

ILLUSTRATED BY HARRY FURNISS.

**B**IG men play variously—the word must not be understood to refer to toys alone. Some turn aside from their particular high-road of life into the byways, and walking for a time in others' tracks, practise their tricks of existence. Some play for the pleasure of playing's sake; some for profit, or exercise, or change, or what not; others play at ideals to break the silly monotony of a workaday world. It would be intolerably tiresome to be condemned to remain a great man day in and day out, impotent of anything little or ordinary. Such a fate might descend upon a Pope if he emerged from his strict seclusion into his fellow men's daylight. He is pityingly called by some "the Prisoner of the Vatican," but there have been enough Popes already for each and all to understand the best method of carrying out their contract with existence.

It has been often remarked that a politician given up entirely to his profession becomes fanciful and faddy, a condition detrimental to broad-minded statesmanship. The reliability of this remark is more or less borne out by the fact that politicians with no other occupation do decidedly put their leisure to the use of diverse pursuits. Mr. A. J. Balfour, for

instance, knows the true value of play better than the majority of men. Furzedown, the Parliamentary golf preserve, and St. Andrews the historic, see him frequently. Though not in the first rank of exponents of the game, he yet takes a deal of beating.



THE COLONIAL SECRETARY.

He has played Shakespeare also, as an amateur, and on one special occasion trod the boards as Hamlet to Mrs. Patrick Campbell's Juliet, with a measure of success. But his performances on the green and the stage are only by the way, his real hobby is the study of metaphysical philosophy, in which he has his own opinions, and so expresses them, in and out of print, that they are hard even for Mr. Herbert Spencer to refute. Posterity may perhaps remember him longer for his



MR. GLADSTONE.

metaphysics than for his politics—who knows? Mr. Asquith finds plenty to occupy his crowded time, apart from politics, in his practice at the Bar, but he, too, takes considerable pleasure in amateur theatricals.

Lord Salisbury might have become as eminent a scientist as he is a statesman. His laboratory and chemical apparatus at Hatfield are a sight worth seeing, and his knowledge of his subject a thing even more worth having. One of his fellow Ministers of the Cabinet is reported to have suggested, in a weak moment, that his lordship's grasp of foreign policy might be due to his keen eye for foreign bodies in a test-tube.

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, like a well-trained maid, does many little things about the House, which, tempered with an absorbing desire for Imperial Federation, now practically manifested, is his real hobby. But he grows, as does also Baron Henry Schröder, of City

banking fame, that most alluring of all flowers, the orchid. Many a long price has one or the other paid for a rare though unsuspecting bulb. Mr. Chamberlain has been known to do some gardening on his own account in the undignified condition of unrolled shirt-sleeves.

Considerable paragraphs have been perpetrated concerning Mr. Gladstone's skill with the woodman's axe, but the pastime nearer to his heart is the intimate study of Horace—whose immortal odes he has lately translated into graceful English verse—and of Homer, upon whose sounding lines he is an acknowledged authority. It is only a year or two since he delivered his memorable lecture upon Homeric research in the Debating Hall of the Oxford Union Society. The president of the Union at the time was Mr. A. G. V. Peel, the son of the late Speaker; Mrs. Gladstone was also present. The lecture, delivered as it was upon the eve of the veteran orator's retirement from public life, formed a grateful and historic episode in the lives of all who heard it. How very different is the private life of his contemporary, the rugged Bismarck! During his youth the German was passionately fond of duelling. An authority states that twenty-seven duels in which he took an active part are on record. When surfeited of duelling he turned to practical jokes, and carried them to such an extent that he was dubbed "mad Bismarck." His retirement, it is now asserted, is relieved by never-ending cigars and light beer, with the novels of Du Boisgobey thrown in as a solid.

Amongst the athletic members of Parliament, Sir Edward Grey claims rightly a high place. One need not look back far to find him holding the amateur tennis championship—an honour which represents not merely a figure of speech, but physical prowess of an exceptional order, cool judgment, a keen eye, and long endurance.

Probably artists are the sole body of professional men who never aim at a seat in our legislative assembly. Nevertheless, many seats at Westminster are occupied by men who are no fools with pen, pencil, and brush. Sir Herbert Maxwell has done much in this direction. Mr. W. S. Caine, the temperance champion, has decorated the walls of his house on Clapham Common with a number of fine sketches by himself, notably of Japanese scenery. Sir Charles Dilke, again, by means of his facile pencil has perpetuated his impressions of far countries, New Zealand and its fast disappearing Maori aborigines in particular.

Horse-racing nowadays can hardly be called a pastime, for it is carried by large owners so

far as almost to become the business of their lives, and it is dabbled in by hundreds. Unfortunately, it is more a national sport than cricket. While we glare askance at German lotteries, every labourer has his something on



PRINCE BISMARCK.

this race or that, and the most revered and respectable person "goes in" for a Derby sweepstake. But the possession of an extensive stud is still not necessarily co-ordinate with a life devoted to its interests. Lord Rosebery and the Prince of Wales find time to own such successful horses as Ladas and Florizel II., and yet pay full attention to their manifold public duties. The Prince is also exceedingly fond of trundling in the fine bowling-alley he possesses at Sandringham. His Royal Highness is only beaten in ubiquity by Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany. They are both yachtsmen of a high class as well as royalties of singular prestige. But the popularity of the Prince of Wales in public and private, at home and abroad, in circles diplomatic and circles sporting, far transcends that of his illustrious contemporary, whose energetic personality makes him a little too brusque to be altogether popular. The Prince, in common with Lord Rosebery and the Queen herself, is an enthusiastic farmer. He runs a model farm of 600 acres, where everything is done in a most up-to-date fashion on the best scientific principles, and with the aid of all modern perfected machinery. The royal farmer is no looker-on at the produce of other men's skill. He is right well up in his subject, and knows where to look for the reason if the crops are not as they should be.

Farming is a favourite plaything of big men—a curious anomaly, seeing that the numerous Englishmen who depend upon it for their livelihood find it a most untrustworthy source

of income. But there is more than a spice of probability in the conjecture that for this very reason men of note try their 'prentice hands at it, having the money to use it as a hobby, experiment with it, lose by it, and laugh, till in due season they shall light upon the weapons to worry the weather out of action and set old England once again upon her agricultural legs.

Mr. H. Rider Haggard is another amateur farmer. He has a pretty *penchant* for red polls, and breeds some fine specimens at Ditchingham, Norfolk, where he lives and revels in outdoor pursuits the year through. In his time he has made agriculture pay: to wit, when visiting a portion of his property in South Africa he cut hay to the tune of a selling price of £300, in fifteen days. He and his partner, two Zulus and a mowing-machine did the job between them, and it needed doing. He is also an enthusiastic horticulturist. Ferns are his speciality, and his fernery teems with rare tropical varieties, transported in spite of high insurmountable difficulties thousands of miles from far Mexico.

Yet another agricultural amateur is Mr. W. S. Gilbert. One has always been led to suppose that the king of light librettists was never so happy as when caught in the act of revealing to the theatre-going world a leading lady the light of whose talent had previously lain hidden beneath the proverbial bushel of lacked opportunity, but this is not his only pastime. His home farm at Graeme's Dyke, Harrow Weald, is almost a slice of perfection's cake, and is peopled by some magnificent thoroughbred Jersey cows, over whom he watches most carefully. Should he tire of his cows and night come down upon him, he can retire to his observatory and lend his versatile imagination for a while to astronomy, a science which he, no doubt, discovers to be



H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES.

alternately singularly soothing and desperately discouraging.

The mention of astronomy induces a cogitative train of thought, and in that connection guides the mind by gentle, easy stages towards angling, a contemplatory recreation. A fine sport, nevertheless, is fishing, and a finer medium for fanciful anecdote. It has many celebrated votaries. The Duke



THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE.

of Devonshire is a never-wearying wielder of the giant salmon rod, and has captured more than one huge prize, and hooked many a huger. In his wake and canny Izaak Walton's follow also Sir John Millais, Mr. Andrew Lang (when he is not golfing, or bespeaking or be-spiking spoons), and Mr. William Black, whose favourite haunts are in Staffordshire. Not the least of the less ambitious company of bottom-fishers who prey upon the roach, the perch, and the rest of those yclept coarse, is Mr. W. S. Penley. His favourite "swim" lies just behind his own house, and many a pleasant hour has he spent there—albeit catching nothing.

Generally speaking, a man grows too old and stiff in the joints for athletics before he earns the title "big," but some are sweetly blessed by fortune. For example, Dr. Conan Doyle would deem life without cricket, football, and cycling not worth living. He is getting somewhat on in years for frequent football, but cycles persistently, and so does his wife, and at the close of each succeeding summer season the Norwood Cricket Club owes an increasing debt to his excellent performances with the bat. A poet is a privileged person, and can always get his licence renewed; but,

theoretically at least, it is over and above a Sabbath day's journey from a bard to a boxer. Still it would be a rare thing were there a grain of fact-foundation in the statement made by the anonymous and sprightly author of "All Expenses Paid," to the effect that Mr. Norman Gale is no fool with the gloves, and competent to join issue in no wise ingloriously with centaurs and satyrs, chuckers-out-in-ordinary to Parnassus. At all events, it is certain that Mr. William Morris of the Kelmscott Press is a practical printer and publisher. His ambition points not so much to profit as technical perfection; and he treats printing from the point of view of an artist, and with the imaginative originality of a poet.

The subject of athletics proper, where big men are the athletes or enthusiasts, would be in treatment sadly insufficient should no notice be taken of the Earl of Cavan's covered lawn-tennis court at Wheathampstead. It is a glorious place, and fit to gladden the heart of the most confirmed and ill-conditioned grumbler. The entire dimensions of the court are 124 ft. by 67 ft. 6 in., and the roof is very lofty, the lowest tie-rod in the centre being 30 ft. from the floor. The light, usually a noticeable deficiency in covered courts, comes clear and good through the glazed glass overhead. There is nothing whatever to impede play. In the words of Mr. Wilfred Baddeley, the present champion, "This court is, in my opinion, and in the opinion of many other players well qualified to judge, one of the best; indeed, I think I may safely say *the* best covered court there is." One of his qualifications is having played on it more than once as the Earl of Cavan's guest, a pleasure which, though he has shared with other first-class players, he modestly makes no boast of.

Exercise is indispensable even to "luminaries of the law," who are popularly supposed to maintain life upon a diet of acidulated dust and air, or what not, which produces a compression of the lips and general gauntness. An ordinary method of obtaining it is by means of dumb-bells, or some patent gymnastic apparatus, fixed but adjustable. However, Mr. Justice Kekewich is too original for that, and prefers the game of battledore and shuttlecock. So do Mr. Baron Pollock and his legal family. In fact, they have made the game, as a means to an exercise end, quite fashionable in legal circles. The idea of a learned and lordly judge pronouncing a painful sentence of death upon a wretch more sinned against, maybe, than sinning, and then away home to dinner and an exciting bout at battledore with the representative of

the Treasury, seems, to say the least, a gruesome bit of the *comédie humaine*.

Mr. Harry Furniss, who never lacks an eye to fun, has caught at the ingenuousness of the game and taken to it, too. Apparently, it is like golf (the scorned of Mr. C. B. Fry, his "magnified croquet"), and steals upon its victim from outwards inwardly in the guise of an "acquired taste." Anyhow, the energetic artist is its devoted votary, though now and again he will vary the intervals by a course of juggling along the prehistoric lines of three balls or four.

Having slid from the law to black and white, we slip back from black and white to the law again, and meet them united in the person of Sir Frank Lockwood, wearer of her Majesty's silk. The clever Queen's Counsel is never without his sketch book and pencil, and snatches each and every opportunity of reproducing the funny things he sees. And "prodigious" well he does it. He was once publicly reproved by a demure occupant of the bench for sketching in court. Presumably art forms an inharmonious blend with law—in the eye of the law.

The wondrous attraction the sea has for all reasoning beings causes the "going down in ships" to be in one way or another the passion of numberless big men's play time. But it has been reserved for Sir Donald Currie to buy a new lamp and yet retain the old. This he has accomplished by lending his ships and his company to sick, worry-worn celebrities, and giving them a free passage to health and strength.

Ministers to our spiritual needs are not innocent of hobbies entirely earthly. The Bishop of Ripon is an ardent bibliophile. Above all other books he prizes the works of Dante, though the great Italian was perhaps a little uncanonical and regardless of rubrics. The Bishop never relaxes his search for old and precious editions of his pet author, and new ones that are good do not come amiss. His enthusiasm has enabled him to gather no mean collection, neither in point of interest nor value. Dr. Newman Hall, a broad-minded Christian if ever one was, can show such a stack of charming sketch books as few amateur artists can boast. Water-colour is his preferred medium, and he handles it deftly. He has a collection of graphic sketches of the Alps, but Niagara is his favourite sketching-ground. He possesses a fine water-colour of a part of the Falls by the American artist Church, who had no peer, unless it was Mignot, as a painter of this particular subject.

But where is now the portliness of the prelate of custom and his propriety? Where

are now the indissoluble dignities of the lawn-sleeves we imagine and the gaiters we expect—when a certain prelate of prominence, here nameless, has resorted to lawn-tennis, and plays it with all the careless vigour of the most redoubtable of feminine suburban championesses?

From the Church to the stage is an easy, and apposite transition. If Sir Henry Irving has any hobby he loves more than another it is that of doing good, of practising an ever-watchful benevolence seldom misplaced. He cannot deny that one afternoon, in the Strand, when his cab was overturned on the kerb, he was courteously helped out by a clergyman of cheerful countenance who said, "Mr. Irving, your misfortune is my opportunity!" who thereupon produced a subscription-list for the restoration of an historic old church—who also was comforted with a cheque by return of post. Besides benevolence, the great actor delights in theatrical portraits old and new, and has a goodly collection of them.

No one needs informing that Mr. J. L. Toole carries the stage, in the form of practical jokes, very much into private life. But like

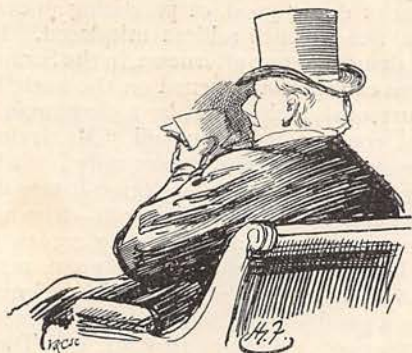


MR. W. S. GILBERT.

the fabled Miller who earned a negative reputation by never making a joke from cradle to grave, Mr. Toole has been dubbed foster-father to much he never invented or carried out. He really did once send a packet of chocolates to a little boy who sat in a stage box, and was disturbing him with his astonishingly loud and insistent laughter. The attendant delivered the packet, "With Mr. Toole's compliments, and would the young

gentleman who laughed so heartily kindly eat these during the performance."

Mr. George Grossmith—prince of entertainers by right of succession—possesses a miniature railway by which he can travel to his own dining-room door, though it is not to be supposed that he is such a deficient trencherman as to need steam-power to drive him to dinner. This model is almost above



SIR FRANK LOCKWOOD.

the level of a toy. The maker, at any rate, is wont to grow irate should it be referred to in his presence as anything but a triumph of mechanical (should one say engineering?) skill. Let it be granted it is so, such, and so on—honestly.

Our new Commander-in-Chief, from whom such an embarrassment of good things is expected that he will be more than mortal if he realises the hopes of the humblest, is a man with a typical hero. Soldier though he is, Lord Wolseley could find no one of his own eternal calling to fit his ideal, but had recourse to the annals of naval warfare for his beau-ideal of heroic humanity, and chose Lord Nelson. He buys with assiduous care the least trophy, the slightest, most trivial memento of England's Admiral. Lord Wolseley has also a wayside whim for Staffordshire pottery and old military pictures.

Another big man who makes a hobby of an ideal and plays seriously with it, is Mr. Hiram S. Maxim. Whatever the future may vouchsafe (and in the sight of the rapid run of science and invention in the last forty years or so, it should be prodigal of favours), the solution of the problem of aerial locomotion and navigation seems at present like Porson's "Germans in Greek—far to seek." The amount of money spent by Mr. Maxim on his "flying machine," and the hopeless wreck it made of itself when he took his friends a trip upon it, are antithetical facts scarcely short of pathetic, if one may use a deadly-abused word.

Once upon a time Sir Henry Bessemer, who invented and gave his name to the famous steel process, hunted a chimera. Brought to bay it would have set every river in the world aflame, much less the Thames; but Sir Henry failed, for, not being able to manufacture it all himself, he had to trust some part of the work to another. The thing was to be a "sun furnace," potent to engender a temperature almost incalculable. It consisted of a wooden building 35 ft. high and 12 ft. square. From a movable mirror within, the sun's rays were to be radiated upon a series of powerful lenses, which in their turn would concentrate the power upon the object ready for fusing in the crucible beneath. But the gentleman who had in hand the manufacturing of the upper lenses made them graduated instead of uniform, and rather upset the process. So the sun furnace was abandoned in disgust. Perhaps Sir Henry remembered that since in England we cannot count upon our sun with any certainty, the machine might spend a deal of time on strike and spoil business contracts. At all events, he is now engaged upon the invention of a telescope which shall eclipse all rivals. If he should aid us to catch a glimpse of our supposititious neighbours in Mars, or even to think we do, he need not fear to challenge the generations for length of name or fame, and still less need regret the furnace.

An article into which cycling cannot creep is a high inconceivable creation in these unbuckramed days. The "bike" is rife and rampant among royalty, and our nobility are daily knocking under in increasing numbers to the charms of this cheap substitute for expensive horseflesh. It is a fact published broadcast and undenied that the Princess of Wales received a tricycle from the Prince as a Christmas present; and it is doubtful whether it is not also a fact that the donor himself in sufficient seclusion has also put foot to pedal.

Poets are dwindling sadly from Parnassus nowadays, and also authors. It was hard to believe the truth of the late Lord Tennyson, that he was a practical dairy-farmer, but when faced it, after all, did not matter: you could sink a good many gallons of milk in his poetry without drowning its fervent genius. But it is harder to swallow the fact that Mr. R. D. Blackmore, the author of "Lorna Doone," though a man eminently of one book, is not a man of one calling. One is assured that at Teddington, where the lock is, he practises the handy art of market-gardening, and two or three times a week drives his own waggon of purchasable vegetables along the road to Covent Garden Market.