

and I ask for information. Now, sir," he continued, "I have sometimes, I must confess, met with a rebuff, but very, very rarely. More generally I have found myself, without any trouble, in the midst of an animated and delightful conversation. You must take care, of course, that such abrupt questions are put to a man of sense and real learning, for a pretender is placed at once in a most embarrassing position."

The eccentric man was right, though his method of proceeding required a little more judgment and discrimination than most people anxious for improvement possess. Clever men are always willing to impart knowledge, as Chaucer says of his scholar—

"Gladly would he learn, and gladly teach;"

and nothing is more deplorable than to see such a man obliged to lock his lips, or falling in with the requirements of conventionality, descend to talk nonsense and tittle-tattle, because nobody gives him an opportunity for talking anything better. To make conversation moreover what it should be, we must provide not for the mediocre only, who have naturally not much to say even under the most encouraging circumstances, but for those who have colloquial abilities, and are seldom at a loss either for topics or words. Where they wreck themselves is in their tendency to talk for effect, to contradict what is plain and obvious, that they may substitute what is paradoxical and falsely brilliant. Now nothing is more against the genius of true conversation, and nothing more calculated to make people retire into themselves, than this. Practical, common-sense people—and in every society such people will be in the majority—despise the speaker, though they may not be able to answer him; men who can speak remain silent, for they see they must either contradict the assertions made and become polemical, or they

must play into the hands of a man who is merely attempting to show off and to monopolise attention. This they are seldom willing to do, and so conversation is again brought to a dead-lock. What, then, are the requirements of a new art of conversation? First, let every one try to enlarge his sympathies and get out of himself, let him acquire broad interests, and take pleasure in what concerns and touches the rest of his fellow-creatures. Having attained this, he will be little troubled either by self-consciousness or affectation. Let him remember that the essence of conversation is a willingness to give as well as to take—in a word, the art of building on the remarks of his partner—and till this is acquired there can be no real conversation; that, to make the best of social intercourse, it is our duty to discover where the strength of our companion lies, and to adapt ourselves as much as possible to his or her capacities and interests; to rest assured that most people will be thankful to exchange empty gossip for sense and reason, but that few will naturally break through routine and conventionality if they are not encouraged to do so; that for this reason a little abruptness will be useful, and is by no means offensive; that no greater compliment can be paid to a woman than to treat her as a worthy companion and a rational creature, not as the subject for foolish remarks and fatuous compliments; that every one can talk if encouraged, and possesses experiences and opinions if they can only be elicited.

"The soul of music slumbers in the shell
Till touch'd and waken'd by the master's spell;
And feeling hearts, touch them but rightly, pour
A thousand melodies unheard before."

In these lines is condensed half the art of conversation; in their ulterior meaning, reflection may discover the other half of that art as well. J. C. C.

THE GAME OF STOOL-BALL: AN OLD PASTIME REVIVED.

WHAT with rinking and Badminton, lawn tennis and croquet, with bank holidays, with the encouragement of cricket by the rural clergy, England has pretty well regained her right to be called merry. Games are so much in the ascendency just now, that any one proposing to describe a good one ought to be welcome; and

I flatter myself that I learned a capital game in the autumn, not new indeed, for it dates from the Heptarchy, but unfamiliar out of Sussex, where it has lately been resuscitated.

I was staying in that pleasant county last October with a friend, who had asked me to shoot over his woods, and as my host and myself were returning one afternoon, somewhat earlier than usual, we found an animated group of ladies and children in the Home Field, who greeted us with an invitation to come and play at—I thought they said School Board.

"School Board!" replied I; "thank you, I have tried that game a little, but——"

"Not School Board—*stool-ball*."

Any play which *is* play, and not disguised work, I am ready to make one at; and as for my host, he was bound to do what his daughters bade him. So we stacked our guns against a tree, were enlisted on opposite sides, and proceeded to take part in the game, which I want to explain clearly to you.

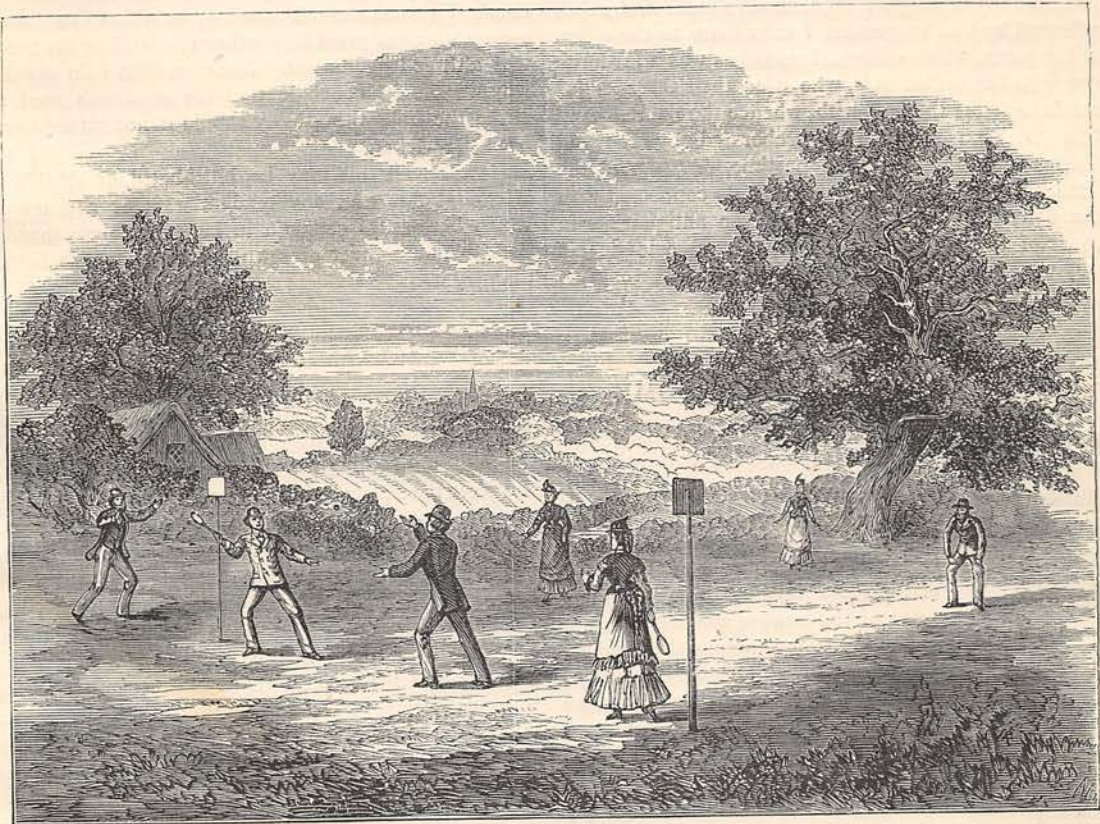
It may have been derived from the same source as cricket, as there are two wickets, and a bowler, and the score is made by runs from one wicket to the other. Imagine a post with a board at the top—"This House to Let," or "Trespassers Beware." Well, the wickets somewhat resemble such familiar notices, much reduced in size. The uprights should be about six feet high, and the boards nailed on to the top of them a foot square, I should say; the distance between them some ten paces. Two of the same side go in together, armed with bats of the form of battle-dores or racquets. The bowler stands half-way between the wickets, and tries to get the batter out by striking the square board at the top of the stick with a tennis-

ball, which may be either pitched or thrown. He must touch the board, the upright post does not count. The batter strives to hit the ball as far as he can, and the fielders are stationed in favourable positions for stopping it, and, if possible, catching the striker out—a fate more likely to await him here than at cricket, since the ball being aimed at a mark above, or on a level with, his head, he must perforce strike it into the air—it cannot be sent skimming along the ground. When the ball is well away, the partners at the wickets cross to and fro as often as they can, touching the

them too difficult to get out, they can be made to play left-handed, or walk their runs—which is not a bull, though it sounds like it.

No *byes*, *overthrows*, or *wides* are allowed, nor can the batter incur any penalty corresponding to *leg before wicket*. It would be *head* before wicket, a method of prolonging an innings which it is justly considered unnecessary to frame bye-laws to discourage.

Two innings are allowed; the members of the side which is in succeed each other until all but one are got out, and then they take their turn at fielding, just



THE GAME OF STOOL-BALL.

opposite posts with their racquets for each run that is scored. During this process they can be run out, by the ball hitting the *front* of the square board (the back does not count) while they are out of their ground. This is not marked out, but you are supposed to be home if you can touch the wicket with your bat. In fact, when you are in the act of finishing a run as the ball strikes your wicket, it is given out if you are not so touching it at the moment. But, on the other hand, if you have completed your run, and are standing quietly, you cannot be put out. A disputed case is for the umpire's decision.

It really is a capital game for ladies and men to play at together; the ball, being struck so high up, is not likely to be driven into any pretty face; the exercise is sufficient, without being too great; and if the experience of the males in other games at ball makes

as at cricket; the game, of course, being decided by the number of runs scored.

If the number of players is limited, and comprises ladies who are not very good at running and throwing up the ball, the members of the side which is in, who are not actually at the wickets, should join the fielders, and honestly do their best to get their own friends out. They play that way sometimes at Westminster, in the game of politics, so you need not despise it. Though your party may suffer by your activity, your individual innings may be brought nearer, which is a consolation.

Is not the bowler, being stationed midway between the wickets, an obstacle to the batters when they are making their runs? He is, rather; but it is his duty to stand still, the striker passing on his left hand, the other on his right. If he baulks them at all, they cannot be run out.

One advantage of this game consists in the simplicity of the materials, which any village carpenter, properly directed, can readily supply. They might even be improvised, at a picnic or other social gathering, with the exercise of a very little ingenuity. A hat on the top of a long stick (somebody else's hat, perhaps, for choice) would make a very fair wicket, and any flat piece of wood might be fashioned with a pocket-knife into a passable bat or racquet, and it would be strange if you could not obtain or manufacture a ball of some description.

If the members of any Sussex stool-ball club that has invested in elegant implements should feel at all offended by this suggestion, I refer them to the origin of the game, which antiquarians tell us was a favourite one with the milk-maids, who used their three-legged stools to strike the ball with, whence the name. And this assertion is partly corroborated by the old Sussex term for the same pastime, *bittil-battil*, the *bittil* and the *battil* being instruments connected with the dairy. I say partly, because an antiquarian in chase of a theory is apt to jump all obstacles in his way with unhesitating resolution, and a stool would be

a very awkward substitute indeed for a bat,—so much so, that one would be rather inclined to suspect that a leg screwed out of it would be preferred to the unwieldy article itself. It is asserted that the *bittil* was a stool, and there may be valid reasons for this opinion, but I have not been able to make them clearly out. The Sussex name is pure Anglo-Saxon. *Bytl*, or *bill*, was a mallet; and *bat*, a club; from which it seems more probable that the *bittil* and *battil* were instruments used in churning, or for making up the butter into pats, and these would be much more handy articles for the game in question. But I speak diffidently, for some learned men may be able to confound me with a clear proof that either the *bittil* or the *battil* was a three-legged stool. But even then I do not see why we should conclude that the stool was used to strike the ball with. Why should it not rather have been the wicket?

However all this may be, *bittil-battil*, or stool-ball, is capital fun, and any readers wanting a game in which both sexes can join in larger numbers than is desirable at croquet or lawn tennis, cannot do better than try it.

HOME DRESSMAKING.

PART THE SECOND.—MAKING UP.



THE dress having been accurately cut out as described in our last number, the next step is the making up. And here it may not be amiss to remark on the immense saving, both of time and labour, to be obtained by the use of the sewing machine. It is not our intention to recommend the machine of any special maker, as tastes and opinions differ greatly respecting their various merits: but we may say that, while for any work that is to be subjected to much wear-and-tear, such as linen, the lock-stitch is advisable, if not absolutely necessary, for all ordinary dressmaking the chain-stitch will be found amply strong enough, with the additional recommendation of being easily undone when alterations are requisite. Either the foot or the hand machine may be used; some are adapted to work by either motion at pleasure; but it should be borne in mind that professional machinists who work the treadle machines seldom keep their health, owing to irritation of the nerves of the spine, while the hand machines are absolutely harmless, though they are a little more troublesome at first, as only one hand is free to guide the work. If the worker is unaccustomed to the management of the machine, she would do well to perfect herself in its use before commencing her dress.

As we have already said, a plain material should always be selected by a beginner; stripes, checks, or other patterns being very troublesome, and requiring much experience for their satisfactory arrangement.

First take the two back-pieces of the bodice, and with the machine stitch them together exactly along

the outlining tacking-thread of the lining. Of course the pieces are placed face to face, and pinned together to prevent slipping. Fasten off the end of the seam securely with a needle and thread. If side-pieces are used, they are stitched very neatly on to the back centre-piece, which then, as we explained before, has usually no seam down the centre. Care must be taken to place them high enough, or the back will be too narrow; and they should be as close together at the waist as is possible. Side-pieces, however, are rather out of date, and the back is often made with five seams, all of which are stitched together before the fronts are commenced.

Then take the right-hand front-piece, fold back exactly on the tacking, and run a neat row of stitching along the edge. On the left-hand front, a line of stitching must be run down the outline thread, but the inch and a half of margin must not be folded under, as on the other side, as the piece is required to go under the button-holes. The next things to be stitched are the darts below the bosom, which draw the material in at the waist: they too must be stitched accurately on the outlining threads. Next come the shoulder-seams, and then those joining the backs and fronts together. The same rule applies in every case, that the pieces are placed faces together, and stitched accurately and carefully on the outlining thread of the lining.

Cut a bias-band of the material about an inch and a half wide, to allow for turning, and stitch it on the outlining thread of the neck, then turn over and finish neatly.

Sew the buttons firmly on the left side, taking care