

the shooting-field, or prevaricating as to the flies with which he is taking trout where others fail. Yet these faults are common enough, as almost every sportsman knows. "Take a cast with my line," he would say instead to some amateur, possibly a poacher, encountered on the river-bank, "the trouts are taking at this moment; but when the sun comes out from behind that April cloud, I doubt the take will end." No great example of self-sacrifice perhaps. For one ought to find it easy to be generous when oneself has plenty. But is it always so? Ask of anglers. You will have gathered that, though master of a salmon-river, my "aristocrat" does not disdain the gentle art of Isaac Walton. No; he is a lover of all forms of sport, excepting only otter-hunting. But he enters upon them, not in the competitive spirit which now is fashionable, but in that of pure enjoyment of the pastime—enjoyment for himself and others also. Indeed, when you see him in his "sporting-jacket" to employ a phrase of Kit North's, his relation to the world of natural history seems as genuine and only less close than that of the fine specimen of mankind, his head keeper.

HE is not now a hard rider after hounds, nor have I heard that in his young days he was exceptional in that respect. None the less there is much in his riding that every connoisseur must admire. In the first place, he is a natural rider; there is perfect sympathy between him and his mount; they move as one organism, nor does he ever forget the horse's share in the eager instinctive life of the pursuit. His judgment, and his knowledge of the country, too, are perfect. Whilst I have heard it said that never, either at home or abroad, will he hunt unless well mounted. See him now as he bends over the arched neck of his chestnut mare. The mare is hot, as the foam-flecks already show, but he is soothing her. Presently he will take it out of her. Meantime his neighbour, the brand-new peer, Lord Peterkin, is turning every minute of the meet to account—spotting the right people to speak to, waiting his opportunity, throwing out a casual suggestion here, and dropping a chance word there, all of which are meant in due season to bear fruit. Very probably they will, for Peterkin has proved himself a man to be reckoned with. He is not quite at ease during this fidgety twenty minutes on his two-hundred-guinea fencer, but is a determined rider none the less. The contrast which he now presents to Lord Blithesdale is not one of inferiority of mankind; nay, of the two, Peterkin is very probably the more effective member of society. Beyond all question he has done more, a great deal more. The contrast is rather between two different ways of taking pleasure. For, during all this time, Lord Blithesdale is chatting quite easily and simply with a not very young and not very prepossessing lady (unmistakably a lady, none the less) who has come out on foot to see what she can. She is the daughter of the late Vicar, and a friend of Lord Blithesdale's early manhood. But you must not scent a romance, reader, for there never was anything of that kind between them. The aristocrat married at twenty-one (as aristocrats and labouring men can afford to do, happy people!) the only woman he had ever seriously cared for. And I now mention his conversation with the Vicar's daughter only in order to show that aristocrats have no axes to grind, nor are they ever bent on "turning things to account." Had Blithesdale industriously ground axes, had he turned every advantage to the best possible account, he might have been an Earl by now, instead of a mere Viscount, and just possibly might have had a seat in a Unionist Cabinet. But he didn't want either. That is at once his weakness and his charm.

BLITHESDALE'S stay at the House of Commons was short. Returned to Parliament for his native county at a very early age, in the last years of the Disraeli Administration, he had a blind faith in his brilliant, insincere leader, which was more than a little touching. It was during the elections of 1880 that I heard him speak on politics, and if sound argument temperately expressed could have stayed the current of re-action he would have done it. But what an "if" is that! "It is far too gentlemanly a speech," said my companion Thruster, who sat beside me in the hall, "he has not mentioned his adversary once—nor even gone for the G. O. M.! That sort of thing is no good nowadays. He overrates the intelligence of the electors—what they want is to see something smashed." "And if you want to win your seat," I returned, "I suppose you must pander to that taste?" But Thruster did not see my sarcasm, and the election of 1880 was the end of Blithesdale's career in the Commons. For soon afterwards he succeeded his father. The few who now remember him at Westminster are agreed that he gave promise of being a useful man on

church and country questions, and on these he is always nowadays listened to with respect in the Lords. But the main current of his activities has been deflected to county business and estate management, and no doubt he is the happier, though less distinguished, for the change. Thruster says that he has no ambition; but in Thruster's estimation the mere desire to do well is not an ambition. For him ambition means the wish to attract attention, to make a "big splash," or to "arrive." Now I question if the aristocrat knows the meaning of this phrase or that word. Certainly neither one nor the other is conceivable in him, either as an aim or as a vocation. Hence it is, perhaps, that he grudges no man his success; he is of all men the least jealous. Though a poor man, if his position be taken into account, his estate is in good order. His word, from the chair of the county council, is an unwritten Local Government Act.



MINORITIES RULE

I SUPPOSE that—like all intelligent observers—you have noticed that minorities generally rule. All this chatter about "majority rule" is buncombe, a fraud on the people, a gross deception of the trusting democracy. Majorities seldom rule; and, when they do, it is either because the subject they are allowed to decide is of no great importance to anyone, or because the majority happens to have the same opinion as the most effective minority. The majority of the people is a huge, gelatinous, amorphous, harmless, indecisive, feeble and futile jelly-fish sort of organism—if organism is not too coherent a term. To talk about it "ruling" is to talk about the guiding of the wind by the flutter of dead leaves which rustle before its breath. The ruling in a modern democratic State is done by minorities—compact, well-organized, decided minorities, who know what they want, and are prepared to fight for it.

TEN voters who will leave their party because it fails to support a cause in which they believe—or to let them come up to the trough when they are hungry—have more ruling power than a thousand voters who entertain pious opinions as to the great desirability of this or that policy; but who will do nothing to get their supine preferences carried into effect, beyond expressing a lady-like wish that it may be so. Ruling is done—not by opinion—but by power. A Government may know perfectly well that a majority of the people want a certain measure adopted; and yet that government may simply not dare to adopt it—though personally it may want to do so very much—because it also knows that the majority of the people will not back their wishes at the polls, while a small but determined minority will. The only opinion that a politician can consider is the opinion which gets itself expressed in "crosses" in the ballot-box.

THIS is what makes even democratic publicists fight so shy of the plebiscite and the referendum. As a matter of fact, there is no class in the community which would so dearly love to enjoy the constant use of the referendum—if it could be trusted. The referendum offers the doubtful politician in office an apparent means of testing public opinion on some dubious measure without risking his beloved office over it. He can simply refer it to the people—and let them decide. He escapes responsibility, and saves his job. As most of our politicians are pure Opportunists, this would be an ideal arrangement for them. They would stay perpetually in office, carrying out the will of the people ascertained by a succession of referendums. This is all so obvious that you may wonder why they do not tumble over each other in their eagerness to get this life-saving system of referendums working. However, like all experienced men, you distrust the very obvious, when it does not occur; and you inquire—"Why?"

THE "Why?" is, unfortunately, all too plain. The referendum only ascertains the pious opinions—the surface preferences—of the majority. It is no guide to what the majority will do on election day. On the other hand, the minority may conceal a compact and resolute little band of

And there is one sense in which Lord Blithesdale's life is a standing protest against the abolition of the House of Lords. His worst enemy could not accuse him of being a man of luxurious habits—a charge from which his zest for simple pleasures quite as much as his sense of duty preserves him. Were it not for Lady Blithesdale, and his daughters, I question if he would have a town house at all. And if you want to see him really happy, really interested, it is not in the enclosure at Ascot, or the paddock at Sandown, that you must look for him out among his own Shire horses and brood mares, his Shorthorns, or his thriving young conifers. He detests bridge, as much as he does tittle-tattle; and the only time I have known him fail in courtesy was during the visit of a well-known raconteur (well-known, I may add, for malice and unveracity) whom Lady Blithesdale had invited, when his lordship deliberately fell asleep.

brothers who will turn out on election day and hurl into everlasting oblivion the group of purblind politicians who put this measure—which they tremendously detest—into force. Under such circumstances, a referendum is simply an additional complication—a trap for the unwary—a further and at times formidable obstacle in the path of the astute politician who knows that, to save his skin, he must legislate against the will of the majority. A formal referendum, carried against him, simply makes his predestined course the harder to defend. I am not saying this to argue against the referendum. I am in favour of the referendum; for I do not care a straw how much it embarrasses time-serving politicians. I would also like it, for it might sometimes help to screw the courage of the molluscous majority up to the sticking-point. But I am using its marked unpopularity with the very people who ought to "welcome it, like the payment of a long lost 'bad debt'—the politicians—to show how perfectly these experts in popular government understand that majorities do not rule.

WE can all think of a dozen illustrations right at home in which majorities do not get their way. Sometimes it is just as well. Majorities are wooden-headed not infrequently. But, in any case, they do not get what they notoriously want; and we all wonder why it is that the politicians, on either one side of the House or the other, do not take an easy road into public favour by insisting that the majority be served. When neither the Government nor the Opposition show any alacrity in coming forward as the champions of the majority, we sometimes begin to think that possibly what we imagine to be the majority is not the majority after all. The politicians may know of a huge hidden store of voters who hold different views. But the truth usually is that we are quite right about the loose and indifferent desires of the majority; but the politicians have their informed eyes on a very active and vindictive section of the majority which will certainly punish them if they dare to do what the majority desire.

OF course, there is no reason in all this for saying nasty things about the majority. The majority—it is "we, us & co." The majority on one question will comprise the very people who form the puissant and powerful minority on another question. The meaning simply is that we all entertain opinions which we are prepared to sacrifice for the sake of other opinions—or interests. We may desire a certain government kept in power for a certain policy to which it is committed. We may, at the same time, deplore its failure to espouse a certain other policy; but, when it comes to polling day, we vote for the government for the sake of the first policy. We must take our choice. We cannot have both; and we choose the most important—in our eyes. I think it could be shown that most governments in this country have remained in power by skilfully making themselves the representatives of a number of very-much-in-earnest minorities, and not at all by catering to the majorities. The knowing politician who cleverly selects his minorities, can always defeat the academic public man—with his head in the clouds—who ranges himself impressively on the side of the majorities.

THE MONOCLE MAN.