Lady Mowbray's hood, while some one "smokes" him by setting fire to the dangling paper. Afterwards they play a kind of football with his hoods, when three inns serve as the goals.

In parts of the Lake District and in out-of-the-way corners of the South Downs secret cock-fights have been known to take place in recent years, with, perhaps, a mere handful of labourers as the only spectators and a few shillings as the stakes. In Lakeland too the Grasmere Sports, with their Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling, have gained in popularity with the march of time.

At Meriden, in what was once the forest of Arden, the woodmen still don their Georgian garments, consisting of white trousers and green coats with gilt buttons, to hold their August "Wardmote," and shoot at targets with bows and arrows of a medieval type such as were used by the bowmen of England at Crécy and Agincourt. So also does hawking continue to prosper in various parts.

Up and down the country the villagers may still be found practising traditional country dances that have been handed down to them through the centuries, and singing the old folk-songs their ancestors loved so well.

Even in an age of speed, commercialism, and machinery the old ways of life cannot be entirely forgotten. While Brooklands—now, alas, no more—and Donington Park provided, in those nineteen-thirties, a spectacle of speed that would thrill thousands, there were plenty who found equal pleasure in watching the "Old Crocks" race from London to Brighton. To us such a race has become nothing more than a joke, for the very reason of its

[1] C. Hole, *English Custom and Usage* (Batsford, 1941).

slowness, but if the Georgian Corinthians could have lined the route to the coast they would have been staggered by the pace.

Things have moved with alarming rapidity since their day, and the pace quickens still further as decade follows decade. What of the future? Will the pace with which we play to-day be considered slow by those who write of sport a hundred years from now?

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