

## The Memoirs of William Withycombe

*These memoirs were written by my grandfather, William Withycombe (1881 – 1968). They were put in order, and scanned into a digital format by my brother, Ian. In places William used pseudonyms – where we are aware of this the real names are in brackets, with a question mark if we aren't sure.*

*He says very little about his family. He was in Egypt for 9 months when his daughter was born, but in her words “the old sod never mentions his wife”.*

*I remember him as a very tall man (he claimed to be 6 foot 3 inches) who spent his time rolling his lawn to make a neat striped pattern, telling tall stories about his childhood, and giving us (my brother and me) slices of Mars Bars and Milky Ways when we went next door to his house to watch the television.*

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## CHILDHOOD

### CASTLE HOTEL

My father had the business of the Luttrell Arms Hotel Dunster and Rowe Farm left him when he was 21 in 1858. It was an important posting house before the Railway was cut to Minehead and was full of visitors during the Devon and Somerset Stag hunting season, a number of hunters as well as posting horses were kept.

In the early eighteen seventies my father gave up the Luttrell Arms and bought The Castle Hotel, Taunton, a large Queen Anne building in the centre of Taunton. Our nursery was on the top floor adjoining the servants quarters, all our meals were brought up from the kitchen as there was no lift in those days.

We had 2 nurses to look after us, Nurse Thorne came when Jack was born and remained off and on for about 7 years and Annie Stone a buxom good looking country girl, whose father worked for Grandfather Gidley (Mother's father), her two brothers were employed in the Hotel — Walter a bus driver and Joe a clerk. All the staff of the Hotel I can remember, there were few changes. Mrs. Bartlett the cook, a very fat cheerful woman, an excellent cook. She spoilt me for I was always running about the kitchen where huge fires were kept up in the old fashioned ranges, a large proportion of game etc., was cooked on spits which turned slowly in front of white hot fires.

Mrs. Bartlett had an enormous cat called "Tammer", he was a sort of kitchen mascot. She confided in me that she had entered Tammer for the Cat Show. I can see her now, dressed up to the nines in a plum coloured dress with a protruding bustle, carrying Tammer in a wicker basket, setting out for the Cat Show and I shall never forget her return. She arrived in a hansom cab at the front door, uproariously drunk, carrying Tamer's basket and a box clutched to her bosom. When she got inside the swing doors she shouted "Tamers won first prize and a time piece for the servants bedroom". There was considerable difficulty in getting her to bed. As this was the only time Mrs. Bartlett had erred, it was overlooked and she continued as cook for many years. What shocked my father was Mrs. Bartlett's arrival at the front door. The Castle was a sort of old fashioned country Hotel where the land owners and county magnates foregathered. At the time of Mrs. Bartlett's escapade, the Assizes were being held in The Shire Hall and The Judge and all the legal luminaries were staying at the Castle. The Judge had his own private sitting room always reserved for him. It would have been bad for trade if The Judge had met Mrs.

Bartlett and Tamer in the entrance hall.

There was another entrance at the side of the Hotel leading into a spacious smoking room with tables all round the room and leather upholstered benches. On Market days there was a plentiful supply of free tobacco set out in pewter dishes and long Church Warden clay pipes and full sugar basins. The smoking room was crowded with farmers, cattle dealers and butchers, these customers never used the front entrance which was reserved for visitors staying in the Hotel.

Old Robert, the head waiter, was a great favourite, a broad and portly figure with white mutton chop whiskers and he had great style and did everything with a flourish. What particularly annoyed my father was the way he handled the very special vintages of port wine. There was a stock of 47 and 63 port, very rare, it was never decanted, the right technique was to take the dusty, cobwebby bottle from its bin in the cellar, where it had lain for many years and gently place it on its side in a special wine basket. In very old port of good vintage there is a thin gossamer sort of crust, in those days it was called beeing, if the bottle was shaken the crust would cloud the wine. Robert would enter the room with the precious bottle and place it on the table with a sort of up and down motion and he drew the cork with a flourish, he would not treat the old wine with proper respect.

### CHERRY STONES.

About this time we had an invitation to go down and spend the day at Porlock Weir. Some friends, the Saunders, had taken a house there. He was a rich Stockbroker and two of their sons went to Miss Gappers. Mother was staying with them at the time, and the Saunder's carriage fetched us as it was 9 miles from Rowe Farm. Nurse Virgin accompanied us, she was a dear and we loved her. She had a way of making us do things and there were never any arguments. She was a very good looking woman about 30, dark hair and eyebrows and blue eyes, tall and a good figure. Mother told me about 30 years after that Nurse Virgin was wrongly named, for they afterwards learnt that she deviated from the paths of moral rectitude.

I was about 5 years old at the time, we had cherry pie for lunch and after we had eaten it, the others started to count their cherry stones, Tinker 1, Tailor 2, Soldier 3, Sailor 4, Richman 5, Poorman 6, Beggarman 7, Thief 8. Then they turned to my plate on which were no cherry stones, I had swallowed the lot being tooshy to spit them out. Of course, I was the butt of the whole party and felt very downcast. After lunch we played hide and seek

in a wood at the back of the house. As luck would have it I hid myself near a hornet's nest and was stung several times. The pain was excruciating and so ended a never to be forgotten day 72 years ago.

### CHURCH.

From my infant days I have always had lively recollections of being dragged off to Church, that was the only thing Father and Mother did not leave to our nurses. We went to St. Mary's Church, Taunton, Father was a Church Warden there, he used to pass the plate round, about 6 of them collected, after which they marched up the centre isle in step and presented the plates to the Vicar, each emptying them into an enormous receptacle held by the Vicar, they then marched down to their places. They were all dressed in black tailed coats and tight trousers.

We boys were always separated in the family pew, a very wise precaution for Robbie and I together would soon have created a disturbance. The order in the pew was Jackie, Mother, Robbie, Father, Willie. We had to kneel all through the litany and stayed to the end of the service which included a sermon. I was about 4 when I started my Church going. HOW I hated it! Especially the kneeling. Mother then suffered from internal rumblings and Father, a very religious man, was always half a lap behind in the responses. In the afternoon Mother came up into the Nursery and read to us, Line upon Line, Precept upon Precept, books about the Old Testament. The one Sunday we enjoyed at Taunton was Yeomanry Sunday. The Regiment in full dress Hussar Uniform and a Battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry in Scarlet, white belts and black and gold helmets marched to St. Mary's each with bands playing. The service was very short, a few hymns, no litany and short sermon. After the service we watched them fall in and march away with their Bands playing. The Vicar of Minehead when we arrived was Mr. Luttrell, he was over 80 and had been vicar for 60 years, tall, very active, with an enormous shock of iron grey hair, being very low church he preached in a black gown and would not allow the psalms to be sung. The choir were not allowed in the Vestry and no surplices were worn, this was in the Parish Church of St. Michaels.

There was another Church in the Town, St. Andrews, where ordinary services were conducted by the two curates, Mr. James Utten Todd, a very tall man with a red beard exactly like Bernard Shaw and little Mr. Sainsbury was tiny. He wore a black cape and was generally running. He took a tremendous interest in children, Sunday School, boys cricket club etc., He was loved in the parish he had fair whiskers round his face but shaved his

upper lip and chin. He never preached from the pulpit but from the Chancel steps he had his funny little ways. The old vicar generally had a curate with him at St. Michaels and the psalms were read, the Vicar reading one verse and the congregation the next. Little Sainsbury always started before the old man had quite finished and this so exasperated him that one Sunday he said in a stentorian voice "Will you allow me to finish my verse" that put little Sainsbury in his place.

Tommy William's School supplied the choir for Saints days at St. Andrews. I remember on one occasion we arrived at the vestry, we had put our caps on a chest and were just going to put on our surplices, when the old Vicar Mr. Luttrell came in, swept our caps from the chest and said "Begone". We picked up our caps and ran, we scored going to Church. This was the only occasion the Vicar was known to have visited St. Andrews. I don't think he even knew we wore surplices. He called on us the next day to say how sorry he was. Mother and Father felt quite sorry for the old man, he explained that all his life he was accustomed to have the vestry to himself for meditation. We boys were hauled up to St. Michaels on Sunday mornings dressed in Eton Suits and Top hats. Old Mr. Luttrell usually conducted most of the service, he seemed to read everything in the prayer book and the sermon was very long. He would pray for about five minutes in the pulpit before the sermon and the only part of him visible was the enormous crop of iron grey hair.

After dinner we went to Tommy William's Bible Class, back to tea, then church again at 6.30. to 8 p.m., home to supper then singing hymns for an hour and finally family prayers in which the servants joined, and heartily sick and tired of praising the Lord, to bed.

When staying at Rowe farm, we had a complete holiday from Church. I can only remember going once. A Mr. Simeon was Vicar of Dunster and he took to playing the cornet accompanying the hymns and as this was a novelty, Nurse Virgin took us one Sunday evening. Mr. Simeon had a row with one of his Church Wardens, a farmer, and the next Sunday he chose as his text "And what shall he know of wisdom whose talk is of oxen and who handleth the plough". The cap fitted for the farmer who at once got up and went out of Church.

The end of our family prayers was the following:—

"Bless us in our basket and our store. Bless us in our rising up and our lying down, in our going out and our coming in from this time forth and evermore.

AMEN.”

### EARLY DAYS.

On July 13th, 1886, I was looking down the street from the Castle Hotel, Taunton. It was Market day and bullocks, sheep and pigs in farm carts were going past the Hotel on their way to the Market. It was my 5th birthday. Slowly round the corner of the street leading from the Market came a pony and trap driven by an enormous gypsy looking man attired in a large check tailcoat, very tight trousers and brown bowler hat. The turn out came to a standstill below my window, the pony was my birthday present, he was a bright chestnut and had his mane and tail platted with red, white and blue ribbon. We christened him Ginger. I was the youngest of three, Jackie, Robbie and Willie to our parents when in good temper, when not so good, Jack, Bob and William. My father was owner and Proprietor of the Castle Hotel, he also had a farm, Rowe Farm, Dunster, 23 miles from Taunton with a bailiff in charge. Ginger was harnessed to a 4 wheel trap, very long and low. Queen Victoria used to drive about the grounds of Balmoral in a similar conveyance. The crab was, the driver was a long way from the pony and no whip was ever long enough to reach Ginger, the consequence was he went his own pace which was deathly slow.

Ginger was sent to Rowe Farm and another pony was bought for the trap, a strawberry roan mare with 4 white legs and face with splashes of white all over. She was a good trapper and good jumper having won a jumping prize at Dublin Horse Show. Her name was Stockings. The West Somerset Yeomanry were billeted in Taunton every year for 10 days during the month of May. All the Officers stayed at the Castle Hotel, other ranks in various pubs in the town. Most troopers brought their own horses, a small proportion hired. The Officers chargers were brought round to the front of the Hotel at 10 a.m. when the Regiment paraded and proceeded to the Orchard Portman field outside the town, where they were drilled, returning about 1 p.m. We all looked forward to the Yeomanry Training, a band stand was set up, every night the band playing whilst the Officers were messing. We were allowed to stay up late to look out of the window at the crowds of people. The Yeomanry week was a real festive occasion for the Tauntonians. I remember the culinary arrangements for the Officers Mess. My father employed a special chef during the training, a Mr. Harder, he had been chef at Buckingham Palace for many years and was living retired at Torquay. One of my earliest recollections was being allowed to stand on a live turtle which eventually was turned into soup.

During the training of 1888, the Duke of Cambridge, the Commander-in-Chief and uncle of Queen Victoria, inspected the West Somerset Yeomanry, he stayed one night at the Castle Hotel.

My eldest brother, Jackie, was allowed to ride Stockings to see the manoeuvres. The Officers had lunch in a Marquee set up in the field, on pork chops by special request of the Duke. Jackie was told he could ride round the country lanes after the inspection in the field, he was then to return and the old stud groom, Warre, would ride back to Taunton with him. Now in the course of Jackie's ride he encountered one Corporal Frankie Day of the West Somerset Yeomanry, who had been placed in a strategic position as an advanced outpost on the look out for the enemy. Frankie admired Stockings, in those days an odd coloured pony was rare and only seen in circuses. Suddenly they heard horses and round the corner came the Royal Duke accompanied by Generals, A.D.Cs etc., in full dress uniform, some with busbies, others with three cornered hats with plumes. Frankie was frightened out of his wits, he saluted and the Duke reined up and said what are you. Frankie Replied - "Plaize sur I be a butcher out to Pitminster", and they all rode away laughing. When we were children Doctor's orders were religiously carried out. My brother Robbie was asthmatical, being a trifle wheezy in the early morning. Our Doctor ordered him to have a glass of Rum and milk before he got up, Jackie was a bit pale so he was ordered a glass of Claret every day. I had no luck, being constipated, I had to have a cold baked apple before breakfast.

On our birthdays we were given a treat, taken for a ride or drive, circus or the Clifton Zoo. On Robbies 8th birthday, we drove over to Milverton in Father's 4 wheel dog cart to see the Church where Mother played the Organ. Robbie had been given a pair of sand shoes, he was delighted with them and after long arguments with father and mother he was allowed to wear them. Brother Jackie and I had to wear our usual black button boots and the three of us were dressed in flannel sailor suits, black stockings up to our thighs and tight shorts to our knees. There was a gentleman's agreement that on our birthdays there would be no punishment.

On entering the Church, mother took us to see the organ, she was organist at the age of 13 until she married. Robbie did not follow us, he was running about in his sand shoes so mother and father did not hear him until they looked up and saw him in the pulpit, when he started to preach a sermon saying "Isaac said unto Jacob", my father was boiling over and kept on saying "Come down at once sir", but Robbie took not the slightest notice, but proceeded to bless us - "The Lord bless you and keep you" - Robbies eyes were turned up to Heaven and his arms spread out and finally he let

forth a loud Amen that echoes through the Church, and came down. Of course, Robbie was on a safe wicket for he knew he would not be punished on his birthday, but retribution overtook him. We went to tea with some friends of mothers. Tea was dispensed on the lawn. Mother thought that the tea was too strong for the children, so the servant poured just a little tea in our cups and then came round with a kettle of boiling water. Robbie did not keep his cup still and a copious amount of boiling water was upset into his lap, scalding his legs and running down into his sand shoes.

### OLD CARTER

I remember as a small boy I was fascinated in watching an old carter getting his loaded timber carriage with an enormous elm tree weighing several tons out of a wood, he had a team of 3 shire horses by name, "Active", "Blossom" and "Darling". He took up his position about 20 yards on the near side of his horses, he directed his team by voice in and out amongst the trees to a gate; his directives were "wug off" meaning right incline "coom ear" left incline, "hall oop" straight on and "Woo a" stop; there was a slight rise for about 100 yards, the going was heavy, sticky clay with a covering of leaf mould. I have never seen horses make a greater effort, they were all three galloping at a walking pace with their noses close to the ground. The carter would encourage them by calling each by name and after each name shouting Ah! - Active Ah! - Darlin Ah! - Blossom Ah! The most difficult part of the operation was getting through the gate way which was only about a foot wider than the timber carriage and water logged, it was necessary to approach at a fast pace to prevent being stuck. This was performed without reins or whip and moreover there was no sort of track for the horses to follow.

### PREP SCHOOLDAYS

My father sold The Castle Hotel in 1889 and took a house in The Avenue, Minehead. We 3 boys started school at Thomas Williams - two doors away. The school was advertised in the West Somerset Free Press as a school for the sons of gentlemen only. A very fine point in deciding who was a gentleman. As my father was no longer the Proprietor of a hotel he was considered a gentleman.

There was about 14 months difference between each of our birthdays, but there was a great gulf fixed between Jack's attainments and Robbie's. Jack was clever, very hard working and conscientious. Robbie just would



not take the trouble to learn. I was just about average. Jack was 10 years old when he went to Tommy Williams, and having been taught by Dr. Bond he was well grounded in Latin and very forward in French. There were about 30 boys, about the same number of day boys and boarders.

It was a time of large families and most of the pupils were batches of brothers. There were 6 Stricklands, 3 Dobries, 3 Mathews, 2 Windsors, 8 Ollerheads and 6 Mitchells at different times.

Tommy Williams had no degree, but kept an assistant graduate Master. Tommy was constantly caning boys. Caning took place in the school room before the whole school. The 6 Stricklands, Eric, Monty, Noel, Norman, Manny and Arky came in for a full share of punishment, especially Manny who was in the habit of wetting his bed. After each mistake he was flogged, it was appalling cruelty. Manny was about 9 years old, a bright intelligent little boy who happened to have this physical disability. His life was a perfect hell and in spite of the terrific floggings, I can never remember his crying. Eric the eldest Strickland resented Manny's treatment and went on hunger strike. He refused to eat any of his school meals and the day boys vied with each other in providing him with the choicest bits they could pinch out of their larders. After a weeks hunger strike he was fat and flourishing. This angered Tommy Williams and finally he was flogged. Tommy told him to bend over, Eric slowly obeyed, and received 6 terrific strokes. He then stood up and faced Tommy with clenched fists, the light of battle in his eyes. He was a tall strong boy of about 16 and Tommy thought that discretion was the better part of valor and told him to go to his place. Soon after, Eric's guardian, Mr. Hext from Barnstaple arrived and took him away and the remaining 5 Stricklands stayed on for another term. Tommy practically gave up caning after this.

Jack completed his education at Tommy Williams with the exception of a couple of terms at a School in Weston—super—Mare. He was a very delicate boy and was seriously ill with pneumonia and pleurisy when he was about 14. After his illness the Doctor thought a sea voyage would put him right. My father knew a Director of a Shipping Company and it was arranged he would go to America in one of his Company's boats in the care of the Captain. Jack went to America twice calling at Rotterdam on each trip. Whilst in the U.S.A. he spent sometime in Baltimore and sent us some sketches of negroes and Americans. Jack, even then, could sketch well, and he afterwards became a landscape painter. On his return Robbie and I met him at the station and had the surprise of our life. He went away in a school boy suit and an Eton collar and returned in a tail coat, very high stiff collar and wearing a brown bowler hat. He bought the outfit in the U.S.A. where there was nothing extraordinary in the get up for it was the prevailing

fashion in the early nineties for a young man.

I used to go to the farm, about a mile and a half from our house, on half holidays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. We were not forced to play games, although we had a good coaching in cricket by a County player.

Nearly every Saturday night Tommy Williams boys were taken to an entertainment in the Town Hall (now a Hospital). There was a wide variety of Travelling Companies, such as The Mikado, The Private Secretary, Faust, George Grossmith, Albert Chevalier, Moore & Burges's Christie Minstrels, The Walford Family, The Show that has stuck in my mind was "Dr. Wade - Mesmerist". He asked for volunteers and 6 went up on the platform amongst them the Bank Manager's Cecil Archer's groom - Will Reed. Archer gave him advice as to the method of resisting being mesmerised. Dr. Wade passed his hand over the faces of the 6 volunteers and they all went into a trance with one exception, Will Reed in spite of Cecil's advice was the first to go off. He made them do a lot of ridiculous things. He threw some cabbages on the floor and told them they were pigs and they at once ran about on all fours grunting exactly like pigs, taking huge mouthfuls of raw cabbage and not using their hands in so doing.

I can remember a Menagerie at Minehead. The Lion Tamer gave a wonderful show and ended up by making a lion open his mouth, then put his head into it. The Lion stuck still as a rock. He asked for a volunteer to do the same and promised £5 for anyone who would take the risk. To our astonishment a young Grocer's assistant, Wally Hunt, went into the cage. The Lion Tamer made the Lion sit up and open his mouth. Wally approached with the trainer and put his head inside, but just as he did so the Lion let forth a God Almighty roar. Wally gave a bit of a shudder but he remained still for a minute and got his fiver.

During the holidays we spent most of our time at the farm. My father bred hunters and kept a groom there. Jack was allowed to ride the young horses. Bob and I used to go for long rides on our ponies. I remember one adventure when we were out for a ride. We saw a huge door lying flat in a field quite close to a pond. We thought it would be a good idea to launch the door and pretend to be a shipwrecked crew on a raft. So we tied up our ponies, Robbie took the front and I went behind. One, Two, Three, we lifted the door, it was frightfully heavy. Robbie took a good step forward towards the pond, so did I and disappeared down a well. Robbie dropped the door and looked round to find I had gone. The well was not deep and I dropped about 6 feet into about 4 feet of water. Robbie went to the nearby farm and got help and I was soon hauled out.

## SCHOOL DAYS 1884 to 1887.

We all three went to a School kept by two old maiden ladies, one was nearly 80 and the other a very active 70. Miss Gapper was very tall and thin with very long neck and tiny wrinkled face. She always reminded me of an Egyptian Mummy wearing a lace cap.

Miss Georgina, the other sister, was short, thick set with a round freckled face, always merry and bright. Miss Gapper was a stern disciplinarian, when she entered the room there was absolute silence and I can never remember seeing her smile.

Miss Gapper took the senior class and Miss Georgina the infants. There was also another teacher, Miss Leslie who took infinite pains in teaching us to read and write. A Dr. Bond gave Latin lessons he wore a black sombrero hat and cape. He was a corpulent short man with a large black beard and a loud base voice. He had fought in Garibaldi's army in Italy. I was terrified of him, when a boy was naughty he was deputed to talk to him. I can remember Robbie who was always getting into trouble standing in front of Dr. Bond with tears streaming down his face, the Dr. talking to him as if he was the last thing in criminals.

Dr. Bond took the infant class once a week to teach us the rudiments of Latin and I always on that day pretended I was not feeling well and very often succeeded in staying away from School. There was a visiting French Mistress and on her arrival Miss Gapper greeted her and they talked for a few minutes in French.

Comparing our early education with the present, without any exaggeration we were at least 2 years in advance, owing to the individual attention we were given by our teachers. We learnt to write by copy books in copper plate style and in the early stages the teacher would guide our hand. As tiny tots we learnt Nursery rhymes. At the age of 6 we could read books and we were never in the Billy Bunter or Peter Rabbit stage. Our earliest books were Grimms Fairy Tales, Swiss Family Robinson and Robinson Crusoe. Before I was 7 I was bribed with a promise of a book if I took a dose of Gregory powder, the book was the Gorilla Hunters by R. M. Ballantyne. I read it myself from cover to cover. Nowadays boys of 7 are reading, if they can read, about the lean bad wolf.

We were day boys at Miss Gapper's and had about a mile to walk or rather run to school, for we wheeled hoops. We were each given an iron hoop with a crook, wooden hoops were considered girlish; our hoops were made

by the Dunster Blacksmith. On wet days we were driven in the station bus. Sometimes we were sent as boarders for a term when father and mother were travelling. Miss Gappers pupils were drawn from the principal tradesmen and the professions from Taunton and district. She started the School nearly 50 years before I went there and many of the boys parents had been pupils.

During the holidays we were sent to the farm or seaside, Burnham or Weston-Super-Mare. We had a great time at the farm for we had 2 ponies, Stockings and Ginger to ride. The haymaking and harvesting have always stuck in my mind, for in those days hay and corn was cut by scythes, the men cutting and the women and boys followed tying up the sheaves. The last load of the harvest was a super one and great care was taken in loading. The carter, Bill Court, hauled us 3 boys with our nurse on to the top of the load and we drove into the Rick Yard with all the harvesters singing, then everybody drank a horn of cider and three cheers was given. Tea was always brought down to the hayfield and a special cake made and cider and beer were provided all day. My father then gave his farm hands 10/- a week, cottage rent free with a big garden and a daily ration of a firkin of cider or beer. They also kept a pig and hens and there were certain perquisites, such as rabbits and a row of potatoes from the field, sometimes several hundredweights. Most of them brought up large families. At the end of the day the horses were unharnessed and fed, then we 3 boys were put on them, they were given a pat and off they cantered up hill and stopped at the gate of the field where they were turned out.

The Bailiff - old Jim Rowe and his wife Anne lived at the farm house, they were both old and a nice old couple. Anne made the butter, managing the Dairy and old Jim was a most efficient bailiff. A daily supply of vegetables, fruit, cream and butter were sent to the Castle Hotel, a full time gardener was kept. On one of our visits a tragedy occurred, poor old Anne went off her head. She had been acting in a strange way for some days, and one night we were awakened by frightful shrieks, the next day the Doctor came and said she must go to the Asylum. A closed carriage arrived soon after with an Asylum attendant, but they could not persuade her to get into the carriage, instead she ran straight to the manure heap which consisted of some liquid cow dung. We 3 boys had been sent out of the house with our nurse, but it came on to rain and we arrived at the farm to see Bill Court, the carter and Harry Webber another farm hand struggling with Anne on the manure heap so we were hastily bundled into the house. We had to go through the kitchen to our room, old Jim was sitting on a chair with both hands over his face sobbing. We never saw Anne again, she died soon afterwards and my father pensioned off old Jim and engaged another bailiff -

one Daniel Chambers - but things were never quite the same after Jim left, there was a discordant note, Daniel was unpopular with the men.

One day there was great excitement on the farm, a stag was killed just outside the farm yard gate, it was hunted by the Devon and Somerset Stag Hounds. Jackie and Robbie were blooded, a barbarous custom of smearing blood over the face by the huntsman from the freshly killed animal. I refused and ran away as fast as my legs would carry me.

### SHOOTING.

My father had a small wood (Penny Wood) about 4 acres and adjoining it, one small field intervening, was Conegar Wood about 20 acres, the property of the Luttrells of Dunster Castle. We were given a half holiday on the day we shot our wood. The shooting party generally consisted of Dr. Hayes, Dr. Clarke, Tiddly Rawle, Cecil Archer and Freddy Manson. The Dunster Castle shooting party was just a family affair, for the County rarely mixed socially with the locals. Dr. Hayes was the only one who shot with them. He was our Doctor and a real friend of the family. His visits generally lasted an hour and included a glass of whisky. Dr. Clarke was another local Doctor.

Will Rawle, his nick name was Tiddly, I don't know why for he did not drink to excess, had been in South Africa but not for long. Later he took a Butcher's business in Minehead and a farm from my father. His brother had married my uncle's (by marriage) daughter, and he was a tall good looking chap, a good horseman and shot.

Tiddly was about 27 at the time he had a romance. When walking on the sea front at Minehead he met a girl and they eventually fell in love and married. She was a Miss Cavendish Bentinck, and was an Aunt of the present Queen Mother. She was married at Minehead and her Mother attended the wedding, but her people never visited her, for she had committed that heinous crime of marrying beneath her. They had no children. Mrs. Rawle told me of her cousins, one as far as I remember a Lord Charles Bentinck who hunted a pack of hounds somewhere in the North of England. I have often thought what a democratic note could have been struck if the Rawles had a son who would have carried on the business. The Butcher's shop could have been called "The Royal Relationship Butchers". Cecil Archer was the Manager of a Bank in Minehead. In the days of small Banks it was customary to put a so called gentleman as Manager. Cecil had been up at Oxford and on coming down got the job of Manager of Fox

Fowlers Bank at Minehead. He kept two hunters and did a lot of shooting and he left the care of the Bank to his 2nd. in command. He was a striking looking man, a splendid head and noble brow, good features, a huge walrus moustache and closely trimmed whiskers. He had a pronounced dulap and wore white stiff collars open in front, the dulap protruding through the opening. He had the shortest legs imaginable, in fact they were almost a deformity, he didn't walk but waddled.

Freddy Manson was the owner and Proprietor of The Beach Hotel, Minehead, a wiry bewhiskered little man with tremendous energy. To revert to the shooting, the Luttrells had keepers and of course wanted to retain all their pheasants in Conegar. Harvey Webber, one of our farm workers, acted as our keeper. My father got a plentiful supply of raisins unfit for human consumption from a Wholesale Grocer friend. Harry used to lay a trail of raisins from Conegar to Penny Wood just before our shoot. Pheasants love raisins and prefer them to anything else. On the day of our shoot all the pheasants had vacated Conegar to Penny Wood.

We also had a good rough partridge shoot. My father being asthmatical could not shoot partridges, the walking was too much for him. Freddy Manson shot our partridges and generally the same guns took part. We boys were useful in taking part in the drives.

I remember one afternoon we had been walking all day after partridges and foregathered at a gate in the late afternoon. Freddy Manson still full of energy and enthusiasm suggested that Cecil Archer should go up a hill and we would take another drive. Poor Archer had been waddling along all day through roots and heather and was just about dead beat. He glared at Freddy Manson and said "If your partridges had diamond eyes and bottoms stuffed with pearls, I would refuse to go another yard after them", so we called it a day and went home.

Cecil Archer had a pal, one Frank Dickinson. Frank had a bit of money but no occupation except golf and hunting. One day he and Archer were having a round of golf and were accosted by a tramp asking them for money. He told them a very hard luck story and Frank gave him half a sovereign, Archer the laziest man that God ever put breath into, gave him a lecture on work. The tramp thanked Frank and then turned to Archer and said in a menacing voice "I will remeber you". That night Archer was dining with Dr. Clark. He had about a hundred yards to walk with a high hedge on one side. He wore a long great coat down to his heels, it was pitch dark. Frank was lying in wait for him behind the hedge and sprang out imitating the tramp shouting "I will remeber you". Archer took to his heels and ran for his life arriving at the Clarke's in a state of utter exhaustion.

## STABLES.

Two horse buses plied between the Castle and the Railway Station. The two bus drivers, Walter Stone and Radford, had a hard job from early morning to late at night, their wages 18/- a week. There was a bus Office in the Town where orders were taken by Joe Stone, Walter's brother.

The Stables were managed by Warre, the Stud groom, he had been stable lad, and later coachman to the Duke of Portland, a very tall and distinguished looking old man. He did a certain amount of taking customers to and from the Station in closed carriages (broughams) and special jobs like driving the Judge to the Assizes in s special turn out.

When my father bought the Castle Hotel it was lit by gas jets of yellow flame. Early in the eighteen eighties he had electric light installed by a London firm of Engineers, it was the first Hotel outside London to be lit by electricity. I can never remember any other light.

On the Jubilee night of 1887, we were boarders at Miss Gappers at the time, father and mother were in Scotland, Miss Georgina took us down to see the electric illuminations in front of the Castle Hotel, they were considered wonderful.

## FAMILY

### WITHYCOMBES

I have already described the Trevor Family with out Uncle Ted ending his days in prison. The Withycombes owned the principal manors on the Dunster Castle estate – amongst them Biccombe, Bridicot and Eastbury in the 18th century. My father's sister told us that her grandfather had been a ward of the Luttrells at Dunster Castle and his father had been killed fighting abroad. The Luttrells boarded out the child to an old village woman. He was not taught to read and write. When twenty one years old he was taken to the castle and signed documents using an X as signature. His son was well educated and started business in Dunster and district. His activities were numerous – he owned the village Chemist and Butchers shops and also ran a successful Mill, grinding corn and selling seed, corn etc.. My grandfather's eldest daughter married a man called Harvey ( a Bristol family) an ex Navel Officer. He managed the mill and also a coal business. My grandfather owned a schooner which carried on trade between Minehead and Cardiff coal by horse and carts to the district. He lived at and was proprietor of the Luttrell Arms Hotel and carried on an extensive posting business before the railway was made to Minehead. My grandfather had seven children, five boys and two girls (my father being the youngest). The boys migrated to Australia where their cousins, the Whites from Spaxton, were ranching. The Whites emigrated to Australia in the 1850's when the conditions were quite primitive (outside loos!). In those days the aborigines were numerous and were in the habit of raiding the ranches, killing sheep. The Whites put down a trough of milk every night for them and consequently had no trouble. The other ranchers used to shoot the aborigines on sight.

My father's second sister married a Lutley, a Wiveliscombe family. They had ten children, eight boys and two girls. All the boys with the exception of two, John who my father brought up and educated and Herbert who managed the farm and was killed in a riding accident, went to America to a place called Tombstone. They had evidently heard stories of fortunes being made in mining gold and silver. The Westerns on television must have a ring of truth about them for one of my cousins who was living in a shack close to Tombstone was actually shot and killed by Indians.

My father inherited the business of the Luttrell Arms when he was twenty one. He also farmed Rowe Farm close to Dunster. When a young man



he was sued for breach of promise and had to pay a very large sum which enabled the lady to retire and live happily ever afterwards.

I think hush money was the reason for my grandfather's financial success. When his father appeared before the lawyers at Dunster Castle, he put his mark to various documents. My Grandfather's many enterprises must have taken a lot of capital. He left thirty five thousand pounds and sent all his sons to boarding schools and supplied capital for them to start in Australia. My surmise is that his success like Uncle Ted's family was due to hush money.

My father was sent to boarding school, 'Fullands' at Taunton – General Gordon was at the same school for a short time. Some families go up in the financial and social scale, others go down. I was confirmed in 1894 by a very old Bishop called Bickersteth – he was Bishop of Exeter. A short time ago a young man was painting the front of my house. He told me his name was Bickersteth and he was very proud of the fact that he had an ancestor a Bishop!

Many families improve their financial and social position through marriage – such as Mr. Harold Macmillan marrying into the Devonshire family. On never hears about his crofter ancestors unlike President Kennedy who greeted his Irish relations in their humble home in Wexford.

There is one Withycombe whose relation to my father I have never ascertained. He was a contemporary of my fathers and about the same age. He was brought up in Dunster and was known as Jack to distinguish him from my father John. He left for South Africa as a youth – it must have been in the late 1850's or early 1860's. from time to time news came how this Dunster lad had – to use a Victorianism – Made Good which meant that by Hook or by Crook (chiefly by Crook) he had become rich: he made his money running coaches to the various townships. At one time Cecil Rhodes had a financial interest in his business. In 1904 he visited Dunster, the first time since his departure and came to see us about 2 p.m. one afternoon. He arrived in the Luttrell Arms Four Wheeler. Never shall I forget the frightful apparition at the front door – he was a typical old Boer, looked like President Kruger's grandfather! He had a Boer wide-awake hat – a real ten galloner. His face was the colour of boiled beetroot. His square beard completely covered his breast and reached to his navel. After 5 minutes he asked me to show him Minehead. When we got outside he said he was dying for a drink. I took him to the Plume of Feathers and there he stuck drinking whiskey until 5 p. m. when I put him in his conveyance to Dunster.

## Uncle Ted

Uncle Ted Trevor was my wife's uncle and had an old established (150 years) lawyer's practice at Bridgewater. His sister at 19 married a parson who died young leaving his wife with a quiver full, 3 boys and 5 girls.

The family moved to near Uncle Ted so that he could advise his sister. He had the purse strings and was executor, trustee etc. Ted was town clerk at Bridgewater, and ran an old fashioned family lawyers practice. Colonel Edward Trevor before the 1st world war (Colonel of the Volunteers) was a greatly respected citizen of Bridgewater, he ruled the Magistrates for 50 years telling them what to do and the sentences to give, showing no mercy to the wrongdoer. He had a loud resonant voice and gave the impression of righteous wrath. He was tall, thin and had a commanding presence.

Ted attended funerals and weddings and always made a speech, he was a born orator, his theme being the straight and narrow path. There was one peculiar thing about Ted, he could never look you in the face. I know this is supposed to be the common trait of the villain, but it was literally true with Ted. He was very proud of his family and could produce a long line of ancestors. He told us he ought to have been Viscount Hampden, apparently his forbears were married in the Fleet Prison and no record of their marriage existed. This letter appeared in the Bridgewater Mercury on April 2nd 1884.

The Trevor Hampden Family. The following letter signed James Trevor, Stowey, Somerset is published in the Pall Mall Gazette.

"I am much interested in your Account of the Trevor Hampden family. The Lord Trevor who was created Viscount Hampden in 1776 was twice married, and by his first wife had 2 sons, the elder of whom was my grandfather, John Trevor D.D. who was educated at Westminster School and was rector of Otterhampton, Somerset, his brother was also at Westminster School and died a minor. The first marriage of this Viscount Hampden was solemnized in the Fleet prison, but all proof of it was destroyed and so my grandfather and brother have been unable to prove their claim to the title. £20,000 was deposited by somebody with the Head Master of Westminster School in trust for my grandfather and his brother and an Aunt of mine, who has been dead nearly 50 years knew all the facts and was (it was generally believed) well supplied with hush money,"

The James Trevor, the writer of this letter was Uncle Ted's father.

There were several incidents before the 1914 war that convinced me that Uncle Ted was a crook. The eldest of his nephews, Arthur, wanted to be a lawyer so was articled to Uncle Ted. The family thought it was a wonderful chance, with visions of the future as partner and then carrying on the family solicitors practice, but Arthur hated it and could not get on with Ted. He eventually ran away and enlisted, this was before the South African war. Arthur soon got a commission in the Essex Regiment, he enlisted in the Somerset Light Infantry. Ted wrote to the family saying he was defraying all the expenses, uniform etc., of Arthur's commission. Everyone thought how generous it was especially as Arthur had let him down, but some years after on looking over the Estate Accounts, I found he had charged the Estate £150 for Arthur's uniform etc., at that time a preposterous amount. However, the family would not let me take the matter up for fear of upsetting his sister (My mother-in-law), Later the old family house was sold for £1,100 it was left to my Mother-in-Law, but she did not receive one penny of the amount for Ted said it had all been swallowed up in expenses. This was a favourite expression of his, on one occasion my sister in law called at his office in Bridgewater and met a farmer's widow she knew coming out. She was crying bitterly, she told my sister in law that Col. Trevor told her all the money her husband had left her had been swallowed up in expenses! At the end of his life he was 88 at the time, an action was brought against him by a firm of London Solicitors. One of the partners was a Company Executor and had sent Ted £3,000 to be invested, the money belonged to my wife's eldest sister. After sometime they enquired how the money had been invested. Ted had not invested it and it had disappeared. My sister in law did not lose her money. The Law Society paid her in full. This was the first payment the Law Society paid. Uncle Ted appeared before the Magistrates in the Court he had officiated for 50 years, he stood up and made a speech talking of the false accusation etc., etc. The Magistrates very apologetically told him he would have to appear at the Assizes, where he was found guilty and committed to prison. Thus ended the career of our Uncle Ted, or according to him, the rightful Viscount Hampden.

## **GENERAL**

### ARISTOCRACY

There was a boy whose parents were neighbours of my wife's people. He used to play as a small boy with my wife's sisters and brothers - his name was Maundy Gregory. He was clever and became an Actor and later a Theatrical Manager. He eventually gave up the Theatre and was employed during the Lloyd George Administration in selling Earldoms and Baronetcies, the proceeds being paid to the Liberal Party, the price £10,000 for a Baronetcy and £30,000 for an Earldom. He carried on the good work under a Conservative Government. By this means both Parties were well supplied with funds - Maundy Gregory made some mistakes. He was going to sell an Earldom to a South African millionaire but after enquiries by the Party it was ascertained that the potential Earl had been an illicit Diamond Buyer and had done a stretch in Gaol. Another final case came before the Courts - a rich retired officer was offered a Baronetcy by Maundy Gregory. He brought an action for obtaining money by false pretences - Maundy Gregory was found guilty and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. The Party, or rather the Parties for both, were implicated, pensioned Gregory. The conditions were that he lived abroad for the rest of his life - the pension was rumoured to be in the region of ten thousand a year - he lived a life of luxury in France but eventually died in a German Concentration Camp.

### THE COMMON PIMP

George Villiers (later Duke of Buckingham) was employed by James I in procuring. The King was a Homo Sexual. The Scottish Chronicle of the time referred to George Villiers as a Common Pimp. The Duke of Buckingham had ten daughters, all of whom had Estates left them by their father, the Duke of Buckingham. In fact they were the richest Heiresses in the country. They all married into the Aristocratic families. In fact I do not think any of our oldest Dukedoms and Earls can be without the Common Pimp's Ancestry!

OUR HEREDITARY RULERS.

We have seen how our Titled Aristocracy, members of the House of Lords, have been maintained throughout history - first through the dissolution of the Monasteries when vast estates were given away and the Ancestral Homes were built - later by alliances by marriage as in the case of the Duke of Buckingham's ten daughters, later the income of the aristocracy was augmented by enormous gifts from the Exchequer of many millions of pounds in the form of perpetual pensions which was spent in maintaining estates, racing studs, Grouse moors etc. - finally selling Titles by Maundy Gregory, the only essential was money!

### BREEDING

I have always been interested in the breeding of animals, especially horses. The 'Darley Arabian' was the foundation sire of the English thoroughbred, which has proved itself superior in speed and stamina to any other breed. Referring to our hereditary Rulers, their foundation stock - First 'The Pimp' and then Prostitutes (Charles II Mistresses) after which came a large influx of rich men who bought their Titles.

In Biblical times we are told that King David was the ancestor of Jesus Christ, Joseph being a direct descendent. I could never understand this theory for we are taught that the Holy Ghost was responsible. However, referring to King David, a man after God's own heart. No worse historical character ever existed. He plotted against Saul, a good King, collecting all the criminals and living under ground in the cave of Adullam. Of his many crimes, I think sending Uriah the Hittite into the forefront of the battle and giving orders that all troops supporting him should be withdrawn after he had seduced Bethsheba, the wife of Uriah, was the most despicable.

Other events in David's reign was the killing of Goliath. It was customary for one side's champion to offer to fight anyone in the opposing camp using orthodox weapons. We all know how David killed Goliath by plugging him in the head with a stone, at a safe distance, from a sling. When David's end came he carried out the most dastardly crimes. Although this lascivious old rascal had four hundred wives and three hundred concubines, he required a young virgin, so they searched all the coasts of Israel and found one, Abishag the Shanamite who was forced into David's bed, the excuse being 'that he could get no heat in his bones'!

On his death bed David gave Solomon a list of men he had a grudge against. He told him to fall upon them and bring their hoar heads down to the grave with do blood. After these charitable instructions, he died and

slept with his fathers, thus ended the life of the LORD'S ANOINTED - the man after God's own heart and a direct ancestor of Jesus Christ. I think the entire Christian world ought to thank the Good Lord that the Holy Ghost was responsible for the birth of Jesus Christ.

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I used to buy ponies in Devon by a horse called 'Interloper'. Apart from being clever and easy to teach, they all had one peculiarity - when first saddled they used to blow themselves out. It was difficult to find a girth long enough. When mounted, after a few yards, they deflated and one had to tighten the girth. They all responded in the same way by putting their ears back and trying to bite my toe in a playful way. My point is that habit is inherited.

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I used to keep various sorts of pigeons. It was extraordinary how various habits were hereditary. The Pouters used to flutter on to the roof and pout - that is distend their crops to a large size. The Fantails extended their tails that enveloped their whole body. Both these sorts seldom flew any distance. The Tumbler pigeons on the other hand would fly high in the air and then proceed to tumble head over heels. They would practise these aerobatics every day on being let out.

Charles Darwin in his book 'Variation of Animals & Plants' states that all these various sorts of pigeons existed in 1600 and in his opinion they are all descended from the rock pigeon, which shows how habits over the centuries can materially change a species.

### THE RED SQUIRREL

I remember some years ago I was awakened early one morning by a Red Squirrel jumping through my open bedroom window; pursued by a host of small birds of different species. The Squirrel went in and out and round about pictures, ceiling and chairs closely pursued by this promiscuous flock. My surmise is that the Squirrel had been robbing these small birds nests, who then made a concerted attack on the common enemy. Eventually the Squirrel escaped up the chimney.

### THE DEDICATED

I was staying sometime ago with a couple of dedicated Communists. There was a fixed routine. I was in the habit of coming down late for breakfast to find the fellow travellers steadily crunching their frugal breakfast of cereals, their heads bowed in apathy and gloom. In their home there were no smiles, no good morning greetings. I used to make a 'B' line for the frying pan to cook my breakfast of bacon and eggs. There was one exception to this routine - the day of the news of the failure of the U.S.A. Sputnik. I went down and got the daily papers and shouted 'the U.S.A. Sputnik has flopped (one has to shout to penetrate the iron curtain). When the Communists realized it, the change was magical. They snatched the paper from my hand and burst forth into peals of uproarious laughter that rang throughout the house.

### SHIPS THAT PASS IN THE NIGHT

I have always been in the habit of talking to people on buses and trains. There is a certain advantage in being the garrulous type - the strong, silent, oyster variety of people must miss a lot. I shall never forget a train journey - I got into a carriage, there was a woman in one corner seat with a Miniature Poodle on her lap. I made conversation with her, talking about dogs. The other occupants were a very pretty girl - she told me she was a Ballet Dancer and had just arrived from Paris. Then there was a Head Master of one of the biggest Government schools in London, near Hyde Park Corner, and lastly a lady from East Anglia, a School Mistress. For an hour we all had an intimate conversation, each of us telling of our various experiences. I would much rather make my confessions to people that I would never see again than to friends and relations. At the end of our journey we all shook hands, never to see each other again. I told the School Master I was a Widower and was looking for a home. His last words to me were, "don't live with in-laws, buy your own house". I have followed his advice.

### OBSERVATION

I have always experienced that one can get a kick out of life by being observant. Sometime ago I met an old farm worker - a Cowman. I noticed the little fingers of both hands were permanently bent. The little fingers of my hands were similar, caused by handling reins for about forty years. I asked the old chap whether he had any experience with horses for I noticed his hands were like mine. His eyes flashed and said, "you're telling me! fer thirty

years I broke to harness all the United Dairies ponies for their milk floats” - the proudest moment of his life was the Bank Holiday parade of horse vehicles in Hyde Park when he drove a team of Suffolk Punches - a fine advertisement for the United Dairies.

One afternoon I came home to find several children, school friends of my daughters, having tea. I noticed one in particular - she was exactly like a boy I went to school with. I shared the same bedroom with him for about two years. Her name was Gill - she was the daughter of my old school friend - she was left-handed like her father. I must add that it was pure conjecture on my part when I asked if her name was Gill for I had never seen her before.

### CRUSADES

Polo is a game of great antiquity - Persians, Indians, Chinese, Japanese and Saracens played in feudal times. Some years ago I came across a translation from The Arabic; it was written in the time of Saladin and depicted everyday life of the Crusaders and Saracens. Saladin's one great obsession was polo, which was played 3 days a week. The ponies were specially trained and every detail was worked out, including the special shoeing of the ponies - the Blacksmith's art had attained a perfection which has never been equalled. Travelling Smiths went to Europe from Palestine making chain suits of armour. One can imagine the fine work of the Smiths, it is a major operation for a woman to knit a jumper; fancy the task of forging a chain suit, every link had to be made on an anvil. There were long truces in the Crusades; one of 3 years; during this time the Saracens and Crusaders jostled each other in the crowded towns. There is a description of a battle which was watched by Saladin and his staff. One of the English Knights was mounted on a nappy (bad tempered) charger, which refused to go into the battle; apparently this was a common fault with the war horses of that time; the battles consisted of a congealed mass of Knights hacking away at each other, and when a horse happened to get out of the battle, he very naturally refused to go in again. Saladin ordered his A.D.C. to go to Montmorency, the English Knight who was personally known to him, with a fresh horse from the Saracen's camp, eventually Montmorency was mounted on the new steed, which instead of entering the battle bolted back into the Saracen's camp. Saladin exploded with wrath and cursed his A.D.C. After humble apologies Montmorency was remounted on one of Saladin's favourite horses. Saladin was the Prince of Chivalry, and when he offered Montmorency the hospitality of a better horse he was angry that his gift horse had failed him.



The Crusaders did not play polo, their sport was jousting. The Saracen version of the history and events in the 3rd Crusade are the opposite to the English. The English Chroniclers in feudal times were written by the Church, the Saracens by civilians, probably by Court Officials. The pro Church King such as Richard 1. had a wonderful write up, he was described as "The Strongest of living men and a genuine type of a feudal Knight, he was tall, well built and muscular, of a ruddy complexion with light brown hair. An almost exact description of King David. This was the Saracen version of Richard 1. "He was a short fat French man, whose face was one mass of pimples". He was brave, being specially skilled in taking castles, but his conquests were always marred by his cruelty, he invariably hanged all the defenders. His suit of armour is still in existence, it is for a 5ft 2 in. man. Saladin on the other hand is described as generous and forgiving; only once did he order a man to be hanged. A company of Crusaders had built a castle for the purpose of waylaying pilgrims, who were robbed and murdered. Saladin wanted to forgive the leader but was overruled by his staff. The description of Richard by the Saracens is most likely to be true, for he lived many years in Palastine and was well known everywhere, on the other hand during the whole of his life, he only spent a few months in England, he could not talk a word of English and when fighting in France he employed foreign mercenary troops.

### FINANCE

Sir George Treadgold [Sir Henry Strackosch?] was one of the richest men in the City, he was reputed to be worth many millions.

It is surprising what moths the light of great wealth will attract; Prime Ministers, Chancellor of Exchequers were intimates; he had one relation, Jack [George?], an Oxford [Cambridge?] undergraduate. Nephew Jack having a lot of money, got into the polo set; I got to know him and sold him a horse on which he won the Varsity point to point and when the polo season came round he bought his ponies from me; he used to spend his vac. with us, playing polo.

One day Jack burst in on us to tell us that Sir George had told him to tell his friends to put their money in one of his South African Gold Companies. I sold out most of my shares and reinvested according to Sir George's advice. At that time I went down to stay with an old friend Bernard Bamford. I had known him from a boy, he was a multiple Director of many of the biggest enterprises in the country. I told him of Sir George's advice and as it came straight from the horse's mouth, Bernard said "Well that's good

enough for me, I will put some in myself'.

We bought at 42/- but soon after, they started to go down. I have never known shares decline faster; in an incredibly short space of time, they were standing at 7/-; by that time I was in a flap and went down to stay a day or two with Bernard, whom I knew was a fellow sufferer. To my surprise Bernard was in good spirits, he and a friend had invested thirty five thousand in the United Gold Mines; he told me his Stockbrokers had made exhaustive enquiries and found out that Sir George had been selling huge blocks of shares and so had started the decline, he also ascertained that the break-up value of the shares was not less than 70/-; they went up as fast as they had gone down and I eventually sold at 50/-. By far the biggest buyer when the shares were standing at a few shillings was Sir George.

This is a good example of a successful financial operation or rather share manipulation. Sir George had started his financial career in South Africa, emigrating there from Austria and arriving penniless, he got a job as a clerk and in a few years became a millionaire.

Jack started life in the City in Sir George's firm, although he had a good prospect of attaining a Directorship, he chucked it and is now farming. An ex-Cabinet Minister, became a Director in the firm. Sir George was offered a seat in the House of Lords, but died before he could become one of our hereditary rulers.

(Mums notes say Sir George Treadgold was Sir Henry Strakosch, the nephew was George and he went to Cambridge not Oxford and Bernard Bamford was Noel Docker cousin to Bernard Docker. She also notes that Jim, her brother, was the manager of the farm owned by Jack (George))

#### FROM THE SUBLIME TO THE RIDICULOUS.

Talking about religious processions, I remember seeing a film many years ago called, I think, "The Song of Bernadette". It depicted a poor village girl who went to a certain well where she saw and talked to an Angel. She went home and told her people, who derided her, she continued to go daily to the well, but at last was told she must never go there again. She disobeyed and swore she was told by the Angel that the waters had healing properties. The village priest set about her accusing her of lying and her parents beat her. Eventually it was proved that the water contained marvellous curative properties.

Bernadette was then believed and it was decided she should be made a Saint. The scene was in a Cathedral of vast dimensions packed with people; the procession led by a Cardinal was impressive, the music enthralling. Bernadette was supposed to be in the last stages of T.B. and was propped up with pillows on the high altar on a sort of throne. Suddenly the singing stopped, there was a hush over the vast assembly. The Cardinal crossed himself and slowly approached within a few feet of Bernadette, he raised his hands as if blessing her and then said in a loud, raucous, nasal, American voice, "Say Bernadette, we want your rekkerd! ".

### HORSES THEN & NOW.

I remember my father telling me that when he was 14 years old in 1851, he rode to Bridgewater from Dunster in a day to visit the Dentist, he paid several visits. Bridgewater is 27miles from Dunster, one cannot imagine the present boy riding 54 miles in a day. In the 1860's Dunster possessed a good cricket eleven, it was customary to play Lynton 22 miles from Dunster. My father drove the Dunster team there once a year with a four in hand, the horses were stabled, fed and rested during the day and he returned with the team arriving at Dunster late the same night. A distance of 44 miles over the most appalling roads and having to go up and down Porlock hill. Farmers were then in the habit of driving to Taunton Market and back from the Dunster district, the return journey about 48 miles, there were a tougher and sounder lot of horses then than now. I have ascertained from certain families in the West whose forbears used to horse the stagecoaches, that a great proportion of the animals were thoroughbred, when they had come to the end of their racing career and were not fashionably bred, they were sold to finish their days in a coach. No doubt a lot of the mares that were worn out were sold to farmers to breed from, hence the riding horse in many cases had a proportion of thoroughbred blood.

A friend of mine one Souter-Sanderson, just after the 1914 war drove the original stagecoach, also using the original harness of the Holyhead to London stage. He drove the outfit from London to Holyhead. He reconditioned the coach and harness, but his great difficulty was finding small enough horses to fit the coach and harness, he ran a team of his own but all his horses were too big.

To return to polo, in the early 1900's we played matches and I remember when playing Fromington, our ponies went by road a distance of 30 miles, we played the next day and they returned the following, a distance of 60 miles and a game of polo in 3 days. This long road journey did not

seem to have the slightest ill effect on the ponies. I don't want to cast any aspersion at the present day girl groom, I think they are wonderful, but the old fashioned strapper who had been taught to groom by a stud groom in a racing or hunting stable, had a certain stable technique as regards using his stable tools that the present girl groom has not acquired, the consequence was that the riding animals were fitter for they were groomed and generally looked after better than the present day.

When I started a stable the price of a set of shoes was 2/6d. The Blacksmith would call and collect the animal and return him shod, the shoeing was first—class. Before the last war I bought a number of ponies from Northolt (pony racing) they were, of course, all thoroughbreds. A big proportion of these animals were light of bone and a number were not straight movers, such animals rarely stood the strain of modern polo. Before the 1914 war I seldom had an unsound animal. The thoroughbred in Ireland is a better animal with more bone, he takes longer to get fit. I think the reason there are such a lot of misshapen English thoroughbreds is that they are bred for speed and not stamina, also they are in bred.

#### NAMES.

One has to be careful in naming a pony. I once bought an animal from an old retired Colonel [Major Lowis of Yately?] who had spent most of his life in India; in answering in the affirmative he invariably said Aye Aye, never by any chance Yes. I christened the pony "Aye Aye".

Sometime after, he and his wife came to tea and they asked after the pony they had recently sold me. I replied, Oh you mean "Aye Aye", she is doing well. The old chap asked why I called her "Aye Aye". I had to think up something quick and told him a sailor had been playing her, so we thought "Aye Aye" would be a good name. The old man replied Aye Aye; we all had a bad attack of suppressed laughter, he did not notice anything, but his wife did and looked daggers.

There was one Malcolm Fergusson who sold me a pony. Malcolm was always in the depth of gloom for no apparent reason; one day he told me that he had fallen in love. It was a case of the eternal triangle. I met the object of his affections, a Mrs. Pany, a large and rather voluptuous looking lady with great soulful eyes, who according to Malcolm was suffering from the cruelty of her husband. Malcolm decided to go abroad and not return. I bought his pony and thought we should not see each other for years. I Christened the pony "Mrs. Pany",

To my surprise Malcolm was back in London a month after; he was still lugubrious. I asked him down for the weekend. The next morning Malcolm and I were standing in the yard when Mr. Smith approached us with short quick steps and said "Excuse me Sir, I have just had a ride on Mrs. Pany, she is a bitch, we shall have to get rid of her". Malcolm was a big jowley sort, he always reminded me of a blood hound. I glanced at him, there was no visible sign of a change of face. However, on saying goodbye, Malcolm asked me a favour, "Please Change that pony's name".

I think-it is a good policy to name animals by opposites. If you have one with a yellow streak, don't call him "Slippery Sam", but rather "Honest Robin" or "George Washington". Once on tour in the West with Babbington, after a strenuous day, our last port of call was the owner and occupier of an enormous historic mansion, it was late and getting dark. Babbington rang the bell and the butler appeared and told us that his Lordship was entertaining guests at dinner. Eventually he came out and said it was a preposterous time to come and see his pony. He gave us permission to look at her in the stable, he would sell her at a certain price, but would not allow a Vet to examine her. I found out after his reason for not allowing a veterinary examination. The pony when a yearling had been bitten by an adder and nearly died, she had a permanent callous scar on her hind leg and many vets would not have passed the animal. Babbington and I made our way to the stable, there was no groom so we put a saddle and bridle on and led her out, by this time it was dark.

The question was Where could I ride it; Babbington said there as only one place and that was the Bowling Green, a small square of grass with a 20 foot wall surrounding it and a large wrought iron gate entrance. We stood the car at the gate with head lights on, which enabled me to canter about. I soon made up my mind and bought the pony. I called her "Welcome" because we were so damned unwelcome, She turned out well and I eventually sold her to Mountbatten and for many years she was one of his favourite ponies. Very often you can name a pony by its pedigree. I sold a pony before the 1914 war to Noel Edwards of the 9th Lancers, he played in the winning English team against America in 1913. The pony was by "The Ghost" out of "Secundus". Noel christened her "Second Sight".

### PERPETUAL PENSIONS

When reading The Bridgewater Mercury, April 2nd, 1884, I came across some interesting letters to The Editor concerning a meeting that was broken up in disorder, it was convened to allow Mr. Chas. Bradlaugh to

denounce the system of Perpetual Pensions. John Hayward in a letter to The Bridgewater Mercury concludes his letter - You will probably, Mr. Editor, desire to discontinue the correspondence, allow me to answer my own question. Notwithstanding the professions of Mr. Gladstone's Government for retrenchment, it is a fact as given in the Financial Reformer Almanac (Mr. Bradlaugh's own publication I believe) that no less than 17 members of his Government are and have been in receipt of Perpetual Pensions and I here give a list of their names and the amounts the several recipients have received. The Hon. E. Ashley, £158,700, Earl of Bessborough £415,000, Earl of Cork £190,450, Earl Cooper £440,200, Earl of Derby £322,000, Lord E. Fitzmaurice £87,000, Earl Granville £229,000, Lord R. Grosvenor £51,750, Marquis of Hartington £174,000, Earl of Kimberley £1,296,000, Earl of Morley £25,000, Earl of Northbrook £797,000, Marquis of Ripon £330,500, Earl of Roseberry £70,000, Mr. George Russell £554,200, Earl Selborne £316,750, Earl Spencer £185,000.

In this paper, The Bridgewater Mercury April 2nd, 1884, the advertisements are illuminating. The Agricultural wage was 10/- a week, now £8 per week, a set of horse shoes 2/6d. now 26/- a set, Men's tweed suits 16/- now £10, maid servants £9 - £12 a year now £150 - £200, Tobacco 3d to 4d an ounce now 4/- to 5/-. Men's boots made on the premises 8/6d a pair now £6. These pensions in present money would be worth 10 times the amount. How were these enormous amounts spent. The largest amount received was by the Earl of Kimberley, in present value 12 million pounds. I knew his grandson as Jack Wodehouse and later the Earl of Kimberley, we were both on the Handicap Committee at the Hurlingham Club, he was not a rich man, evidently this enormous capital had then disappeared. The Earl of Derby received in present value about three and a quarter million pounds, but the Earl of Roseberry only received a paltry seven hundred thousand pounds present value, but later became Prime Minister so probably had a second helping. Both Lord Derby and Lord Roseberry had racing studs.

Our hereditary rulers were certainly not behind the door when pensions were given out. I think the reason that Charles Bradlaugh's meeting was broken up was not because he was denouncing Perpetual Pensions, but because he was an Atheist, he was elected M.P. in 1880 and was prevented from taking his seat because he was an Atheist. He was forcibly ejected, he was re-elected in 1881, 1882 and 1884, but in 1886 he was allowed to affirm and to take his seat. This list of Perpetual Pensions was during Mr. Gladstone's Government, what must the list have been under the Conservative Administration.

There can be no doubt that a great number of the Statley Homes of England, complete with grouse moors, deer forests and Racing Studs were maintained by these enormous pensions. Income Tax in those days was 6d in the £. These pensions were issued in my life-time, I can remember events that happened in 1884. Joseph Chamberlain at this time was advocating for M.P's to be paid, yet it was possible for aristocratic sections of both administrations to get these enormous hand outs from the public exchequer.

### SELLING PONIES,

When one has trained a pony for a year possibly two, a price of £300 is the minimum sale price and it all depended who your customer was; few soldiers give more than £300, but Indian Maharajahs would give up to £1,000 and there were certain rich civilians and Americans that would pay the high price for a suitable animal, but the Market was limited. I had an advantage at Fleet for all the low handicap players from Oxford, Cambridge, Woolwich and Sandhurst played Tournaments at Fleet. I got to know the Maharajah of Jaipur when he was a cadet at Woolwich and for many years he bought ponies from me. A son of the King of Siam was a Sandhurst Cadet, he had hired a couple of ponies and on leaving I asked him to buy some ponies. He replied "I have no money, but I said you are the son of a King, surely you have only to write to your father. He said "You don't understand, I have 83 brothers and sisters:

### SHOWING.

My first experience of judging was in 1908 when Ted Miller and I judged polo ponies in Dublin.

I think there has always been a bit of jiggery pokery about showing.

During every decade there are a few outstanding showmen. They are always well known to the judges and consequently attract their attention, very often the ordinary rider without the technique of the professional misses the eye of the judge, though he may be riding a better animal, the riders are judged as well as their horses.

I remember in the 1890's and early 1900's one Jack Goodwin who was a marvellous show rider. In one large class he did not happen to be riding; the judges had started to eliminate and one of the first discarded managed to sneak out of the ring, Jack accosted him and asked to take the horse

back into the ring, he hastily put on his own saddle and bridle (Jack always used a special plush lined saddle which remained in place) he galloped into the ring and profusely apologized to the judges for being late, they eventually awarded him 1st prize.

At a Hunter Improvement Society Show at Taunton. I was staying with Babington at the time, very often I picked up a good pony at shows, but never amongst the prize winners. I was asked to ride an animal the property of a farmer. I saddled the animal with my own saddle and rode out into the ring, it was a big class of about 30. My mount was the worse I have ever ridden, he had a mouth of cast iron, it was absolute purgatory to ride him. I managed to manipulate him round the outside of the ring, I dare not let him gallop for I would never have stopped. To my great and thankful relief I was the first, as I thought to be eliminated. The judges took a lot of time riding several animals before making up their mind. To my utter astonishment one of the stewards came and doled out the rosettes and I was awarded first prize. I thought I was bottom of the class, instead I was top: the judges did not ride my animal. I bought one pony out of the class I rode in, not noticed by the judges, she turned out a real smasher and was for many years one of the best ponies in India.

Rupert Hotchkiss for a time was in the Vienna Riding School, he was one of the worlds best show riders; when he first came to this country, he was with me for a time, owing to a disability (a slightly crooked right arm caused by an accident ) he was not much use in schooling ponies. He started on his own training and showing. Rupert soon blossomed out as a Count, he was a real Adonis, tall, slim, beautiful blue eyes and fair hair and always dressed immaculately,

All the horsey debs simply itched to become Countess. Rupert disappointed them by marrying a lady old enough to be his Mother, he used to charge £20 to ride an animal in a Show. The judges invariably gave him first prize. I am sure some of the animals he rode would not have been noticed by the judges if ridden by an amateur.

I used to buy some thoroughbreds from one Henry Gibson in Warwickshire, he told me of an incident when he was judging hounds at Peterborough with Lord North. After they had finished the fox hound classes, a strong class of dachshunds entered the ring, Gibson said he didn't know anything about the breed. North replied, Neither do I they all seem exactly alike; so what shall we do. Gibson said let us give the prize to the dog with the biggest genital organ and that's what they did and gave great satisfaction to all concerned.



## SNOBBS

Our neighbours at one time, we will call them King (Laings of Fleet Farm House), he had been a regular Cavalry Soldier and returned after the 1914 war with the rank of Lt.Colonel. His father had a Restaurant and a Wine and Spirit business in the north which prospered enabling him to send his son (Poppa his nickname) to a public school and Sandhurst. His eldest brother ran the business. On Poppa's retirement from the Army, they opened a branch in London which Poppa managed. He used to go up to town every morning. The locals were never good enough for the Kings, they were exclusively in the County set. After the 2nd war they employed a butler. I got to know him, he had been a manager of a small war factory in South Wales. He had a wife and small child and as he was at a loose end he took the King's job as Butler and his wife as cook. He told me that he knew the King's family, his brother had a commission in the 1914 war and was in the same regiment as Poppa's brother. The butler did not remain long at the King's; soon after he left Mrs. King rang me up and asked me to come over after tea and have a drink. Mrs. King said they particularly wanted to see me for they had heard their late butler had been spreading rumours that he had known the King family. Believe me said Mrs. King, we had never heard of him or seen him before we engaged him. Poppa sat and said not a word. About 6 months later I met the butler, he had been away but came back to manage the Red Lion Inn, his wife had a secretarial job. In the course of conversation I told him what Mrs. King had said. I have never seen a man so angry, he was purple in the face with rage. What? Not know the Kings. My old Dad kept the Bull Inn in Turpin Street in their home town and old King had a pull-in in the same street. My old Dad knew old King (Poppa's father ) as a young man when he was employed by the local Brewery as a dray man. I believed the butler.

We used to deal with an old grocer called Newman. He had been a bailiff to a rich brewer Lord C..... and managed his pedigree herd. Lord C..... died and left Newman a legacy with which he bought the grocery business. Newman was the son of a small farmer, his brother became a shop assistant in Brighton, prospered and eventually became a Director and Chairman to one of the biggest multiple stores. He had one son who during his childhood spent a proportion of his holidays with the bailiff uncle; as they had no children they made a great fuss with him. He went to Sandhurst and was commissioned in a Guards Regiment stationed at Aldershot. Although his uncle was only 3 miles distant he never looked him up. The old man felt very hurt.

What a system to be ashamed of our relations.

## THE WAR HORSE IN FEUDAL TIMES.

War influences the type of riding horse; as armour got heavier the pony was superseded by a larger animal. Jenghis Khan put paid to the Knight in Armour; his armies were mounted on Chinese ponies; small bands laid waste the country, cutting off supplies to the towns and destroying the irrigation systems; they defeated the Knights in pitched battles; they had no armour. Knights in heavy armour were absolutely useless against them.

It is generally supposed that there were hordes of Jenghis Khans followers, but on the contrary they were small mobile cavalry detachments.

The British Museum has lately acquired through the generosity of the late Mr. Brooke Sewell, a picture colours on paper dated 1290 of a horse and rider by Chien Hsuan (Yuan dynasty). The horse has an extraordinary modern appearance, in fact a polo sort, made all in once piece, head, neck, back, all fitting into each other, nothing disconnected. The Norman horses in the Bayeux tapestry, are horrible animals, long disconnected with no middle piece. The horses on the Parthenon Frieze and on Roman and Greek coins are legendary types, cresty necked, unnatural looking animals, with huge thyroid glands, their heads embedded into their necks. It is hard to imagine the horse of the Crusaders for all the sculpture and later pictures are of this legendary, fantastic, unnatural prancing animal. Chinese paintings are portraits; I have seen a Chinese picture, 16th Century, of a Chinese polo player galloping after the ball, his mount is exactly like the present day polo pony.

The East is the natural home of the riding horse; when exported and bred in Western Countries, it soon loses its characteristics. Some of the Armada Ships with horses were wrecked on the Shetlands; they were probably of Arab type for the Cavalry, after being bred in the Shetlands for generations, they turned into the Shetland pony and have remained a distinct type of small pony ever since and although the Spanish horses were probably grey, the Shetland ponies are all black. Shetland ponies are the only exception that when exported and bred in foreign countries they still remain the diminutive Shetland pony. The Shetland sheep dogs, they were once collies, are diminutive and remain so wherever they are bred; so also do their bantams, once fowls. I know for a fact that Exmoor ponies when bred on good land change and soon become larger animals losing their pony characteristics. The English thoroughbred emanated from the Arab; The Darley Arabian and The Byerley Turk.

There is a distinct type of riding horse in the Argentine and South America which started from the Arab; also in Australia, the Whaler, which began from the English thoroughbred.

### TRANSPORT IN FEUDAL TIMES.

It is one of the world's mysteries how the enormous numbers of horses were loaded and landed in feudal times.

In 1189 Richard 1 met Philip Augustus, King of France, on the plains of Vezelai in Burgundy. Their united force amounted to one hundred thousand men. There were small sailing ships with the auxiliary rowers of certainly not more than 150 tons. The two Kings, their nobles and men remained during the winter in Sicily and in 1191 sailed for Palestine and took Acre.

The fleets of Venice and Genoa were employed by the Crusaders although the Venetians and Genoese were neutral and still carried on trade with Egypt. There are few references to ships in feudal time.

This is a description of The White Ship by a chronicler of the Time:—

"Henry 1 spent 3 years from 1117 to 1120 in Normandy. On his return to England the King set sail accompanied by a crowd of nobles. The Ship in which his son William embarked was called the "Blanche Nef", (this is the old French form of the Latin, Blanca Navis, white ship) and filled with young nobles and drunken sailors, for the young Prince had distributed stoups of wine among the crew, it lingered till evening behind the rest of the Royal Fleet. At length it cast loose from the pier. Driven by the arms of 50 excited rowers, it swept at the highest speed out of the harbour, but there was no head to guide, and the ship ill rowed in the darkness of the coming night, struck against the rock of Catteville and filled rapidly. Prince William put off in a small boat, but the shrieks of his sister The Countess of Perche, moved him to row back to the wreck. His boat was sunk by the maddened crowd who tried to swarm over its sides. One man only, a butcher of Rouen was saved 'out of 300".

By this description we learn that the ships of the 12th century could carry 300 troops and it was necessary to have 50 sailors to row in case of a calm, also none of the occupants could swim except the butcher of Rouen. Out of the one hundred thousand men that were transported from Burgundy to Sicily and from thence to Palestine, a considerable portion, at least ten thousand, must have been mounted. A Knight in feudal times was useless

without his horse, for it was, owing to his heavy armour, impossible for him to march and fight on foot. Hannibals job of crossing the Alps or the transportation of the stones from South Wales to Stonehenge were simple compared to shipping this enormous force in small ships of about 150 tons.

## HISTORY

### BLUEJACKETS

I used to take a team down to Portsmouth in the Spring to play the Bluejackets team. Their regular team was, Lonsdale, Lamb, Neville and 'Mountbatten. On this occasion they had decided to put in another sailor instead of Robert Neville who was a Marine and had worked out entirely new tactics, which they were going to carry out in London, if successful against us.

Their tactics were a complete flop; in the last chucker we were leading by 8 goals to one; just at the end of the chucker Mountbatten took a bad toss, his pony rolling over on him, he was concussed and put his collar bone out. Robert Neville was reinstated in the Bluejackets team and that year got into the final of the Inter- Regimental, a wonderful performance for a Sailor team.

### CAVALRY SCHOOL FINAL PASSING OUT. ROME 1931

The French team and ourselves got an invitation from the Commandant of the Cavalry School to see the final Passing Out.

The Italian Cavalry School at that time had an international reputation, they were the first to advocate the forward seat, and their show jumping results were the best in the world. The course was 18 months duration. Cavalry Officers from the other Nations including the USA took the course. The Commandant and ourselves took up our positions on a stand in the middle of a dead flat field of about 100 acres, on which every conceivable jump was erected, there was not set course. The troop of about 60 paraded in front of us, they were mounted on various types, the English Hunter, the weedy Arab and the ewe necked, buck throated nondescript. I have never seen a worse collection, they were all unclipped with long coats, their tack was the forward seat jumping saddle and a snaffle bridle. The troop followed the Troop Leader in single file over the various obstacles, which were all solid, if they hit them it spelt disaster; in front of our stand was a wall built of solid masonry about 4 ft. 6 inches in height and a triple bank which consisted of 3 banks of 5 ft. high, when the animal arrived on the third

bank, he was 15 ft from the ground, so had to negotiate a 15 ft. drop the other side.

There was only one mishap, the Troop Leader's mount refused the triple bank, he got him over the second time.

The Commandant asked me if I had any criticism. I told him all the troop followed the leader and did nothing individually, he then asked me to pick out a couple and set them at any of the jumps. I selected two of the worse types and asked one to jump the triple bank and the other the wall, both left the troop and jumped perfectly. We then walked up to the Mess which was situated about 100 ft. above the field; at the back of the mess was a disused coal mine and shale heap, similar to the ones in the coal mining districts of England.

The Commandant and ourselves entered the Court Yard of the Mess, he shut the gate, a solid wooden one of about 4 ft. 6 inches high; he then signalled to the Troop, they came up the steep incline in single file and jumped the gate from the road into the Court Yard, their horses were blowing and streaming with sweat, yet they all made that supreme effort and cleared the gate. The last act; after an interval of ten minutes, the troop appeared at the top of the shale heap and all slid down riding in the forward seat style.

What impressed me was that the animals taking part had been selected from various units of the Army with no qualifications of jumping talent, yet they had been trained successfully to jump every type of obstacle.

I heartily congratulated the Commandant on a marvellous and absolutely unique show.

### CIGAR VENTURE

Alter the 1914 war it was difficult to get grooms, in those days there were no girls who took on stable work. I had about 50 ponies to look after and took stables and grooms accommodation at Fetcham Park near Leatherhead. I had an excellent schooling field on the chalk that one could school on all the year round. I managed to sell a lot of ponies, it was hard going for there were no made ponies available, one had to make all your sale ponies. I got a few ponies from the Argentine, Alfred Grisar, Frank Rich and myself got over about 50, they landed at Antwerp and cane from Grisars estancias (Grisar was Managing Director of Liebig's) he was a good polo player and played in London and Antwerp. The remainder of my ponies

chiefly came from the West country. The Argentine ponies had never played polo but were naturally handy having been cow punched. My stud groom in those days was one Frank Lawlor, he had served his apprenticeship in a Racing stable. Frank had the knack of producing fit ponies, as regards stable management one can't improve on the Racing technique of feeding etc., after Frank left me I employed a stud groom an Irishman who had been head man in a dealers yard. He was not a success, although the forage bills went up the ponies were never really fit. My advice to those employing a stud groom is to get a horseman not one that stays in the stable all day.

Frank was newly married when he came to me, his wife a very lovely girl died suddenly after they had been with me a year. Frank had a nervous breakdown and gave me notice to leave, although I begged him to take a holiday and promised to keep his place open. About ten years after I was playing polo at Minehead when a chap passed me in a car, suddenly pulled up and there was Frank, he had an expensive car and a lady with him the second Mrs. Lawlor. Frank had got a job in the Prudential at first collecting the weekly pennies from door to door and after an administrative job at a good salary. That reminds me of a friend of mine, an ex-officer after the 1914 war, applied to The Prudential for a job. They told him he would have to start at the bottom and gave him a job similar to when Frank started. My friend made a bad start there were precious few pennies to collect and before the end of the day he was heartily sick and tired of ringing bells and knocking on doors and then getting rebuffs. His last call was at the end of a long street, a child opened the door and my friend said, my dear do you know whether your Mother is in The Prudential? No Sir, the child answered, she is in the W.C. That was the only day my friend was in The Prudential. After the 1914 war there were thousands of ex-officers unemployed. After I was demobbed in 1919 I got to know a firm of Belgian Wholesale Tobacconists, they were cigar manufacturers and collaborated with the Dutch firms in importing the leaf Tobacco from Indonesia. They offered me the sole agency for putting their cigars on the English Market. The cigars were cheap, a packet of small cigars cost about the same as a packet of cigarettes of similar weight. I went to a lot of expense in getting ready to launch our cigars on the retail trade. I employed 3 travellers, two of them ex-officers, one an old school fellow, who had been axed from the Navy, the other an ex-Gunner who had commanded a battery. I took an office in London and employed a secretary, in fact we had everything taped and started the campaign in Edinburgh. The first week we got a lot of orders, we delivered the goods a day or so after the travellers visit from our warehouse, where we had a stock. The next week exceeded all our expectations, the tobacconists had all sold out and gave repeat orders, the weeks work from one traveller brought me in a net profit of over £100. The next week was The

Budget, the Government brought in an enormous increased duty on European cigars, it put us right out of business, for our cigars to be sold at a profit would be priced the same as the expensive Havana cigar. There is no doubt that if this tax had not been levied, a great proportion of smokers would have smoked cigars in preference to Virginian cigarettes. I was fighting against a huge combination, who when advised of my sales pulled the political strings and got the increased tariff, they were, of course, large subscribers to political funds. In fact there must have been a Tobacco lobby, this was my assumption.

Before the 1914 war the sales of American cigarettes were much smaller owing to the popularity of Turkish and Egyptian brands, it was customary to carry both Virginian and Egyptian or Turkish cigarettes in one's case, if you only had Virginian you apologized for offering a gasper as the Virginians were called. There is another point, if my campaign had been successful and The British became cigar smokers, the incidence of lung cancer would have been reduced.

#### COINCIDENCE OR TELEPATHY.

It was during the last war, I was farming at Fleet, having to convert the Fleet Polo Club into a farm, when an extraordinary coincidence happened.

I had to go to Guildford Market to put a reserve on some of my stock which were being sold. My wife had recently been given a length of Irish tweed which she wanted to have made up into a coat and skirt and had arranged to take it to a lady living at 19 Artillery Road, Guildford, we therefore decided to attend the Market and call at 19 Artillery Road. I was very short of petrol which was rationed and had to return during the early afternoon for an appointment.

I was worried, for arriving at Guildford the place was choc-a-block full of cars, I had no idea where to find Artillery Road. On passing the policeman on point duty, he volunteered the information that I could not park in the Market. I said "Damn" and drove on.

I had gone about 30 yards when a man crossing the street motioned me to stop and pointed behind. To my surprise the policeman was running after me. He said "Go down this street and take the 3rd turning to the right, you will find a place to park there". I followed his instructions, the street he directed us to was absolutely jammed with cars on both sides. I had to go up to the end of the street for I could not turn round, but right at the top there



was just one space free, I managed with difficulty to wedge the car in. We walked down on the way to the Market and on looking up at the name of the street, I said to my wife, "What a coincidence, this is Artillery Road". I saw my animals sold and came back to the car that was parked outside No. 19!

Of course, this might have been the ten thousand to one chance, a miraculous coincidence, but I think unconsciously I telepathized my want to the policeman, who was compelled to leave his point duty and direct me to Artillery Road and that No. 19 was taboo to the other motorists who wanted to park there.

The only word I spoke to the policeman was "Damn".

### EARLY DAYS OF POLO IN ENGLAND

Polo was played in India in the 1850's by English Merchants and Army Officers, the height of ponies then was fixed at 12.2.hands.

The 10th Hussars played at Hounslow in 1869 and 1871. No rules were produced until 1875. The 3 Miller brothers really started modern polo in England just before the South African War, they settled at Rugby and after the war polo clubs sprang up all over the West of England, it never took on in the North or Scotland. I played at Minehead, West Somerset in the early 1900's, We had no Tournaments and there were no handicaps, we played matches. I remember playing the following clubs, North Devon at Fremington, Ottery St. Mary, Exeter, Blackmore Vale at Sherbourne and Cardiff.

The official height of ponies then was 14.2. hands and in India 14.1. hands, all ponies had to be registered. There was an official measurer appointed by the Hurlingham Club, one Mr. Sheather M.R.C.V.S., fee for registration 10/- per pony. Rattle Barrett of the 15th Hussars played a season with us in 1904 in West Somerset, he had played for a number of years in India and was one of the best players in the country, he taught us how to run Tournaments, he played for England (the winners) against America in 1913.

When we first started, things were very primitive. We had about 20 playing members, consisting of farmers and certain men that let out horses for stag hunting, three doctors and 1 lawyer. It was customary for members to play their trappers. We played 3 chukkers of 10 minutes on each pony, A splendid tea, Devonshire cream etc., and drinks were sold on the ground. I have never enjoyed polo more than these early days.

It was strange then that the principal dealers in polo ponies were brothers. The 3 Millers, George, Ted and Charlie, 3 Richs, Frank, Harry and Bert and later 3 Balding's, Billy Tiny and Bert and in Ireland the 3 Slococks.

For some years I sold my ponies to the Richs, their top price as £70 many of which were bought by the Millers for £200 and £300 apiece. I was earning a very precarious living and owing to another man starting to make and sell ponies to the Richs, I decided to try my fortune elsewhere. I went to Colchester and played for a season with the 8th Hussars but did not sell them a single pony, they already had bought all they wanted from the Richs. I was desperate so wrote to Charlie Miller offering to send 2 ponies to Roehampton on trial. I sent them up and had a letter within the week enclosing a cheque for £375, 1200 for one and £175 for the other. This in 1906 started my connection with the Millers which continued until 1914. Ted Miller was Manager of Hurlingham and Charlie of Roehampton.

### EYGPT 1921

After the 1914 War there was a great surplus of remounts (Mules and Horses). I was a D.A.D.R.(Deputy Assistant Director of Remounts) and had to organise sales by auction in various districts in France. By this means we disposed of large numbers in France. There was a Paris firm of Horse dealers called Salomons of Paris.

Salomon the head of the firm attended all the sales and bought both Horses and Mules. After I was demobilised I took Salomon to England and sold him eight hundred Mules, the Director of Remounts giving me special facilities in collecting and selling these animals. Salomon put me in communication with Schapiro of Doncaster - they were a firm of International horse dealers having connections in Germany and Russia. Schapiro the head of the firm came to London to see me and to ask if it was possible for me to fix a similar arrangement of selling him animals that I had with Salomon. I went to Head Office and had an interview with the Director of Remounts. He was most co-operative. Most of the Remounts in England had been sold but there was a large surplus in Egypt - Schapiro and I decided to go there. The War Office cabled Egypt that all sales of Remounts should cease until my arrival. The German Government had given Schapiro an order for seven hundred Remounts with a promise of more orders if the first consignment was satisfactory. The animals were required for Sugar factories. Sugar Beet was grown within a few miles radius from the Sugar factories - these farms had large supplies of Sugar Beetroots but no transport available to cart them to the factories. In January 1921 Schapiro

and I started our journey to Alexandria via Rome and Brindisi in a passenger and cargo ship. We spent a few days in Rome sightseeing and stayed at Brindisi several days which enabled us to see a bit of Southern Italy. Schapiro was a good travelling companion telling me about his family and their experiences - a relation of his sold many thousands of animals to the Russian Army.

When the Revolution started, the Remount General and Schapiro's relation were arrested, the General for receiving bribes from Schapiro - they were released later and ordered to reorganize the Remount service which had completely broken down. The Russian Remount Service had been built up over many years. In the horse breaking areas the Peasants sent the animals they wanted to sell to collecting stations where the Remount Officers either bought or rejected them. From there the animals went to the various Remount Depots which were in strategic positions to enable the units of the Russian Army to be re-horsed. The Remount depots were huge establishments, the animals being trained and issued to the various Army units requiring remounts. Sometimes great distances had to be traversed from the collecting station to the Remount depot. The Russians made use of the rope system as we did in the last stages of the 1914 War when the Railways could not cope with the transport of animals - it was also used in the South African War.

Twenty two animals were attached each side of a rope about thirty yards in length. In front the rope was attached to a Trace horse - the end of the rope was attached to a horse with britching harness, thus the rope was kept taut between the two harnessed horses. A mounted man led the Trace horse (there was also a man to lead the britching animal). in the middle of the rope a mounted man led the two animals which were bridled, (this was to ensure safe cornering), the middle man pulling the animals to the centre of the road when going round a corner - thus twenty-seven animals were taken great distances by three men. In France we used to travel about thirty miles a day by this method to a camp with tents, picket lines and forage where we stayed the night. A Blacksmith always accompanied us in case any shoes were cast.

We embarked at Brindisi and called at many ports, Cyprus, Crete and various islands. At one port some three hundred Jews came on board. To my astonishment all these Jews were fair with Flaxen hair and White skins They came from South Russian, their destination Palestine. There was not one with dark complexion and Semitic type.

We had only four other first class passengers - two English women Doctors who had been in the Serbian retreat and two Americans (man and

wife). He told me his job in the U.S.A. was selling spectacles. He employed a Brass Bank and extensively advertised his visit - by this means he said he could make enough money to satisfy his Nomadic instincts. There was hardly a country in the World he had not visited.

On arrival at Cairo I at once went to see the D.A.D.R. (Deputy Assistance Director of Remounts) one Major Gallagher of the Tobacco family. He had been in the 11th Hussars. I did not receive a cordial reception - I think he had other plans for the disposal of surplus animals. There was at this time large numbers of horses and mules in Egypt belonging to the British Army. They had taken part in Allenby's campaign against the Turks three years before. Most of the men had been demobilised leaving a skeleton staff to look after the animals which were eventually sent to the Remount depot at Kantara. There was practically no demand for Remounts in Egypt, the few that were sold fetched not more than £10 a piece. We stayed at Shepherds Hotel at Cairo to wait for about three weeks for the German ship to arrive at Alexandria. She was a frightful old hulk with no fittings for animals. We had to employ a Stevedore, one George, a Maltese, to equip her with horse standings. It was an expensive operation having to employ Egyptian carpenters. The loading was a nightmare - it was impossible to fix a loading ramp. Instead the animals had to be harnessed in a sling and deposited in the bowels of the old hulk. We had one casualty, a Mule broke his leg and had to be destroyed. We bought the animals at Kantara and from there they were trained to Alexandria - the distance from the station to the docks was about two miles through narrow streets. Gallagher would not sell us animals under £50 though before our arrival the top price was £10 per animal. After we had bought the animals Schapiro had not enough money to pay for them, being £13,000 short. He cabled Salomon and received £13,000 by return cable. This is an example of the solidarity of the Jews. Before the 1914 War when buses and cabs were the order of the day, thousands of horses were imported to this country. Several Jewish firms were large horse importers. Horses for buses came from Canada and lighter horses for handsome cabs came from Hungary and the Argentine.

The seven hundred horses and mules were shipped to Hamburg and took six weeks to get there. Unfortunately they arrived when a Revolution was taking place; consequently they could not be landed for several days and were in poor condition having only enough forage for the voyage. The Germans cabled Schapiro that owing to the animals being in such poor condition, they refused to pay for them. We had to wait a fortnight in suspense but eventually we were paid in full but did not receive a repeat order. We at this stage moved into a less expensive Hotel and to our surprise the two women doctors who were our companions during the voyage were

staying there. It was during this period I was having a drink with the Manager of the Bank of Athens at Shepherds, I told him of my experience. He told me the Greek Government were desperately short of transport animals - I gave him my conditions that I could supply animals at £55 a piece.

At that time the Greeks were fighting the Turks. In June 1920 Great Britain, France and Italy authorised a Greek offensive against Turkey - their object was to unleash against them Turkey's natural enemies, the Greeks. The suggestion had come from Venizelos, the Greek Prime Minister, and had been taken up with enthusiasm by Lloyd George. The scheme was to cost so little - a temporary loan and the maintenance of the British fleet in the Sea of Marmora and of a French army in Cilicia - The Greeks were almost certain to succeed, armed as they were with the supplies which the Allies had accumulated in Macedonia. All went well until the Spring of 1921 - at Angora, Mustapha Kemal was working furiously to organise the Turkish national forces.

To resume my dealings with the Manager of the Bank of Athens, I heard nothing for three weeks. By that time I had gone to Alexandria and booked my passage home. On coming back to my hotel I had an urgent message to get into touch with the Manager of the Bank of Athens who told me that the Athenian Government had accepted any offer and were sending a deputation to buy the animals under my conditions. For several days they did not call on me they were trying to buy animals from various sources but failed. Eventually they called on me and we arranged with the British Government to see animals at Kantara. I must explain the set-up at Kantara (on the banks of the Suez Canal). It was a Remount Depot where animals were collected from the various Army Units. They were kept in enclosures and fed on Barley and Hay - the Barley was not crushed and the Hay was top quality (Clover).

The animals were loose and the Hay and Barley deposited on the sand. There were few cases of sickness and it took a short time for the animals to be in very good condition. I spent several weeks at Kantara inspecting the animals as they came in from the various Army units. The Commanding Officer was an old friend of mine named Hackett. He was awfully good in providing me with free accommodation - I messed with the Remount Officers. Hackett gave me a tent which I pitched on the banks of the Canal. I had a gentleman's agreement with the Remounts that I should be able to school polo ponies and select two for my requirements. We played polo twice a week - the Scots Greys were stationed near.

The Remounts got up a Horse Show, the Scots Greys supplied the judges. Everything was set for a start when a Brigadier strolled into the ring - the judges (three Scots Grey Officers) smartly saluted. He introduced himself and they all shook hands. The Brigadier was bogus. The other units got hold of a Lance Corporal from the Greys, dressed him up in immaculate Cavalry tunic and Bedford Cord breeches and gave him a breast full of medal ribbons. We were all cracking our sides with laughter seeing the Greys cowering to their own Lance Corporal - they must have been a bit dim not to have recognised him.

In the show there was a high jumping competition. The winner, by a strange coincidence, I knew before the War. He was a travelling Sadler and visited polo, hunting and race stables. He had, I think, a commission in the Gunners. Several of the competitors cleared six feet but failed six foot six inches. The one exception was my Sadler friend - he was mounted on what Remounts classed as an R.2. - a nondescript Riding animal that was issued to Infantry Officers, Padres and other units. This animal was about fifteen hands, very fat with a great cresty neck. He carried his head straight out - in fact he was exactly like a fat pig. He approached the jump at a slow trot (it would have been a physical impossibility for him to canter). When practically under the jump he slowly reared up in a perpendicular position - he remained thus for several seconds. The Sadler had the forward seat and clutched hold of the mane - his mount then gave a tremendous spring and cleared the six foot six inches.

I enjoyed staying at the Remount Mess, they were a most interesting lot of chaps - a flat racing jockey, a school master and a man who had spent several years as a Stoker on the Cornish Riviera express, Paddington to Penzance. He enlisted several years before the War and when I knew him, he was a Captain in the Regular Army. The School master had been an assistant master in the Prep school my son went to in Brighton.

I spent a lot of time at Kantara. At sunrise I used to go out for a ride in the desert, at that time in the early morning the air was filled with a delicious scent owing to the growth of a minute cacti with a small flower and cup shaped leaves, in each leaf was a tiny globule of water collected from the heavy dew, every now and then one could see a ship looming up amongst the sand dunes.

In all the enclosures at the Depot there were literally thousands of doves feeding on the Barley which was fed to the animals. I eventually met the Greek delegation at Kantara and we then inspected the animals collected. I agreed with the Greeks to sell them two thousand animals at £55 a piece. The Greek ship eventually arrived at Alexandria. I arranged with

Remounts at Kantara to train the animals to Alexandria in batches of two hundred. The station was about two miles from the docks - the animals arrived at the station with halters that were supplied by Remounts. I had to hire Egyptians to lead them to the docks. At this time there was tension between Egyptians and Greeks. George and I paraded the animals in lots of fifty, one Egyptian leading three animals - we gave strict orders for the animals to be led and not ridden. George went in front and I followed behind. I was continually hauling off Egyptians who had disobeyed orders and were riding. George told me that if mounted it was possible for an Egyptian to suddenly ride down a back street with his three animals and we would never see them again. The Greeks insisted that the one thousand animals should be picketed round the ship before embarkation so that they could thoroughly inspect every animal - this presented a problem for the animals had to be fed. The Greeks refused to help.

I went to see the C.O. of the A.S.C. and told him my difficulty, a moderate estimate of feeding one thousand animals for a week would be £500. He told me he had a large surplus of forage and after seeing my War Office papers said he would forage them free of all costs. At last we loaded all the one thousand animals and the ship left for Smyrna. I was given a bill of lading and cashed it at the Bank of Athens. We still had to wait for another Greek ship for the remaining one thousand animals. At this time fierce fighting was going on and at last the Greek offensive against Angora failed. This showed the World that Turkish Nationalism was an invincible force - the immediate result was that France made a secret treaty with the Angora (Turkish) Government and withdrew her eighty thousand men from Cilicia.

When the second Greek ship arrived at Alexandria to take the remaining one thousand animals, rioting broke out in the dock area, Greeks being beaten up by the Egyptians. George and I had a hell of a time getting the animals through yelling hostile crowds - it took more than a week, when once the animals were through the dock gates, they were comparatively safe for there was a strong British armed guard round the docks.

At last the one thousand animals were ready to be loaded, then the British Government refused permission for the animals to be embarked. The Ministry of Shipping asked me to go to Cairo and call on them - at the interview the Minister told me that the animals were contraband of War and would not be allowed to go to Smyrna but unofficially I can tell you that we should have no objection to their going to Alexandretta'. I took the hint and altered the ship's papers to Alexandretta. The one thousand animals were loaded and the ship left. The ship's captain gave me a bill of lading and I heard a sigh of relief. Alexandretta (now called Iskenderun) was then a

Turkish port. The British Government had now changed sides and were backing the Turks!

On arriving at my Hotel I met a man who told me the Bank of Athens had gone broke. You can imagine my feelings with a bill of lading in my pocket worth fifty five thousand pounds. However, the Bank of Athens issued a Moratorium, that is it remained shut and issued no payments for a fortnight - then I was paid.

A question was asked in the House of Commons: Are we supplying contraband of war to the Greeks? The answer being in the negative. A few days after the ship had left the Egyptians were massacring the Greeks, some two hundred were killed and the Railway Station that the animals had arrived on was burnt to the ground. History repeats itself, the Greeks fighting the Turks in Cyprus at the present time. Throughout History, Greeks seem to be the natural enemies of the Turks. I am sure my readers will gather that I was used simply as a medium for the British Government to sell animals to the Greeks at a high price. I could never understand Gallagher's role. The British Government gave him instructions that I should be granted every facility - he extracted the maximum price and left me a minute profit. The only concession granted, he supplied the animals with halters at 1/6d a piece! I think he had his own plans for disposing of Remounts and my arrival must have cooked his Goose!

Schapiro could not take any part in shipping for he was in hospital suffering from Malaria. George and I had a strenuous time and were on duty at the docks day and night for a week. I went to Kantara to say goodbye to my friends and to settle up for my two polo ponies that still officially belonged to me. Remounts bought my ponies at the same price that I paid for them. I returned to Alexandria and booked my passage to Liverpool on a slow boat which would give me time to recuperate. I spent a week in Alexandria before embarking and during that time I had several business proposals - an Egyptian wanted me to use my influence to buy Tin hats from the Government. They held enormous quantities of them we could sell them for about ten times the amount we paid to the Greeks and Turks.

Then a Fruit merchant wanted me to join him in buying Oranges from Palestine and the Greek islands and exporting to England. I also met a man, ex Major (Life Guards), who wanted me to join him farming in South Africa. He was there before the War and could offer an attractive life, plenty of Black servants and a lucrative farming business.

My own aim and object was to get home and start training ponies. I think people had an exaggerated notion of the amount of money I had made.



My expenses were enormous and of course I had to share everything with Schapiro.

I had an interesting voyage home - my cabin companion was a very fat Artillery Major (a terrific snorer). After a wakeful night or two I got the Purser to make my bed up on the dining room table. Two sea swallows followed our ship the whole length of the Mediterranean - there must have been insect life to have enabled them to fly the thousands of miles. Butterflies continually perched on the ship, probably migrating from Africa to Europe. When nearing the Straits we had to stop to allow several Whales to cross our bows. They came so close that they were within pistol shot. The Captain of the ship fired at them - there were vigorous protests from the passengers at this senseless and cruel act. It was a grand sight to see these enormous creatures lift themselves entirely out of the water and then appear again. They seemed to be swimming at a terrific rate.

I was glad to get home I left in January and returned in December.

#### FARMING IN WARTIME – DISHONESTY

When war broke out in 1939 I was playing polo at Minehead and immediately hurried home. At that time I had 50 ponies, and it was a bit of a problem to decide what to do with them for no one would buy ponies in War Time. I sold a few at low prices to the Government and destroyed the old let out ponies. The rest I turned out. Eventually I had to plough up the two grounds, buying a tractor and farm machinery. I was desperately short of agricultural workers, but various people fortunately helped me. One day a Canadian private called and said he had come to stay with me for a fortnight and help on the farm. I had never seen him before so I asked him his name and he replied call me Ed.

At that time I had about 50 acres of Corn just cut and Ed volunteered to do the stooking. He had a special technique. He put up 4 sheaves and then placed the fifth on the top horizontally, spreading it out over the stook. That year we had torrential rain, raining every day for about 3 weeks, but thanks to Ed's method I carried my corn in in good condition. My neighbours corn stoked in the ordinary way grew out and was spoilt. Ed was an American from Ohio. He lived and worked on his grandfather's farm and he gave me a graphic description of the American slump. At the time his grandfather had 50 fat hogs and officials came round, slaughtered and burnt them and it was given out that too much food was being produced. All the farms were put out of cultivation and their stock slaughtered and burnt.

In the meantime Ed and hundreds of other farm workers were out of employment and starving. They marched to the nearest town where they were told they could find work. On arrival they found the Town crowded with starving workers. Ed told me with a tremulous voice - "Sir, I had never stolen a thing in my life, but now it was either breaking into the shops or starving to death". Ed was shipped off to the T.V. Authority where at first conditions were frightful. When war came Ed went to Canada to join up.

I employed for several years a chap called Harry. He had two jobs, working for the War Department by night as a stoker and for me in the day. I don't know when he slept, certainly not on my job, he was an enthusiast always with a broad grin on his face and the more difficult a job the better he enjoyed it. He did the work of two men and I have known him carry a field of corn by himself, loading the trailer and stacking the sheaves in the barn.

Alas Harry had his troubles. His wife left him, taking his furniture and his small son. I suppose there might have been faults on both sides, for as he rarely slept in his own bed, there could not have been much time for connubial bliss.

There was an old gardener in the adjoining house. In his young days he had worked on a farm in Norfolk, When the Polo Club was converted into a farm, the old man spent quite a bit of his time in my farmyard, He was the son of a Game Keeper and had a varied knowledge of wild animal life. I had known him for many years and always enjoyed a yarn with him. He was bell ringer and sort of Church Warden at the nearby Chapel of Ease and was for a great number of years a Special Constable. At that time I had a large number of cockerels on a free range. On counting them one night, I found there were about 70 missing. The old gardener was convinced a fox had been taking them and a few days later he took me to see some feathers in the lane that proved his theory. I glanced at the feathers and decided the thief was two legged. I had been in the lane in the morning, and this was early in the afternoon, so I was certain the feathers had been planted there. It was dry weather, there being about inch of dust and there was no imprint of a fox's pad. I did not tell the old gardener my suspicion, but arranged with the man I employed to look after the poultry to keep in a shed between 1 and 2 p.m. when he usually went to dinner and watch the yard and field. He was rewarded a few days after by seeing the old gardener go into my barn with a bucket which he filled with my wheat which he started to scatter. He enticed about 100 cockerels into his garden and when they were all busily eating he knocked them on the head with a garden rake. He had already killed five when my man came up behind and knocked him on the head. I rang up the police who took him to the Station and charged him. They kept him at the Station until the evening when the old man begged them to take him down

to the house where he was employed for he had to shut up his employers' chickens. On arrival the Superintendent followed him to a shed at the back of the house and found him messing about with a sack that contained 10 more of my cockerels. He had stolen and sold well over a hundred pounds worth of cockerels. He appeared before the Magistrates who fined him £10.

I have employed a regular staff of stablemen for 40 years up to the 1939 war and have never found a case of dishonesty, but when I started farming things were very different, you could trust no one. I think it was due to the Army technique of scrounging which soon turns into real thieving. This was in the Aldershot Command. I employed one man who had been a Government Clerk of Works and soon after he came I missed things amongst them a New Pig Boiler price about £30 and the police traced it to a local Cattle Dealer. Another man who had been employed as a storekeeper at the R.A.F. and came to me with excellent references, came to me after threshing and asked whether he could transfer 6 sacks of wheat (2¼ cwt in each sack) from the hired sacks into sacks of my own and he would then cart them up to the house stables so I could feed the poultry. I told him to carry on, and the next morning I went out to the stables and instead of 6 sacks of wheat there were 6 potato sacks three parts filled. I went down and asked whether he had made a mistake as there were 6 (2¼ cwt sacks) and now only 6 potato sacks. He replied "As true as God is in Heaven I transferred every grain into the potato sacks". I left him and went over to his house nearby and had a chat with his son. They kept a lot of hens and the boy told me they were laying badly, so I asked how they were fed and he volunteered to show me his fathers forage shed. He produced the key and opened the door and there were my 6 full sacks of wheat.

One morning I was just going out for the day in my car when a chap called in a lorry and asked me to give him a sprig of holly. He said "O,ive had a bit of bad luck my little biby has just doied and Oi want a sprig of Awley to put on his grive". I said help yourself to a sprig. I had a lot of holly on the farm and was in the habit of selling it, about £20 worth, to the local Florist just before Xmas. When I returned I found every bit of berried holly had been taken by the man who had lost his baby, he had slashed the trees and in some cases spoilt them for years.

One Xmas I had a pair of white string gloves given me. I went to the barn and then had a look at the stock in the fields and came home without my gloves. I asked my chap Rex, an ex serviceman whether he had seen them and also to have a look round. A few days after I asked him to collect some branches that had been blown down and bring them to the house where they could be sawn into logs. The next morning in the bathroom I could see him collecting the wood. There was a long straight road leading to

the house and after he got into the cart he put on my pair of white gloves and when approaching the house put them in his pocket. I went down and told him where to dump the wood and after I thought I would give him a chance of saving his face and said to him "Rex you haven't seen those gloves about have you". He replied he had looked everywhere and couldn't find them. I said if you put your hand in your right pocket you will find them and he fished them out and gave them to me without a word.

I had a man cutting out stakes for a pig run and he left them in heaps of about 20 in the plantation. He had cut about 200 and on going out one morning I found all the stakes had disappeared. There was a chap, an ex serviceman, who was starting a small holding about a mile away and he drove through my farm every morning with his lorry. I asked Paddy, the chap who had cut the stakes to bike, when the small holder was at breakfast, to see whether the stakes were at his holding. He returned to say all the stakes were there. At that moment the lorry in question turned the corner and I stopped it and said I had missed about 200 stakes. He replied "You aren't accusing me of stealing your bloody stakes are you" and I said that is exactly what I am doing and if they aren't returned within an hour I shall ring up the police. The stakes were returned within the hour.

### DAVID & EDGAR

#### I Used to Buy Ponies in West Somerset, Devon And Cornwall

In the summer of 1932 my first call was at Billy Burstons, he had a farm in West Somerset on the fringe of Exmoor. Billy was little thin man with a bristling white moustache and light blue eyes, he talked very fast and was continually blinking, on asking how he was he always replied "First rate, capital, first rate, capital". He said he had a pony to suit me and I asked if it could really gallop, he replied "My Haye cant her go, just like a bullet out of a gun, just the very same". I eventually bought the animal which turned out very handy and easy but was slow.

My next visit was to an old friend, Edgar Huxtable of Long Aller. There were two farms in a sheltered combe, the other farmed by John Adams, who unlike most of the locals was a good horseman and often produced a really high class pony.

These farms sloped down to the sea and each had about 50 acres on the salt marsh. Edgar and John Adams shared a sheep run of about a thousand acres where they ran sheep and bred Exmoor ponies. Edgar was short, very dark, of semitic type. He was a sort of oracle in the parish,

everyone asked his advice from the Parson downwards. I remember one day the Parson calling to ask Edgar who was one of his church wardens, his advice about a grave village problem that was worrying him:- That nearly every marriage he officiated at, the bride was expecting, there were no illegitimate children in the parish. Edgar looked at his boots with furrowed brow, and then suddenly looked up, he had extraordinary eyes of violet blue that could flash, very slowly in broad West Somerset he pronounced:- "You can't stop it, there are people in this parish who will always sweep the flu before they put in the grate".

Edgar and I walked down to the vale as the locals called the salt marshes. It was a glorious afternoon, brilliant sunshine with a heavenly blue sky and a few small fleecy clouds, every now and then the sun was obscured by a cloud which changed the vale to sombre grey, then the sun reappeared the whole scene became one of brilliant and varied colours, bright green square marshes dotted with innumerable white sheep, interspersed with golden squares of ripe barley, the sea ever changing its colour of bright blue to green and grey; across the channel the Welsh mountains could be seen in an opalescent haze.

Edgar was going to pay off some gypsy pea pickers; field peas were a lucrative crop that Edgar sold direct to the wholesale greengrocers. After the gypsies had been paid, there was one other evidently not a gypsy. Edgar paid him and turned to go, when the man asked if he could give him a job, Edgar replied that he would want to know more about him before he could consider it. He told us he was a Somerset man, when a boy his parents sent him to Rhodesia to a cousin, who had a tobacco farm, after several years the farm failed to pay and David Faulder [Holder?] was forced to return to this country, he arrived practically penniless and couldn't get a job, he was forced to join up with a gypsy gang, strawberry, potatoes and pea picking. There was something about the chap I liked; he was thin, tall and cadaverous looking, one of his eyes had been injured and was partially closed, he wore his cap on one side to hide it, there was a look of suffering in his face and I felt sorry for him; he could talk well and persuasively. Edgar asked him if he could ride and he assured him he was in the saddle most of the day in Rhodesia, after more questioning Edgar offered him a job, if his work was satisfactory, until the early spring. I thought by that time I would have a lot of ponies in the stable so I promised him a grooms job, if Edgar could recommend him. I used to tour West Somerset, North Devon and Cornwall and stayed with friends, who looked out likely ponies for me to buy; amongst them Gervase Babington, Master of the Lamerton, Robin Hall, Master of the North Cornwall, George Brendon of Bude and several more, but I invariably started the tour by staying a night or two with Edgar who

with Mrs. Edgar provided the best food in all my experience; for one reason you got delicacies you could not obtain elsewhere, such as lambs tails, sweet breads, wortleberries and Devonshire cream, fresh mountain trout, venison and snipe, chicken, ducks and guinea fowls cooked on a spit and lastly that delicious of all deliciousnesses, Laver, a sea weed that only grows on the West Somerset coast eaten as a vegetable with roast Exmoor mutton. Queen Victoria had a weekly supply sent her for many years.

Edgar and John Adams used to kill a sheep for their joint households. There were also hams smoked over oak fires and pickled from a receipt that had been handed down in the family for generations. Edgar made the best cider in the district and Mrs. Edgar always plied you with cordials as she called them, home made cherry brandy, sloe gin and a very special liquer cider that I have never tasted elsewhere, and of course, home made bread.

I called on John Adams and bought a very good pony. John was a tall good looking chap, a natural horseman, he always collected his steed and hand cantered everywhere.

The West county farmer in those days was a frightful horseman, he never cantered, but rode to market at a fast trot, a sort of half gallop, his horses head stuck out like a wild duck in flight, so different to his counterpart in South America, Texas and California, who seldom trot but invariably canters. The West country farmer's saddle and bridle were always in the last stage of decay and he always contrived to have the smallest of irons had he wore the biggest boots. When on tour I always brought my own saddle, stirrup irons. Edgar and John had several hundred sheep and each about 50 Exmoor pony brood mares; they sold their suckers as they are called at Bampton Fair and in those days averaged about £7 a piece. Pit pony dealers bought them, their sheep had to be driven to auction about 15 miles distant, all these operations entailed a lot of riding; to round up and brand ponies and dip the sheep etc.

Edgar being small and light rode Exmoor ponies; John used to ride animals about polo size. Edgar always had a good type of child's pony to sell me, they had the advantage of being trained and ridden by a man and consequently were quiet and had no tricks. In the spring I received a letter from David Faulder enclosing a recommendation from Edgar.

At that time my staff consisted of the Stud Groom, Smith [Reg Ball?], who had been with me for many years, he was in a Cavalry regiment in the 1914 war. Smith was a fine horseman and a most efficient stud groom and got on with the rest of the staff. Old Joe a Yorkshire man who had lived most of his life in France and at one time had been the leading flat race jockey

there, it was a mystery to me how he had come down in the world, for he had no vices, he was, of course, a little man and looked like a miniature Duke of Wellington and had the exact replica of the Wellington nose, with a thick crop of white hair. Paddy an Irishman, a first rate stableman, always in a good temper, Tom and Harry [Crompton?] both Yorkshiremen first rate grooms, Tom had a great sense of humour.

David turned up very different from the down at heel, emaciated dirty looking chap I saw in Edgar's pea field, he wore a bright green clergyman's hat tilted on one side over the injured eye, a sports coat and light khaki trousers, he had a confident springy walk, when I was at school we should have said he put on an awful lot of side.

I introduced him to Smith and it was arranged for him to start work in the stables the following morning at 6.30. The stable was then mucked out and Smith took the exercise, each man riding one and leading two. After a week Smith came to me and said he couldn't stand David. His reasons were that David always strapped with his hat on and moreover could not ride in fact he was not safe to put on a high class pony. I told him I couldn't see why he couldn't groom with his hat on and it would be quite easy to pick out a quiet pony for him to ride. I could understand Smith's objection to David, for he was no stableman, the others had served their apprenticeship in Racing and Hunt Stables. David would walk down to the stables with springy step and start mucking out with his coat and hat on, whilst the others were in their shirt sleeves and I think Davids bright green clergymen's hat tilted on one side got on Smiths nerves.

One morning after breakfast, Smith was out schooling. I told David to put a saddle and bridle on a certain pony and ride round the field for half an hour at a trot and then cool off at a walk. I went up to the stables at the house and on walking down on my return I heard a terrific whistle, Tom was a real expert in whistling through his fingers in his mouth; then in a stentorian voice he yelled 'Arrie'. 'Arrie'. 'Coom down and see spring heel, Davids nick name, with his hat off. Harry was working at the house stables about a hundred yards away.

I walked round the corner; David was describing enormous circles in the field at a gallop, the pony gathered speed and I expected every minute to see her slip up on the turn, David's hat had blown off and as Tom said — he just sat there and soffered! Paddy remarked; You gosson must be afther having an electric bottom. Old Joe saved the situation; he led out a pony and took his position in the centre of the circle David was describing; gradually David's steed galloped in a smaller circle and finally came to a halt by Joe's pony. David fell off and lay on the ground streaming with sweat and

absolutely done in.

After this episode I had to take David out of the stables. At that time I had a small saddlery business. I taught polo and mounted about 20 Sandhurst Cadets; when leaving to join Cavalry Regiments, I sold them ponies complete with saddles, bridles and clothing. I thought I could employ David in the saddlery business by making him travel to the various trainers and hunts getting orders. I got him an old car, after teaching him the saddlers technique and sent him out, first sending a post-card to the various trainers and Officers Messes that our Mr. Faulder would be calling on a certain day. David was a great success as a traveller, obtaining- lots of orders.

David had a side line, he kept a couple of Pekingese and bred a litter of puppies every year. I had sold a child's pony to an American living in England and kept it at livery, his little boy had a ride once or twice a week. The boy's grandmother over from America came down to see her little grandson's pony. Just as the car was going, David emerged from the forage shed with two Peke puppies, he approached the car in the best of Mr. Faulder's manner and asked the old American lady if she was interested in Pekes, for he just had these two pedigree puppies for sale, he then got them to run about, throwing sticks which they retrieved. Mrs. Ephraim Blobs lent forward to look at the pups; she was a bedizened peroxidized, tiny woman, she looked rather like a Peke herself, "Say aint they just cute" said she, David sold both the puppies for £30 apiece. I thought the deal might have fallen through, for Mrs. Blobs at first only wanted one, but David persuaded her to have the two, he put on an agonized look and said he didn't think he could sell one without the other, for he hated the idea of parting them, he would have sold either before Mrs. Blobs visit for 50/- apiece. David spent most of the £60 on his back, bought a dress suit and thoroughly equipped himself with an up to date wardrobe. He was keen on dancing and two or three nights a week his old car chugged away to various village dance halls, he was always accompanied by a fair dance partner.

The War came and our Mr. Faulder had to find another job, he joined the Fire Service, but later, through a great friend of mine who Commanded the R.A.S.C. at Aldershot (Col. Stokes), got a commission in the R.A.S.C.. I did not see him during the War years, but heard from time to time of his rapid promotion, One evening about 4 years after the War, an old Rolls Royce polished up to the nines, stopped at my front door and who should alight but our Mr. Faulder, not a Lt. Col. He was on his way to a Hunt Ball and could not stop for more than a minute. I said Well lets see you stripped; the stable term for removing a horse's clothing; I pulled his long great coat off and there our Mr. Faulder stood resplendent in a pink coat, the gold buttons



were engraved D.H, David told me they stood for Delta Hunt. I must explain to my non hunting readers, that large subscribers to Hunts are presented with a Hunt Button, after which they are entitled to hunt and dance in pink. David had never subscribed to a Hunt in his life,

A few years after the war, I was down in the West and called at Edgars, he was now a very old man; we had a long talk about the various animals he had sold me, our friendship went back to over fifty years, Just as I was going I told him of my last meeting with David, who was arrayed in scarlet on his way to a Hunt Ball in a Rolls Royce. The old man sat with bowed head for a few seconds, then looked up his face illuminated with a smile and said very slowly; "And to think I got him out of a field of peas",

### IRELAND.

I went to Ireland in January 1911 and stayed there until the outbreak of the 1914 war. We took a furnished house in the North Circular Road, Dublin, opposite the cattle market and rented stables nearby. I schooled in The Phoenix Park and joined The All Ireland Polo Club.

Later I took a house with good stabling near the County Kildare Polo Club and was made joint Manager with one John Shackleton (a cousin of the Explorer). My house was near the Park gates of an enormous house "Castletown" as big as Buckingham Palace. The polo ground was in the Park. Castletown belonged to a chap called Ted Connolly, but he had let the house to Captain Wills ex 10th Hussars of the Tobacco family who played polo and kept a stud of ponies.

We ran a good club with about 20 playing members. I could never understand why such an enormous house as Castletown was built, in all the stately homes of England I have never seen its equal in size; but the Irish landowners in the 18th and 19th century had some crackpot ideas as regards building. About a mile from my house up a grass lane there was an edifice like a castellated Arc de Triomph, but three times as high, Architecturally a frightful, useless, monstrosity. I was told it was erected by Connolly's grandfather to give the starving Irish employment during the famine. It was called "Connolly's Folly". I was told that one of Connolly's ancestors had a butler by the name of Guinness, who after some disagreement left Connolly's service and took a small pub on the banks of the Liffey, where he started brewing a few barrels of porter, this was the start of the famous Guinness family of brewers and now a long line of our hereditary rulers. Talking about families, my grandfather can remember a

travelling salesman from Bristol that paid periodical visits to Dunster in a gig, peddling tobacco, his name was Wills.

### IRISH JUSTICE (1912)

My near neighbour in Kildare was Tiny Balding, Tiny had the same job as myself, he schooled and bought ponies sending his made animals to his brother Billy at Rugby; I sent mine to the Millers also at Rugby. Tiny as his nickname indicates, was enormous weighing about 16 stone, he was like his nephew Gerald, a superb horseman and polo player. One morning I had an early call from Tiny asking me over to his place, for he wanted my opinion about a pony he had bought. I at once notice the pony in question had a bowed tendon, which of course, rendered him unsound. Tiny told me he bought the pony the previous day from Captain Stokes of the 4th Hussars stationed at the Curragh, who sold him as sound. Tiny returned the animal to Stokes, who was away at the time, the groom took delivery I must explain to my non horsey readers that there is a gentleman's agreement, even among horse dealers, that when a vets examination is dispensed with, the animal is sold as sound. Tiny said Stokes sold the animal as sound, Stokes said he did no such thing.

Eventually Stokes brought an action against Tiny for the price of the pony £150 and several months livery charges. The case took place in the Law Courts in Dublin before a Judge and Jury. Tim Healey (Nationalist M.P. and later Governor General) acted for Stokes. I was witness for the defence, but could only affirm that I saw the pony a few hours after arrival and it then had a bowed tendon. Tim Healey asked Tiny why he had bought a light weight pony. Tiny told him he had recently been to Rugby and saw one Evelyne Rothschild, who was a light weight and had asked him to find him a pony. Tiny had bought the animal thinking it would suit Rothschild

Is his speech for the Prosecution, Healey addressed the Jury in broad Irish, whether assumed or natural I don't know. "Gintilmen of the Jury - Ye have before ye two men, one of them an Officer and gintilman, the other a common horse dealer, which are ye to believe, Captain Stokes or this man Balding and he pointed a finger of scorn at Tiny. Gintilmen, I aske he can ye belave this harse dealer, who tells ye he knows Rothschild, the richest man in all the wwwwuld, I say he is afther telling ye a pack of lies.

The Jury and Judge thoroughly enjoyed Healey's speech, they looked upon him as a sort of clown at a circus and laughed heartily at some of his quips.

In summing up the Judge complimented Healey on his speech and told the Jury that it was a clear case of one man's word against the other. Captain Stokes, a Cavalry Officer and Mr. Balding, a horse dealer. I may tell you said the Judge, that you may believe the word of an Officer and gentleman, except in the case, here the Judge lowered his voice to a sort of reverent whisper, where the honour of a woman is concerned.

The Jury after an absence of two minutes brought in a verdict for Stokes.

During the winter of 1912, I took a house in Westmeath about 12 miles from Mullingar. I found I could keep ponies much cheaper, moreover, there was a good field that one could school in wet weather. The village, Bellinagore, must have been prosperous. There was a large disused mill, also a Gasometer to light the village and mill and two big houses, one almost a mansion in large grounds. I took the smaller of the two, furnished from an Irish Judge. I bought several green ponies in the district. There was on Arthur Boyd Rochfort who owned and lived at Middleton, an enormous house rather like Castletown, he bred thoroughbreds which he sent to his brother the trainer at Newmarket. I bought some very good thoroughbred ponies and had to increase my staff. I took on one lad from the village, his nickname was Barrabas. At that time I had a wired haired terrier, he was a great favourite and followed me everywhere, if I went in a house, he would wait outside sitting up in a begging posture until I came out. One morning he was not in his kennel, we searched everywhere and enquired at every house in the village, we rode for miles searching and at last gave it up. One night about a week after I had lost him, I heard a knock at the door. There was Barrabas who told me he had found "Togo" the lost dog, who was in the possession of the Publican; he kept a small grocery business combining it with selling porter. I at once went down to the Pub and enquired if they had seen "Togo", they told me they hadn't but at that moment "Togo" being in the inner room, hearing my voice started to bark. I at once got over the counter and was effusively greeted by Togo.

#### POLO BEFORE & AFTER THE 1914 WAR.

Polo before 1914 was quite different to the period between the two wars. There were any amount of good players in the Army, in India and this country. After the 1914 war, Cavalry Regiments were cut down by half, two Regiments amalgamating becoming one. Before the 1st. war there was little professionalism in polo, good players consisted of soldiers and rich civilians.

Westminster. Count Johny de Madre and Winborne ran Teams. After the 1914 war the polo set up was different.

I became manager of Stoke D'Abernon Polo Club and also played at Hurlingham and Roehampton. The low handicap players consisted entirely of rich Tradesmen or rather Company Directors, this was the only class that could get time or money to play. There were few players in the professions, Pilcher now a judge used to play in West Somerset during August and September. The following household names were players, nearly all of whom I knew, or had sold, bought or put up their ponies.

Walker - Johnny Walkers Whisky.  
Werhner - Theatre.  
Coleman - Mustard.  
Borwick - Baking Powder.  
Wills - Tobacco.  
Guinness - Stout.  
Tate - Sugar.  
Bell - Meat.  
Docker - B.S.A.  
Mackeson - Stout.  
Whitbread - Beer.  
Courage - Beer.  
Mason - Masons Sauce.  
Grirsar - Liebig's (managing Director.)  
Cullen - Grocer.  
Cowdray - Oddhams Press.  
Houlder - Shipping.  
Barclay - Bank.  
Baring - Bank.  
Sandeman - Port Wine.  
Singer - Sewing Machines.  
Robertson - Marmalade.  
Horlick - Horlicks Malted Milk  
Cubitt - Building.  
Gee - Building.  
Dimmock White - Timothy Whites (Chemists).  
Reed. - Paper.  
Vesty - Meat.  
Kayzer - Shipping.

King Edward VIII took lessons in polo from Frank Rich but never played much. His brother the Duke of Gloucester used to play at Fleet and once went on tour playing polo in the west country with one Gairdner who

when I first knew him was a gunner, but later got an exchange to the 10th. Hussars, I knew his uncle in Ireland whom I bought many good ponies from.

Most of the high handicap Teams consisted of rich men who paid professionals to run the team, play and look after their ponies. Laddy Sanford employed Pat Rorke. Keith Rouse and Joc Whitney employed Gerald Balding. Archie David for many years employed Johnny Butler. Madleiner an Argentinean employed Hughes and Frost.

During the 1920's polo flourished at Stoke D'Abernon but after a few years the playing membership fell. I saw the red light so went to Fleet where soldier polo flourished. A year after I left, Stoke D'Abernon ceased to function, but later I got Derek Peachey to restart the club. Derek I knew as a Sandhurst cadet, he got a commission in the Life Guards, but on his marriage with a lady, who had once been on the London Stage, was forced to resign. No Officer in the Household Cavalry was allowed to retain his commission if married to an actress!

We put Keneth Dawson in as manager, the club carried on successfully until the outbreak of war. I discovered Keneth When

He was employed in a Travel Agency in London; before the 1914 war he had been in the Argentine and done some riding, he used to ride during the weekend at Hendon where I was schooling some ponies, I gave him a job as secretary and general factotum.

### PROCESSIONS IN ROME 1931.

I got to know some charming people in Rome, amongst them one Count Cortesi. He was the Daily Mails Correspondent there, he talked English without the slightest trace of a foreign accent, he told me he had been 6 years at Sherborne School, his father had an important post at the Vatican and had frequent audiences with the Pope. Cortesi said that for some reason he was not sent to an English Roman Catholic School, it was decided that his experience at an ordinary public school would be better. Whilst at Sherborne he regularly attended the School Church of England Chapel, an unprecedented act of Religious tolerance.

I found the Romans a most tolerant people, they were always ready to concede two points of view. It is a fact that at the Headquarters of Religions there is a spirit of tolerance which does not exist farther afield. I used to live at Maynooth Ireland and attended the Protestant service, the two churches

Roman Catholic and Protestant were in the Roman Catholic Theological College grounds and were within a few yards of each other. The Protestant parson and the Priest were great friends, there was a woman who cleaned both Churches, the congregations used to walk back to the village together.

We had an Italian friend who was a keen archeologist and took infinite pains in showing us round Rome. One morning he called at my hotel in a great state of excitement and told Jackson and I that we must come with him to see a wonderful procession at the Basilica, where no less than 7 Cardinals were taking part and moreover he would show us something of great interest that few people had seen. The procession was enthralling, it was led by an enormous Cardinal (he must have weighed about 20 stone) with the most powerful voice I have ever heard, like 2 Paul 'Robeson's rolled into one. He was followed by the other 6 Cardinals, a boy followed each Cardinal pushing a little wheel barrow on which was the red Cardinals Hat and then the choir and the incense carriers, the singing was marvelous, really soul inspiring.

Our Italian friend told us to follow him, he took us to a small chapel in which a priest was in the act of consecrating the sacrament; we were shocked when he marched up to the Priest and gave his surplice a pull, after crossing himself the priest entered into an animated conversation with him for a minute or so, then turning to us saying "it's no good I must try elsewhere".

We then met in one of the side aisles a priest carrying the Host accompanied by six servers, our Italian stopped the Priest and they talked for some little time, he then told us he had the information required. We followed him to a small room built into the wall where a verger was sitting. After a lot of talk our friend was given an enormous key we followed him up a long flight of steps and came to a wooden door which he unlocked, we entered a small narrow room in which was an enormous plank of wood. This our friend told us was the actual table of the last supper. I was told after, that there are certain sacred relics that are bricked up or relegated to obscurity like the table, that are brought to the light of day at an appropriate time, they are so to speak put on the ice or in the refrigerator.

### THE BLACK SHIRTS (ROME). 193 I

I was friendly with the head waiter at our Hotel; one evening he said he would like to show me something of interest, I followed him down a corridor at the end of which was an open door, a wireless was blaring forth

one of Hitler's speeches in German. Round the wireless stood about 12 Germans, they were all typical Prussian, Hohen Zollern, long headed German Officers, were all standing bolt upright with one arm extended in the Heil Hitler salute, they had been standing in that position for about half an hour. I heard after that Mussolini had them to put a bit of pep into his black shirt movement.

A few days after there was a tremendous black shirt display. Many thousands of them marched past our Hotel. We were intensely amused at the show, each regiment about a thousand strong was preceded, by a band, the first few columns marched magnificently, but the farther they got from the band the worse they marched and at the end of the regiment they did not trouble to keep in step and some of them walked along with their arm round the waist of girls.

#### UNITED NATIONS POLO AT ROME. (1931)

It was in the autumn of 1934 I got an invitation to take a team to Rome, they were starting a Polo Club there and had a promise of a German and French Team; there were also some Italian players who used to play at Cannes and Brioni.

After some deliberation I decided to go. The Rome Polo Club undertook to pay my expenses one way and to put my team up free of charge. I was assured there would be no difficulty in selling all my ponies at the end of my stay. We were put up in one of the best Hotels.

All the expenses of the French team were paid by the French Government, they had some really high class ponies, all French thoroughbreds, I wanted to buy some but they were not for sale, being the property of the French Government. They brought their own Veterinary Surgeon and Master of the Horse.

The German Team was composed of players from Frankfurt, where there was a Polo Club. We had a good game against the French and just managed to win and played the final against the Germans who we easily defeated. It was then decided we should split up and didn't play as a team again. We were therefore, another month and played 3 days a week. Every morning on polo days, The United Nations, French, German and Italian players used to go to the Polo Manager's Office and there they wrangled as to who should play who, they started about 10 a.m. and continued until 1 p.m. The Manager, Jackson, an Englishman, just let them decide, any decision he made was ignored. On one occasion when the sides had been finally made

out, the Captain of the German Team, a rich Banker, collapsed in a chair and wept. Since then I have always had heartfelt sympathy for our diplomats at the United Nations.

The Rome Polo Club was a real Aristocratic set up. The succeeding King played a few times, nearly all the players were titled.

When the time drew near for our departure, I tried to sell my ponies. I sold one without difficulty, but for the rest I received promises only, but at last I sold another pony to two players, each agreeing to pay half the price. Two days before I left I received an invitation from Prince Colonna, a member of the Club, to spend the day with him, and he motored us over to his country estate. I was interested in his farming methods, all his ploughing was done by oxen, magnificent animals, pure white with long horns, exactly like the oxen depicted on the murals of Ancient Rome. He showed us over his palace in Rome and after tea I said what about buying some ponies? He replied "I will buy one, perhaps two, maybe three, I will call on you tomorrow at 10 a.m." That was the last time I saw Prince Colonna, he never turned up. The ponies were going to be boxed at 6 a.m. the next morning, so I thought I would stroll down to the Polo Office and collect my money from the two partners who had bought the one animal between them.

On entering the room, there was a crowd of spectators that formed a ring and in the centre were two men violently quarrelling, gesticulating and every now and then they were prevented from coming to blows by the spectators; imagine my concern when I recognized the two quarrellers, Count Campello and Count Antonelli, as the two partners in my pony. After a lull in the shouting, Campello saw me and said he was sorry but he could not be a partner with that - and then a string of unprintable adjectives -, Antonelli. I said I would wait for them to make it up. After a time they gradually cooled down and eventually kissed each other. I was paid for the pony and bid them a tender last farewell.

#### ACCIDENTS AT POLO.

There have been many fatal accidents in Tournament polo. I remember the following players that have been killed all personally known to me:—

Lamb killed at Ottervale P.C.

Pat Rorke killed It Meadowbrook.

Scott Douglas killed at London.



Stevens killed at Minehead,

I shall always remember an accident that happened at Fleet. A Royal Duke was the casualty (Duke of Gloucester). I was playing with him at the time, he got hit on the elbow with the ball, he was evidently in great pain for he threw himself off his pony. My stud groom, Mr Smith [Reginald Ball?] was a most resourceful chap, absolutely undefeated. When attending ponies he had a clean stable rubber tied round his middle and invariably carried an enormous sponge and small bucket; when ponies came in after playing, he attended to them fore and aft, sponging their mouths out and then sponging their docks, hissing vigorously when so doing. This enormous sponge was his badge of office, he was never without it on a polo day. He was a biggish chap on top, big head and broad muscular shoulders, but he had very thin legs and small feet, when walking he took very short quick steps. Mr. Smith was soon on the scene of the accident and carried the Duke into the mens changing room, although in great pain he was not seriously hurt, so I went and reassured the Duchess and then returned to the dressing room, when to my horror I found the Duke seated on a chair with a wash basin in front of him and Mr. Smith busily hissing and sponging his head with the historic sponge, by the Duke's side was a half finished glass of water that Mr. Smith had fished out of the nearby stream, the water of which was unfit to drink, owing to the drains of some near cottages that ran into it. The ambulance soon arrived. after and took the Duke to Hospital, he was none the worse for Mr. Smiths' administrations.

An Italian Count Galleani used to come over to my place every day and helped me to school ponies; he was a very dear friend. I learned a lot from his methods, he had spent his life in the Argentine ranching.

The Count was playing with us in a match against Aldershot, when his pony going all out, fell like a shot rabbit, the Count was pitched over its head and lay on the ground unconscious. I told Mr. Smith who was of course on the spot, not to touch him until the Doctor came.

Eventually we got him into the ambulance; Smith and I accompanied him; on the way to the hospital I asked Smith what had become of the Counts false teeth, for I could see he was without them; at that moment the Count suddenly sat up and shouted "Its a lie I haven't got a false tooth in my head". Mr Smith rejoined I know you haven't for I have got them in my pocket. He had removed them from the Counts mouth when he was unconscious, The Count recovered but he never played polo again.

## COX & CO

Everyone who held a commission during the 1914 war were acquainted with Cox & Co., the Army Bankers. They collected your pay and allowances and all the chaps I knew thought they were stingy in granting overdrafts - we received a stinker from them if we exceeded £10. I knew Algy Cox the head of the firm. He served in the South African War in the 16th Lancers and then chucked the Army and went into his old family Banking business, and eventually became Managing Director. Before the war he was apparently very rich and owned a super stud of horses. After the war all his friends, considering the amount of business Cox & Co., transacted in the War, thought Algy must be worth about a million a minute, but they were wrong. Algy told me one day sometime after the war that he got on a bus and a man whom he knew got on the same bus and said to him "Hello Algy - anyone would think Cox & Co., had gone broke to see you on a bus". Algy told me afterwards that this chaps surmise was true, he had just come from a board meeting and that great banking firm Cox & Co., were practically insolvent. Their undoing was the small overdrafts they allowed their customers, who when de-mobbed disappeared leaving no trace. One of the big 5 took over Cox & Co., together with Algy who was given a Directorship. Nowadays he would have been voted amount £20,000 a year pension instead at a working directorship.

He was living then in a house near Windsor Park and I lent him a pony during the winter to hack in the Park. He looked after it himself, riding every morning before breakfast, before going to London. Jackson, the Polo Manager at Rome, was living with him at the time. Jackson had a variety of experiences in Managing Polo Clubs all over the world, India, Austria, Hungary, Italy and Poland. His experiences in Poland were unique. Count X was the largest landowner in Poland and lived in a baronial Castle. When Jackson arrived he was met at the Station with a coach and four and when they drove into the Castle Courtyard ,brass band played God Save the King. There was no club, all the players being the Count's guests. I don't know how many ponies were kept, but enough to mount 15 or 20 players. An English stud groom was employed. In those days there were polo clubs in Vienna, Budapest and Frankfurt and players were invited from these clubs, and there were several English polo players who went every year. The whole set up was run regardless of expense, with any amount of vulgar ostentation. There was an American Cocktail Bar with an American bar tender. The Count, of course, paying for all the drinks. Outside in the country, the peasants, presumably the Count's tennants, lived in the most frightful squalor and poverty.

## FINANCES OF THE FLEET POLO CLUB.

One year (1932) we were badly in the red — I must explain that the club was Military. We only had 4 civilian members out of a membership of over 100. The other Military Polo Clubs were so to speak Nationalised, soldier grooms, goundsmen, programme sellers, gatekeepers etc., and moreover they got a large revenue by gate money, the subscriptions to members were consequently absurdly low. I went over to Windsor a short time ago, there were huge crowds watching the polo, I was told that they take £300 on a match day, the consequence being it was possible to subsidise the whole show, for the benefit of the soldier player.

We had no such facilities at Fleet. At that time old Tom Walls was a frequent visitor to the Club and we had a member, one Donada who owned a string of Cinemas. He lent us the Fleet Cinema for one night. Tom Walls released a new film starring himself, Robertson Hare and Ralph Lynn. Florence Desmond also helped us and gave a wonderful show.

Tom Walls had won the Derby that year, he sold the plates (horse shoes) of the Winner April 5th himself by auction in aid of the Club, they fetched a colossal price.

## FLEET POLO CLUB

It was difficult to make the Fleet Polo Club pay.

I must explain that all Soldier Polo Clubs, with the exception of Fleet are run at the expense of the Government, the grounds are kept by soldier labour, free stabling, in fact it is a nationalised sport.

The Fleet Club had only 4 civilians out of about 100 playing members which included Sandhurst cadets, 2 Cavalry Regiments, Staff College, Gunners and other Units. As a rule all the members were most co-operative. Vivian Lockett the Colonel of the 17th Lancers was on our Committee, so also was Breitmayer, the Colonel of the 7th Hussars. We had one Regiment an exception, we will call them The Scots Chestnuts, they were reputed to be the richest Regiment in the British Army.

In all forms of sport the Cavalry get a special cheap rate. The playing subscription for Cavalry soldiers was one guinea a year per player. About 2 months before the start of the season, we had a Committee meeting and decided to put up the playing subscription from one guinea to two guineas a year per playing member, for Cavalry Soldiers and notices were sent out to

this effect. In the first tournament of the year, the Scots Chestnuts had entered a team and were due to play in the final at 2.30.p.m. I had a message from the Colonel of The Scots Chestnuts at 1.30, saying he would not allow his team to play, because we had put up the subscription by one guinea a year. I told him that from this time forth and for evermore, his Regiment would be known as The Aberdonians.

I was on the Committee of the Burlingham Club the governing body of polo, corresponding to the M.C.C.) We called a general meeting to censure the unsporting behaviour of the Scots Chestnuts, every member of the Committee turned up and there was not one dissentient vote.

A comparatively short time ago an old friend of mine in the 7th Hussars came to see met he told me The Scots Chestnuts are still known as The Aberdonians.

#### POLO INCIDENTS.

In the days before handicaps, the Richs entered a team in the Rugby Autumn Tournament. Stablemen were always excluded from playing, but the Richs employed a groom, a particularly fine striker, who schooled their ponies, they dressed him up as an Indian with turban and darkened face and arms and entered him as a Maharajah. They won the Tournament a few people guessed the identity of the Maharajah. One year they entered a team called "The Undertakers" and played in black jerseys and top hats.

#### PRIMITIVE POLO INCIDENTS.

It was in the days of pimitive polo in West Somerset - about 1900. There was a little prim sort of chap called Pinks who joined the club; he used to drive to polo in a Tub drawn by a beautiful looking pony, he was accompanied by his wife and groom in a blue livery, silver buttons and boater straw hat. The pony was unharnessed, saddle and bridled for little Pinks to play. Topsy hated polo, but little Pinks an energetic beginner worked his passage gallantly to persuade Topsy to canter about, when Pinks reached the ball he was always too exhausted to hit it.

Nobody laughed more heartily at Pinks and Topsy than one Beaumont! he was colossally rich and kept a great establishment. He had one son, who had just left Eton and had started to play polo. I lent him a

pony to play, but old Beaumont said he would buy Monty a really good beginners pony, I had nothing suitable. Topsy and Pinks disappeared from polo.

One day I met old Beaumont (we called him "Blofly" - he had made his money in meat) he said you must come over to my place and see a beginners pony I have bought for Monty. I had no sooner got into the box after the groom had stripped the pony than I was seized with a fit of uncontrollable laughter when I could speak I said you have bought Topsy!

Little Pinks an artful little man had persuaded a pal of his to include Topsy in the sale of his entire stud sold at Tattersalls. I heard that Blofly was run up and had to give a big price for Topsy. Topsy was sent back to Tatts to be sold without reserve. Little Pinks had the last laugh!