

Lawn Tennis for Ladies

Mrs. Lambert Chambers

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[Illustration: Mrs. Lambert Chambers]

LAWN TENNIS FOR LADIES

BY

MRS. LAMBERT CHAMBERS

WITH TWENTY-THREE ILLUSTRATIONS

First published in 1910, London

TO MY FATHER WHOSE KEENNESS AND ENCOURAGEMENT HAVE ALWAYS BEEN SUCH A GREAT HELP TO ME DURING MY LAWN TENNIS CAREER

PREFACE

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As a rule an author writes a preface to explain or to apologize for a book. I shall do neither: I have tried to explain my meaning simply and clearly in the book itself, and I am optimistic enough to think that my favourite game is too popular to require an apology for increasing its literature, however unpretentious the attempt may be. Moreover, I am still too much affected by the "brilliant and feverish glow" of enthusiasm to dream of offering one.

Two things only I wish to say. First, that I am writing with no academic pride, but only with a passionate fondness for what I consider a great sport, and with a keen desire to make others equally devoted. Secondly, I should like to thank all those who have assisted me with suggestions and the loan of photographs, especially my "arena colleagues" who have rallied round me so graphically in the last chapter.

DOROTHEA LAMBERT CHAMBERS

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MRS. LAMPLOUGH

MISS A.M. MORTON

MISS A.N.G. GREENE

From a photograph by G. & R. Lavis, Eastbourne.

LAWN TENNIS FOR LADIES

CHAPTER I

ATHLETICS FOR GIRLS

I hope and believe there are comparatively few people who will deny that athletics have done much for the health and mind of the modern girl. Exercise in some form or other is essential, and although I am quite ready to admit that games of the strenuous type, such as hockey and lawn tennis, can be and sometimes are overdone, yet the girl of to-day, who enters into and enjoys her game with scarcely less zest than her brother, is, I am convinced, better in health and happier in herself than the girl of the past generation. What are the objections to games for girls? It seems to me the chief arguments against them are (1) that they are injurious to health; (2) that they impair the womanliness of woman; (3) that they mar her appearance. There may be something to be said for these contentions, but to my mind the _pros_ materially

outweigh the _cons_.

As to the injury to health, I deny that the case is proved. Indeed, evidence is rarely forthcoming. A delicate girl would probably become more delicate if she did not play games in moderation and take exercise. A friend of mine, an old doctor, told me the other day that in his youth the great plague of his life was the hysterical female. She would put in an appearance obtrusively at critical moments, and the anticipation of a scene always shadowed his arrangements. We rarely see this type now. Games have driven her away. The woman of the present generation is calm, collected, and free from emotional outbursts, and I believe that invigorating outdoor exercise is the chief cause. As to the second objection, the injury to the womanliness of woman, the answer depends on what is meant by the essential feature of "womanliness." I am afraid most people, including most men, say with Hamlet, "Frailty, thy name is woman." Womanliness to most men implies just frailty. They may perhaps call it "delicacy," and refer to the "weaker sex," but they mean that just as a man's glory is his strength, so a woman's glory is her weakness. They argue that you must impair this "weakness" by strenuous games. Is this true? Is the essential feature of a woman her weakness, just as the essential feature of a man is his strength, not merely physical, but mental and moral strength? I do not think so. Woman is a second edition of man, if you will; therefore, like most second editions, an improvement on the first! As Lessing puts it, "Nature meant to make woman its masterpiece." I well remember reading in a stirring narrative of the Indian Mutiny how a small party of English men and women were besieged in their quarters by a body of rebels, and while the men fought at the windows and doors the women were busy preparing ammunition, loading guns, bandaging wounds, and zealously cheering their war-worn defenders. When victory was at length achieved, the men asked themselves what would have happened but for the women. That, to my mind, was a picture of true "womanliness." Inferior in neither moral strength nor brain-power, the true woman is a helpmeet, or man's complement, giving him just the special form of strength in body and soul that he needs for the special experience.

If this, then, be "womanliness," can athletic games injure it? Do they spoil woman's usefulness as a woman? Do they damage her specific excellence? Do they tend to give her less endurance and nerve at critical times? I do not think so. Certainly lawn tennis does not. It is undoubtedly a strenuous game. There is more energy of physical frame, more brain-tax and will-discipline demanded in one hardly contested match than would suffice for a whole day's devotion to many other games. These requirements must help a woman, and in the possession of the qualities that games bestow athletic girls have a great pull over their sisters. If you are skilled and well drilled in discipline and sportsmanship, you are bound to benefit in the strife of the world. You are the better able to face disappointments and sorrows. For what do these strenuous games mean? Exercise in the open air, and exercise of a thorough and engrossing character, carried out with cheerful and stimulating surroundings, with scientific methods, rational aims, and absorbing chances. Surely that is the foundation of health culture.

The truth is, games have done for women what the dervish's subtle prescription did for the sick sultan. You perhaps remember the story. The sultan, having very bad health from over-feeding, sedentary habits, and luxurious ease, consulted the clever dervish. The dervish knew that it would be useless to recommend the sultan simply to take exercise. He therefore said to him, "Here is a ball, which I have stuffed with certain rare and costly medicinal herbs, and here is a bat, the handle of which I have also stuffed with similar herbs. Your highness must take

this bat and with it beat about this ball until you perspire freely. You must do this every day." His highness acquiesced, and in a short time the exercise of playing bat and ball with the dervish greatly improved his health, and by degrees cured him of his ailment. Now, the tennis ball, to my mind, is stuffed with medicinal herbs which impart vigour and health to the player. The racket is possessed with a magic handle that has the power of quickening all the pulses of life in the plenitude of healthy vigour and wholesome excitement. In a medical book now before me the subject is put tersely thus: "Health and strength depend on rapid disorganisation, and rapid disorganisation depends on rapid exertion." Now, if this is true, what better and more interesting method of rapid exertion could be devised than a game of lawn tennis? Body and mind alike are wholly absorbed with the utmost rapidity, and there is no doubt the sense of refreshment is largely due to the rapid exertion demanded for the proper playing of the game. The medical book goes on to say, "During exertion we drink, as it were, oxygen from the air." This oxygen is the only stimulating drink we can take with lasting advantage to ourselves for the purpose of invigorating our strength. It is the wine and spirit of life, an abundance of which Nature has supplied us with ready-made. If you are low-spirited, drink oxygen. Take active exercise in the open air and inhale it. When next you see a lawn tennis player hard at a strenuous game, remember he or she is not necessarily overstraining or injuring health, but taking long, deep draughts of oxygen, imbibing the wine and spirit of life and laying up a store of vigour in readiness for the varied experiences of life.

Of all games lawn tennis is the one most suited to girls. Its claims are many and potent. It is strenuous and very hard work, but if not overdone it is not too taxing for the average girl. The exercise depends naturally upon the nature of the game played and the players engaged, from the championships to the garden-party patball game. The greater the knowledge of the game the greater the enjoyment and benefit derived from it, and there is really no reason why a girl should not excel at the game and therefore thoroughly appreciate and enjoy it. It is not physical and brute strength that is wanted so much as scientific application--finesse, skill, and delicacy of touch, all of which women are just as capable of exercising as men.

I am well aware that if you compare the lady champion of any year with any first-class man of the same year you will find a great disparity between their actual play. That is to say, the first-class man would be able to give the lady champion thirty or even more in order to have a close struggle. I have often played Mr. R.F. Doherty at the tremendous odds of receive half-forty, and have not always been returned the winner at that! I wonder sometimes why there is this pronounced discrepancy. Garments may make a little difference, but they do not account for it all. I think perhaps that man's stronger physique, naturally greater activity, and severer strokes prevent the girl from playing her own game. She has to be nearly always on the defensive, and thus plays with less accuracy and power.

Another claim lawn tennis has for girls is that it is not an expensive game. It is more or less within the reach of all, rich or poor. It can be played on one's own lawn or at any of the numerous clubs situated all over the world, or even nowadays in some of the public parks. The time required to play a game is not excessive. The implements, rackets, balls, nets, etc., are neither numerous nor prohibitive in price. The club subscriptions are moderate, and the actual expenses of pursuing the game are small as compared with golf.

[Illustration: WIMBLEDON, 1905: MISS MAY SUTTON WINNING THE LADIES'

CHAMPIONSHIP FOR THE FIRST TIME. SHE BEAT MISS DOUGLASS IN THE CHALLENGE ROUND.]

Then, again, lawn tennis is not difficult to learn, although of course by this I do not mean that it is an easy game to play well--far from it. But a rudimentary idea of it suffices to give any one a good deal of healthy exercise and enjoyment, and provided that one is keen and wishes to improve, and possesses what is known as a good games' eye, there is no reason why advance should not be rapid. It is also a pastime in which women can combine with and compete against men without in any way spoiling the game; and mixed doubles, to which I refer, are perhaps the most popular department with the average spectator. I think I am not wrong in saying that there is no other game at the present time in which this combination of the sexes does not tend to minimize the enjoyment of the player and the interest of the spectator. A mixed foursome at golf is poor sort of fun for the man, unless the ladies are quite first-class; the game is rather spoilt for him. Mixed hockey is an abomination; splendid sport absolutely spoiled for both sexes. But a mixed double at lawn tennis seems like a distinct game, so different is it to the other forms of lawn tennis and so well adapted to the combination of both sexes.

Then it is asserted that strenuous games mar the appearance of girls. This charge was very deliberately brought against hockey for women some little time ago in an influential London journal, and was rightly and promptly answered by a spirited article with illustrations of some well-known lady hockey players--proof positive of the fallacy that hockey damaged their appearance. I am afraid most of these contortions are the product of the snapshot camera. It must be remembered that instantaneous photographs show players of games as they are really never seen. Girls are doubtless in the ungraceful position represented for a fraction of a second; but the time is too short for the eye to see, although the camera, worse luck, catches the view, and what is more, registers it for ever! Though a girl should always try to be as neat and look as nice as she possibly can, even when playing a strenuous game, it is hardly possible or natural to be "just so" every second of a long struggle. In fact, I think it is more interesting to see a girl not absolutely immobile. I prefer that she should show some signs of excitement, that her muscles should be strained and her face set. This has a very real pleasure of its own, and I do not think it unsightly. Public speaking and singing may distort the mouth and disturb the facial muscles to a most ludicrous extent and give the eyes quite an unnatural appearance; but I have never yet heard it said that a man or woman should give up either because of its effect upon the appearance. Why, then, should women abandon athletic exercises, which they enjoy so much, and which do them so much good, merely because, just for a moment or two perhaps, their appearance is distorted?

CHAPTER II

PRACTICE, AND HOW TO IMPROVE

Players, even tournament players, often ask how they can improve. "I have been at the same stage so long; what can I do to play a better game?" That is not infrequently the question. Now I think many who are very anxious to advance go to work in the wrong way. To my mind, the great point to remember when you are practising is not that the match

must be won, but that all your weak strokes must be improved. We all know our special failures; if not, some kind friend will soon point them out to us. Tackle these doggedly in practice. Strokes naturally avoided in a match should be given as much experience as possible in a knock-up game. It is the only way. Many players make the cardinal mistake of playing day after day in the same way; they starve all their weak strokes and overdo all their best ones; in fact, they play in precisely the same manner as if the occasion were an important match. If you do this, you must always preserve those weak strokes; they are not even given a chance to develop. I once asked a girl whom I noticed continually running round her back-hand in a practice game, why she did this. The characteristic answer came back: "I cannot take a back hand. I should be hopelessly beaten if I didn't run round the ball." But what does it matter if you are beaten fifty times in a practice game if you are improving your strokes? That girl's back-hand could never improve; she made absolutely no distinction between a practice game and a match. In fact, it was very little of a _practice_ game to her. How can your game improve, or move forward, if you make no effort to strengthen what is feeble?

Practise, then, conscientiously, and with infinite patience; never mind who beats you. Take each weak stroke in turn, and determine to master it, and I think you will find that you will be amply rewarded for all your painstaking work by a vast improvement and keener enjoyment in your game. What greater delight than to feel a stroke you have always dreaded becoming easier and less embarrassing each time you use it, to know that you are genuinely advancing instead of making no progress and playing the same old bad shots time after time? I am sure you will say such a sense of achievement is worth all the trouble which must be faced and all the patience which must be exercised.

Of course in match play it is quite different. You avoid your weak strokes as much as you can; your object then is to win the game. But after discriminate practice you will find, probably to your surprise, that there are not so many weak spots after all to remove, that your game is opening out and steadily advancing. Do not get easily disheartened if you find improvement slow; for a game that is worth playing at all is worth playing well, and to play lawn tennis well you must go through a stiff apprenticeship. You must school yourself to meet disappointments and failures; you must cultivate a philosophic spirit, or you will never reach the goal of perfection. I need not say that if you wish to go forward enthusiasm is essential. Lawn tennis players never seem to me to be nearly so keen on their game as golfers. So many of them appear quite satisfied to remain at a fixed stage. They will certainly not get their handicap reduced unless there is an ardent desire to become better acquainted with the science of the game. A struggling golfer is never tired of learning talking about his pastime--often, I admit, to the annoyance of people who are not so obsessed. Nevertheless, he is on the right track; and being so thoroughly absorbed and in earnest, he ought to improve. You will find him buying every new book that comes out and poring over its pages. He may play in a few competitions, but his time is more seriously occupied with practice and improvement. He wisely deprecates the continuous strain of match play. He prefers to acquire a working knowledge of the game, to make the various strokes with some degree of accuracy, before he pits his skill against others.

I think this lack of adequate practice is one of the reasons why there is such a dearth of rising talent among lawn tennis players. Some of the competitors one meets at tournaments have been for years at exactly the same stage. They never pause to take stock of their game. They never

advance or cultivate a new stroke. They go from one tournament to another, struggling to win by hook or by crook. Assisted by a generous handicap, they may win a prize, and, apparently, they are satisfied. Let me say, in regard to tournaments, that when you are taking your strokes correctly and are really adding to your knowledge of the game, open competitions are admirable, and are essential if the highest honours are to be achieved. But tournaments can very easily be overdone, especially by young players who have not completed what I may call stroke-education.

When you are practising, remember to practise head-work as well as strokes. Cultivate thinking about the game. Never mind asking an experienced player for advice. Most people who play the game well are anxious that every one should improve; they want them to get more enjoyment out of the game, and they want the general standard of play to advance. As a rule they never mind giving a helpful hint. Do not hesitate, therefore, to ask for that help. Discuss the game with your friends and find out all you can about it. Read all the excellent books that have been written on the game from time to time. I have often noticed that beginners will willingly pay their entrance fees for open events at tournaments, when they know very well that nothing but a miracle will take them through the first round. Yet the same players grumble at the expense of purchasing books dealing with the game. The book would most probably help them a great deal, whereas the one solitary match does them no good. It is over so quickly, the difference in the class of play is so great, that the beginner hardly hits the ball at all.

A good way of practising is to play up against a brick wall. In my own case I found the method very useful. It helps one to keep the eye on the ball, to time well, and place with accuracy. Another good way of practising is not to score, but to get some friend to hit or even throw the ball where you want it. Systematic stroke-play like this for half an hour a day, finishing up with a game which brings into play the stroke you have been developing, is bound to improve your game. I know of one champion of England who always practised in this way. Any new stroke that had to be mastered was passed through the mill and assiduously exercised until perfection came. If no friend were available for the purpose, the butler had to devote an hour a day to throwing the ball in the given direction.

To come to the various strokes, I do not mean to enter into these elaborately. There are now so many good books in the market that deal exhaustively with this subject, such as "The Complete Lawn-Tennis Player," by A. Wallis Myers, that I shall not aim at covering old ground.

The first and foremost stroke to be learnt is The Fore-hand Drive. A good fore-hand is one of the chief assets of the game; a good length must be one of the first things to cultivate. The ball must be sent as near the base line as possible. Do not at first try to get a severe shot, but practise getting a good-length slow ball until you are very accurate at that. You will find that pace and direction will come afterwards. When making a fore-hand drive stand sideways to the net. Your left shoulder should face the net, your left foot should be in front of your right. Wait as long as possible, for the ball. By this I mean, do not rush in to it; wait for it to come to you. Stand well away from it, sideways and lengthways. Swing your racket slowly back to about the level of your shoulder, then bring it slowly forward, and simultaneously transfer your weight from your right foot to your left. This transference of weight, let me add, is most important, and can

only be achieved by careful practice. If it is transferred too soon or too late, the whole power of the stroke is lost.

[Illustration: THE FORE-HAND DRIVE BEGINNING MIDDLE FINISH]

The ball must be hit firmly and cleanly with the centre of the racket. Feel as if you were literally sweeping it along--your movement must be so perfectly timed--to the place you wish it to go, not forgetting to follow well through with your arm and shoulder in a line with the flight of the ball. Great muscular strength is not needed to play well. _Timing your stroke, transferring your weight at the right moment, and following well through at the finish_--these are the chief secrets of good and powerful strokes. Do not be content merely to watch the ball, but keep your eye fixed on it until the last possible moment, following it right on to the centre of your racket. Until you have tried this you cannot realize how difficult it is, or how greatly it will improve your stroke; and it helps to complete concentration, which to my mind is one of the chief attributes of success.

The Back-hand Drive is taken in the same way as the fore-hand, only with your position reversed. Here, too, you must not face the net, but stand sideways. This time your right shoulder must face the net. The position of your feet for a back-hand stroke is most important; it is where so many beginners go wrong. Take a step towards the ball with your right foot in front of your left, and with your weight at the start of the stroke on the ball of your left foot. Swing your racket well back, with its head raised above your wrist, and hit the ball firmly with the centre of your racket. Be transferring your weight all the time from your left foot to your right, and follow well through in the direction of the flight of the ball. When playing a back-hand across the court, from corner to corner, let your arm and shoulder on the follow through be extended as far as they will go, and your body brought round to face the net.

[Illustration: THE BACK-HAND DRIVE BEGINNING MIDDLE FINISH]

The lob is a most important and useful stroke and should be constantly practised. It is by no means an easy stroke to play really well and accurately. It is generally a defensive shot, and makes your opponent move from the net, unless she intends to be beaten by it. I am speaking, of course, of the singles game. It is a useful stroke for giving you breathing time if you are made to run about much, or for enabling you to get back into position if you have been forced out of it. It is nearly always best to lob to your opponent's back-hand, since the majority of players are weaker there.

There are three kinds of lobs: (1) _The high lob_, sent well out of reach of your opponent's racket, but with the disadvantage of taking some time to reach the ground. Although it moves your opponent out of her dangerous position right up at the net, there is time for her to run back and return it. (2) _The low lob_, which only just passes over your opponent's racket--a much more risky shot than the high lob, but with the advantage of falling much quicker. If you succeed in getting the ball out of her reach, it is almost certain to be a winning shot, because she will not have time to turn and go after what is a very fast-dropping ball. (3) _The lob-volley_ is one of the prettiest strokes and a most effective one. It is very difficult to accomplish with success; there is always great risk of not getting it out of your opponent's reach and having it killed outright. It is generally played with an under-hand stroke by hitting the ball before it has reached the ground, and lifting it well over your opponent's head. It should be a

high lob. The racket must be grasped firmly and held nearly, horizontal for this stroke. In playing lobs the racket must come well underneath the ball, which should be struck very truly in the centre of the racket.

The Half Volley--This stroke has great possibilities, and is efficacious both in attack and defence, although chiefly used for defence. The ball must be hit immediately after it has bounced; in fact, within a few inches after its impact with the ground. For attacking it can easily be seen how useful this stroke can become; the time gained, as compared to waiting for the ground stroke, is invaluable. But it wants a perfect eye to play it with any facility; the majority of players do not watch the ball long enough. Lack of confidence is another reason why this stroke is not used more on the offensive.

A short drop shot from the back of the court, or, in fact, from any position in the court (but I think more effectively used from the back of the court), is a very paying stroke to have at your command. It is difficult to be accurate with this shot, and it needs much patient practice. Yet it is one on which trouble may very profitably be expended, for it often turns the tide at a critical moment.

I remember playing one match where I used this stroke a great deal. Owing to its success--my opponent never even attempted to reach it--I won ace after ace. At the end of the match my opponent indignantly upbraided me. "I cannot admire your length," she protested. Neither did she think it was "fair to play sneaks," adding, "Anybody could win if they cared to play like that." In her opinion it wasn't tennis! I'm afraid I did not take this censure very seriously. As the object of the game is to put the ball as far out of reach of your opponent as possible, I could not see what difference there was between making her run from side to side of the base-line or to the net and back again. Both methods as regards placing are just as good tennis, and should be used judiciously in turn. But this sort of argument did not appeal to my opponent; she still thought any one could win who cared to play that "unsporting game." Perhaps the incident caused her to think a little, and it may be she tried the stroke in her next match. If so, I am quite sure she did not find it so easy to play accurately as she had imagined.

The danger of this stroke is that unless it is just in the right spot, instead of giving you an advantage it will be a very easy ball for your opponent to score off. If it is short, it will find the net; if hit too far, it becomes a bad-length ball and will get the punishment it deserves. It is difficult to explain how this stroke should be played. I think it is best to stand very close to the ball and get rather in front of it, drawing the racket across it from right to left--stroking the ball, as it were, rather than hitting it. It requires a delicate touch, and can be very deceptively played. Your opponent is kept in the dark until the last moment, when the ace has probably been won.

The Service--I should, as a rule, advise an overhead service. At the same time, an underhand cut service is very useful as a change. Variety of stroke and tactics should always be encouraged.

For an overhead service stand sideways to the net, with your left foot just behind the base-line, the left shoulder facing the net, and the right foot a little to the right of and behind the left. Throw the ball high up over your right ear, bend your body well back and your right shoulder down. Raise the racket at the same time as you throw up the ball, hit it with the centre of your racket, bringing your body forward with all its weight on to the ball, and transferring your weight from

the right foot to the left at the moment of impact. Bring your racket right through, and finish a little to the left of your left knee. At the time you throw the ball into the air the left shoulder must be facing the net, and as your racket hits the ball and follows through to your left knee your body should be brought round to face the net.

[Illustration: BEGINNING OF SERVICE MIDDLE OF SERVICE]

Do not at first attempt a fast service; keep your ardour down until you have gained a mastery of the ball and can vary its direction. Place is always better than pace; this applies, generally speaking, to other strokes besides the service. Try to cultivate a second service which bears a likeness to the first. That is to say, if you have served a fault (and the best players in the world cannot be absolutely sure that their first delivery will not pitch just over the side-line or service-line or hit the top of the net), do not be contented with a soft and guileless second which has no length and which gives your opponent an excellent chance of making a winning drive. Most players are weaker on their backhand. Remember that fact and place your ball accordingly. It is a good plan, when serving from the right-hand court, to aim for the spot where the centre line bisects the service-line. Length and direction will both be good, and in nine cases out of ten your opponent will be required to move to make the return--always a point in your favour.

Remember that variety in service, as in tactics and general play, is essential. However fast your service may be, if its pace and placing are stereotyped, a good deal of its efficacy is lost, since your adversary knows what to expect, where to stand, and the kind of stroke suitable for return. It is better to possess a variety of slow services, if they have good length, than to own one fast service which has no particular merit except speed. And, of course, the faster the ball comes off the racket the more liable is it to go astray. Another reason why you should temper zeal with discretion is that a vigorous service will tire you out like nothing else, and in a long match stamina should be judiciously preserved. You never know when an extra spurt may not be required to turn the scale in your favour. I have often noticed the difference in length and sting between the service of some players at the beginning of the match and in the third set, and I am sure that one of the reasons why so many matches are ultimately lost after a promising start is the decline in the service, in its sustained vigour and in its length.

By the way, why do many lady players, even those who compete at open tournaments, stand several feet behind the base-line when serving? Are they aware that the length of their service is probably just so many feet short of what it ought to be and that they voluntarily give themselves an extra journey to recover short returns, even if they reach them at all? You will never find expert players, who appreciate what I may call the geometry of the court, penalise themselves in this manner. Yet the habit, for some reason or other, would appear to be on the increase.

Low Volleys--For these strokes the head of your racket should be above your wrist, your elbow low down, and your knees slightly bent. You should, in fact, stoop so that your eye is level with the flight of the ball. The late Mr. H.S. Mahony used to say that if girls would only bend down more to the ball they would be able to volley much better. You should not swing back as far for a volley as for a ground stroke, nor relax a firm grip of your racket, remembering to follow through to the place you wish the ball to go. In overhead work it is most important to remember the oft-repeated maxim: "Keep your eye on the ball." Watch it

up to the moment of striking. Do not always "smash" every overhead ball when a well-placed volley will win the ace just as well. It is a waste of much-needed strength, and there is a greater risk of making a mistake. For a _smash_ the right shoulder should be down and well under the ball, the head and weight well back, the weight transferred at the moment of striking from the right to the left leg, the body balanced with extended left arm, and the body-weight brought right on to the ball as it is hit. Finish to the left of your left knee as in the service.

CHAPTER III

MATCH AND TOURNAMENT PLAY

When you have acquired a certain knowledge of the game and can play the various strokes in the correct way, then, as I have said, tournament and match play is the very best method of improvement. I would emphasize the need for a certain standard of efficiency, because I am convinced that at the present time there are too many weak players competing at open meetings. The style of these players has only to be watched to be condemned, and their knowledge of the game is hopelessly limited. Invariably making strokes in a wrong way, tournament play only serves to consolidate weaknesses and check advance.

But assuming you have practised on sound lines and are fit to take part in what, after all, should be a test of trained skill, tournaments will then be a great help to you. You will more often than not play against better players than yourself--an advantage denied you in practice--and against all varieties of attack and defence. You have the chance of watching first-class matches and learning at first hand how the different strokes should be played. You should be careful, however, to limit the number of your tournaments, especially when the excitement and strain are new to you; otherwise you will do much more harm than good. I am convinced that, generally speaking, players attend too many meetings. Instead of their play improving, it may deteriorate. They run the fearful risk of staleness--one of the greatest dangers to a lawn tennis player--and they become physically worn out. As soon as you find you are losing interest in the game, when it becomes an effort to go into court, give the game a rest. It is clear you have overdone it and need a period of recuperation. One or two tournaments at a time, and then a rest to practise the new strokes and tactical moves you have learnt and seen, would, I feel sure, be much more helpful to your game than tournament touring, week-in and week-out.

Some people advise you to dismiss the coming match entirely from your mind before going into court. Personally I find this physically impossible, and I do not commend the suggestion. I think it is much better to study your opponent's game before pitting your own against it. Many matches may be lost while you are finding out the right line of attack. Therefore I advise you to think about the match you are going to play. Mentally rehearse your mode of campaign. But do not worry over the possible result. At all costs it must not be allowed to disturb your sleep the night before--there is nothing puts me off my game so much as a sleepless night.

As soon as you know who your opponent is, seize every opportunity to watch her play, get to know her strong and her weak points, and map out your plan of campaign. Then come the first preliminaries, the toss for

choice of sides or service. In choosing your side you must take into consideration the position of the sun, the wind, the slope of the court (if any), and the background. If you have won the toss and do not mind on which side you start playing, and also have a good service, elect to begin the service. If you have won the toss and for some good reason do not wish to serve first, you can make your opponent serve; but remember that you also give her choice of courts.

One of the great things to remember in match play is this--do not strive to win outright with every stroke. Especially does this maxim apply to the return of the service. So many players are inaccurate with this important stroke simply because their sole ambition is to make it end the rest. Much better to work for your opening. Try to imagine where your opponent will be after taking a certain stroke, and then according to this position determine which is the best stroke to play next. It is similar to playing chess. You should think a move or sometimes two moves in advance. Length, variety of stroke, and direction are the chief factors in success when playing a single. Very often when the place to send the ball is obvious, even to the spectators, it is just as obvious to your opponent, and she will probably be making for that place before you have even hit the ball. Then is the time to return the ball, not where every one, your opponent included, anticipates, but straight back to the original place--that is, the spot your opponent is just hurriedly leaving. She will most probably be beaten by this simple device. Trite though the hint may appear, always try to send the ball where it will be least expected.

[Illustration: TWO WELL-KNOWN PAIRS WHO COMPETED IN A PRIVATE MIXED DOUBLES TOURNAMENT AT THORPE SATCHVILLE MRS. C.W. HILLYARD AND MR. NORMAN BROOKES MISS PINCKNEY AND MR. G.W.HILLYARD]

Again I would urge the importance of keeping your whole attention absorbed on the game. Complete concentration is absolutely essential. You must lose yourself in the game--eye, mind, and hand all working together. If you find that events transpiring outside the court are attracting your attention, you cannot be watching the ball. Many players, even when concentrating, take their eye off the ball too soon, with the result that it is not properly timed and not hit cleanly in the centre of the racket.

In match play remember that a game is never lost until it is won. Never give up trying. Matches have been won (you have only to read the experiences related in the final chapter of this book) after a player has had a set and five games to love called against her. Therefore, unless the game is over, it is never too far gone to be pulled out of the fire. Even if your opponent requires only one more stroke to win the match, remember how difficult it often is to make that one.

[ILLUSTRATION: MISS D.K. DOUGLASS AND MR. A.F. WILDING MISS EASTLAKE SMITH AND MR. R.F. DOUGHERTY TWO WELL-KNOWN PAIRS WHO COMPETED IN A PRIVATE MIXED DOUBLES TOURNAMENT AT THORPE'S SATCHVILLE]

The same applies if you have a good lead. Play hard the whole time; never for one moment slack off. For if you do it is very hard to get going again, and you may find yourself caught up and passed at the post before you have a chance of getting back into your stride. I well remember being a set up and five games to one against Miss C.M. Wilson (now Mrs. Luard) one year at Newcastle, when victory for me meant permanent possession of the challenge cup. This cup was very valuable, for it had a splendid list of names inscribed upon it; it had been going for very many years. Miss Wilson seemed so off her game, and I was

winning so comfortably, that I could almost see that cup on my sideboard! But it was not to be. (At any rate not that year. I was lucky enough to win the Cup outright in 1908, when it was even more valuable, as Miss Sutton's name had been added.) Whether I unconsciously slacked off, thinking the match was mine (which is a fatal thing to do at any time), or whether Miss Wilson suddenly found her game, is impossible for me to say, but she eventually won that match and the cup and championship for the year. She never gave in, but played most pluckily right up to the end. I remember another match where the result hung in the balance for some time. I was playing Miss A.N.G. Greene at Eastbourne in 1907; again the Cup would be my own property if I won it. I met Miss Greene in the second round. She won the first set, and was five games to four in the second set, and seven times she only wanted one point to win that match. I was able to make it five games all. It was very bad luck for Miss Greene, as the moral effect, after having had seven chances of winning the match, was so great that it completely put her off her game, and I won that set and the third quite easily.

Be careful also, when you are behind, and are slowly but surely catching up your opponent, that when you do draw level _you do not relax your efforts_. This danger is most insidious, and must be fought against. The strain and anxiety involved in catching up, and the great relief when you are games all, provoke a reaction unless you are on your guard. A rest is taken, often involuntarily. It is fatal, because before you realize it and can get going again your opponent has run out a winner. This happened to me at Wimbledon in 1908 against Mrs. Sterry. I was behind the whole time, and it was a great relief in the second set to hear the score at last called five games all. But I had hardly taken a breather when Mrs. Sterry secured the set by seven games to five. The eleventh game I played almost unconsciously, so relieved was I at getting on even terms, when I ought to have spared no effort to win that critical game, even if I had failed. These three matches--and I could mention many others--show how important it is to play hard right up to the last stroke of the match, letting nothing put you off, never losing your temper, taking umpire's bad decisions and all the little annoyances that may disturb you in a sportsmanlike manner--keeping your whole attention, in fact, absolutely concentrated on the game.

[Illustration: MISS MAY SUTTON, WHO WON THE LADIES' CHAMPIONSHIP AT WIMBLEDON, 1905, 1907]

In a single it is best when serving to stand as near the centre of the base-line as possible. In this position you have greater command of your court, and there is not so much scope for your opponent to put the ball out of your reach. Miss May Sutton, the American lady champion and ex-champion of England, in her desire to stand as near the centre of the court as she possibly can, gets so close that umpires find it very difficult to tell whether she is serving from the right court or the wrong. In fact, I think I am right in saying she has actually been pulled up for stepping over the centre line of the base-line. If you stand as close as she does you are liable to step over the line unconsciously. Stand as near the centre line as possible, but without any risk of stepping over it. On the other hand, there are players who prefer to serve from the other extreme end. Mr. A.W. Gore, the present champion of England, is one of these, but personally I cannot see any advantage in this position. It seems to leave so much open court, of which your adversary will not be slow to make use.

Use the overhead service for choice, but have an underhand service ready at your command--it may come in very useful for a change. Remember that

a good-length, well-placed service is better than a very fast one, and much less tiring in a long match. Keep your opponent wondering where the service will come next; vary it as much as you possibly can, both as to pace and direction. Be sure to make your opponent move to take it.

I have tried the American service, but I think the strain is too severe for the average girl, and the advantage gained would be very slight, for the rest of your game would deteriorate, owing to fatigue. It places so much tension on all the muscles of the body, and I do not think it would do a girl's health any good to cultivate it. Of course if she were abnormally strong and did not feel the effects of the physical effort, she would be a tower of strength in the land, and her service would be an invaluable one.

I am not an advocate of persistent volleying in a lady's single. I think it is too great a tax on the physique. Nor do I think it pays in the long-run. A volleyer, to my mind, is much easier to play against than a base-liner, and most of the first-class base-line players agree with me. The great physical exertion entailed in running continually to the net will after a time make the ground strokes weaker and weaker; and you must have good length to be able to come up and volley with any success. Miss E.W. Thomson (now Mrs. Larcombe), one of our best lady volleyers, put up a magnificent game in the first set against Miss Sutton at Wimbledon in the championship singles of 1905. She had carefully watched Miss Sutton's game and thought out the best way to play her. Volleying most judiciously, she would force Miss Sutton up to the net with a short drop stroke, and then, lobbing over her head nearly on to the base-line, take up a position at the net, winning the ace with a neat cross volley. These tactics she repeated again and again, and actually led by five games to two. If she could have lasted she must have won that match. But she could not keep it up. She became obviously exhausted, did not get up to the net quickly enough, and her length got shorter and shorter. Miss Sutton eventually won that set and the next easily. I do not know what would have happened if Miss Thomson, when she found she was tiring, had stayed back for a little while and then resumed her tactics at the net. Perhaps she would have come much nearer to victory.

A very large majority of non-volleyers in singles have won the ladies' championship, and I think that fact helps to prove my argument. Miss Maud Watson, Miss Rice, Mrs. Hillyard, the late Miss Robb, Miss Sutton, Miss Boothby and myself are base-liners. Miss Dod and Mrs. Sterry are the only two volleyers. Every girl, however, should learn how to volley. You may be inveigled up to the net, and you should then know how to play and place a volley. And you should go up now and then on a good-length ball.

In Doubles of course it is different. I think then a girl should volley. It will greatly improve her play all round, and will also make the game so much more attractive. I think it would be an excellent plan if ladies' doubles were always played like men's doubles, both players moving together and keeping parallel with one another, going up to the net together and retiring to the back of the court together. Competitors would improve their volleying, and the double, instead of being the dreary, monotonous affair it is now, especially for the base-liner, would be varied and instructive. I am sure referees would welcome the change with avidity. The much-dreaded, interminable ladies' double event would be a thing of the past. If we played the double with the new formation, perhaps we should succeed in re-establishing the event at Wimbledon! But it is very difficult to get ladies to volley at a tournament. They think they have more chance of winning from the back of

the court. Perhaps they have. But they have much less chance of improving their game and learning a variety of strokes.

Miss V. Pinckney started a great work in 1908, organizing a ladies' volleying league, in which all ladies who entered a ladies' doubles event at any tournament were obliged to volley. A most successful experiment took place at the Beckenham tournament. Miss Pinckney and I played together at the Reading tournament, and although we were both base-liners, we determined to go to the net. We found at the end of the event (which we won, owing fifteen) that we had both much improved our volleying. Of course we made endless mistakes and were frequently in the wrong place, but it was experience so badly required. Unfortunately Miss Pinckney, the pioneer, did not play much last season, and I think the ladies have rather gone back to their old ways. It seems a thousand pities.

In Mixed Doubles a girl has a very important part to play. Practically speaking, she has to work for all the openings for her partner, who comes in and kills. And very often if in watching a mixed double you are inclined to think the man is doing little work, or that he is playing badly, it is because his partner is getting him no "plums." She is playing a poor length, or not keeping the ball out of the reach of the opposing man. It is a good plan to keep your head well down, and of course your eye glued on the ball, until the very last moment, so that it makes it difficult for the opposing man at the net to tell in which direction you are going to hit the ball. The late Miss Robb, who was a magnificent mixed doubles player, used to play in this way. Men have told me it was impossible to anticipate her returns. Keeping your head down will also help you from getting flurried or put off, however "jumpy" the opposing man is, or however much he is running across. You can always have a mental vision of him to tell you where he is without looking at him.

To play a mixed double you must be able to lob. It is really the most necessary stroke to cultivate. A very good return of the opposing lady's service, when both men are at the net, is a lob back to the server. It is much safer than lobbing over the man's head--if at all short your ball will be instantly killed--and it also gives your partner at the net plenty of time to anticipate any kind of return. It will be difficult for the server to return a good-length lob out of your partner's reach. The opposing man at the net will not be able to do anything with this lob--it is quite out of his reach--and it would be useless for him to run across as he might do for a cross drive. It is usually best, I think, for a lady to serve down the centre of the court in a mixed double. It shuts up the angles of the court more, and there is less risk of her partner being passed down his side line.

Do not enter for too many events in a tournament. You may get thoroughly worn out and not able to do yourself justice in any, and you would probably have to play when you were very tired--bad for your game, and worse still for your partner's chance in a double. Remember that before playing an important match it is very injudicious to watch another game. It is likely to put your eye out. If possible, do not travel by train just before playing, or carry anything heavy, such as your tennis bag, for this will make your hand shaky and unsteady.

To sum up, there are five golden rules which I have found very helpful to me when playing an important match. I give them to you in the hope that they may prove equally valuable. Always remember that constant practice of these rules will make their pursuit natural in a match.

I. KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL

You have so often been told this, I know, and perhaps the familiar ring about the advice may evoke contempt. Yet unless this rule is implicitly obeyed you cannot expect much success at lawn tennis. Taking your eye off the ball is the secret of every mis-hit and mis-timed stroke. You must not be content merely to look at the ball, but follow it right on to your racket; watch it up to the actual moment of striking. The court and the position of your opponent must be mentally engraved at the same time. How frequently attentive observation will reveal a player lifting his or her eye from the ball a fraction too soon! Always be on your guard against this inclination. It is at first done almost unconsciously, but it soon becomes a habit.

II. KEEP YOUR MIND ON THE GAME

This is a most important rule. As I have remarked before, complete concentration is absolutely necessary to success. If you are worried about anything, business or home affairs, it is bound to affect your game. Think of absolutely nothing but the game you are at the moment playing. Your whole personality must be absorbed. To play the game well demands the use not only of limb and muscle, but heart, eye, and brain. The first rule will help the second, because your attention must be more or less fixed on the game if you are carefully watching the ball the whole time.

III. KEEP PERFECT CONTROL OF THE TEMPER

This rule some players will find much more difficult than others. You hear of a person having the right temperament for games, of being naturally imperturbable. It is a priceless quality, for to my mind it is half the battle if nothing can disturb your equanimity. To be calm and placid at critical moments, never to get excited or flurried, or in any way put out, whatever little worries may turn up--and sometimes these worries seem endless and try one to the uttermost limit--that is one of the keys to fame on court. I think if a good games' temperament is not natural to you, it can to a great extent be cultivated. But it requires much practice and an abundance of will-power and self-control. It is a very important quality to possess, because to lose your temper, or to be upset over any trifle, not only puts you off your game, but helps your opponent to take a new lease of life and encourages her to play up harder than ever. She naturally thinks that if you are so upset at something or other your game is bound to deteriorate, and she will have a much better chance of winning the match.

IV. KEEP YOUR HEART IN THE GAME

By this I mean do not get easily downhearted and discouraged. Fight pluckily to the end, however things are going against you. Courage and pluck are wanted above all things to carry you successfully through your matches. Never say die, however hopeless the score may sound against you. If you are very done up, try not to make it too obvious. Your opponent may be just as played out as you are. Seeing your signals of distress, she will buoy herself up and continue the struggle with renewed hope and vigour.

V. KEEP YOUR METHOD ON THE MOVE

This maxim is rather difficult to explain. What I mean is, you should vary your manner of play and re-adapt it in order to counteract your opponent. Upset her usual game by your tactics. It is always a great mistake to keep up a method of attack or defence if it is proving unavailing. If necessary, keep your own method of play continually on the change. A change of tactics has often meant a change of fortune in the game. Never let your opponent know what you are going to do next; do what she would least expect. Always try to make a stroke. Give her plenty of the strokes you know she doesn't like. I have often felt myself improving an opponent's weak stroke by pegging away at it. It gives her plenty of excellent practice, of course, and when you find she is beginning not to mind it so much, give it a rest. When you go back to it you will probably find it successful again. Use your brain, and always know what you are trying to do. Play with an object of attack and defence. Do not merely return the ball aimlessly; let each stroke have its little work to do to complete the whole victory. This is difficult, I know, but it is so much more fascinating, and is, I am sure, the way the game was meant to be played. There is much science that can be brought into lawn tennis, always something new to learn. And that is the reason why we never tire of playing it.

CHAPTER IV

RACKETS, COURTS, DRESS, AND TRAINING

A good lawn tennis racket is indispensable; indeed, to use a weapon of inferior make is to court failure from the start. You cannot be too particular to have a really well-made racket. Fortunately there are now so many good makers that it is a player's own fault if she is not suitably equipped. It may be a little more expensive to buy a really first-class racket; but the few extra shillings are well worth while if you mean to take up the game seriously, and to get out of it all the enjoyment you can. Personally I always play with a "Slazenger" racket, preferring their make to any other; but there are many other good manufacturers.

The weight of your racket should vary according to your strength of wrist, and should depend on whether you volley or play entirely from the back of the court. I am inclined to think there is a tendency on the part of lady players to use too light a racket. I have often seen them with a 12-1/2-oz. or 13-oz. These are too light, and may be condemned. If you use a racket that is too light, it means that the maker has not been able to string it as tightly as it ought to be strung--the frame would not stand the tension. I do not think a racket should be lighter than 13-1/2 oz., which is the normal weight for ladies. Myself, I prefer and always play with a 14-oz., and hold that unless there is a weakness of the wrist, or some personal reason why the player should knock off the extra half-ounce, this weight is the best for ladies to use. I like my racket slightly weighted in the head, but I think most players prefer one evenly balanced. The latter may be recommended to a beginner.

The handle should be about five inches in circumference--at least, that is what I use and recommend for a natural and easy grip. Of course the circumference must vary a little according to the size of the player's hand or length of her fingers, but I counsel all ladies to fight shy of the handle that is abnormally large. I am quite sure it is a mistake; it

tends to tire and stiffen the hand. Endeavour to standardize your requirements. Find out by careful trial what weight, what size of handle, and what stringing suits your game best; and then you will find, when you use a new racket for the first time, that the tool is familiar and has a friendly influence over your strokes. What more embarrassing experience than to play a match with a racket you cannot recognize?

You should always take a wet-weather racket with you when you go to tournaments; it is, like a pair of steel-pointed shoes, a necessary item in your tennis bag. In England, with such variable weather, it is necessary to play in the rain, or at any rate on a wet ground, and with sodden balls; and the very best gut in the world cannot stand rough usage. It is a good plan, too, to take to tournaments at least two rackets as much alike as possible. If anything goes wrong with one, you will have a good substitute, one that is not strange to you.

Always take great care of your rackets. They are very susceptible both to damp and excessive dry heat, and should always be kept in a press when not in use. A warped frame is fatal. If you do not use a tennis bag, your racket should be protected in a waterproof case. It is a good plan, after use in the wet, to rub the surface of the strings with a little beeswax or varnish. Most makers keep a special preservative in stock.

And now for a few remarks on dress. There has been a great improvement during the last few years in the costumes worn by those who take part in tournaments held all over the country. First-class players know from experience how to dress to be most comfortable and least hampered by their clothing. But the less experienced are wont to appear in a "garden-party" trailing skirt, trimmed hat and dressy blouse--a most unbusiness-like costume for the game. It is essential to remember that you want, above everything else, free use of all your limbs; physical action must not be impeded in any way by your clothing. An overhead ball which may require your arm to be extended as far as it will go, a low volley at the net where you must bend down, a run across the court or up to the net--all these strokes you must be able to perform with freedom and facility.

[Illustration: ON TOUR: THE LATE MISS C. MEYER, MISS PINCKNEY AND MISS E.W. THOMPSON (MRS. LARCOMBE)]

I advise a plain gored skirt--not pleated; I think these most unsuitable on court--about four or five inches from the ground. It should just clear your ankles and have plenty of fullness round the hem. Always be careful that the hem is quite level all round; nothing is more untidy than a skirt that dips down at the back or sides--dropping at the back is a little trick a cotton skirt cultivates when it comes home from the laundry. A plain shirt without "frills or furbelows"--if any trimming at all, tucks are the neatest--a collar, tie, and waistband, go to make an outfit as comfortable and suitable as you could possibly desire.

The material that this plain shirt and skirt is made of does not so much matter, and must be according to the taste of the wearer. Serge, flannel, and cotton are the most popular, and the last predominates. White is undoubtedly the best colour to wear. It washes well and does not fade, and looks very much neater on the court than a coloured material. I prefer white shoes and stockings, for I think it looks nicer to be in one uniform colour. But this is a matter of taste. Some people urge that white shoes make your feet appear much bigger than black or brown. I do not agree. If you are wearing a white skirt, the black or

brown shoe must show up more distinctly against it than a shoe of the same colour.

I have also heard it decided that when girls are compelled to play in the rain or on dreadfully muddy courts, as unfortunately they often are, it is better for them to don a dark skirt of thicker material. This seems to me a great mistake. A white skirt will wash well, and it does not matter how dirty it gets; so long as you do not have it trailing in the mud it cannot come to much harm. It looks as neat as anything can look that is surrounded by rain and mud. A dark stuff skirt, on the other hand, which many players use in wet weather, does not wash, and is absolutely ruined after a soaking. Moreover, it is twice as heavy to drag about the court.

If you do not happen to have steel-pointed shoes with you, and are called upon to play in the wet, it is a good plan to wear a pair of men's thick shooting stockings or socks over your tennis shoes. It is wonderful what a firm grip they give without in any way impeding your movements.

I find, after having tried nearly every sort of shoe for tennis, that the simple white gymnasium shoe suits me best. Most players use a proper tennis shoe or boot with a thick sole. I have tried these, but find they make me much slower in court and are not as comfortable as the "gym" shoe. Some people say the thicker sole is less tiring to the feet, but I find I am much less foot-weary after a match when playing in the thin shoe--there is less weight to carry about. Of course thin soles soon wear through, but then they have the advantage of being very cheap. I pay half a crown a pair for mine, and one can have several pairs in use and can always replace them without any great expense.

I think it is best, if you can, to play without any hat at all. There is not the bother of keeping it on, and it is much cooler. Nor is it easy to find a suitable hat for lawn tennis. A girl's hair is generally a good safeguard against sunstroke. A long warm coat is a very necessary article of wearing apparel, especially for girls who are playing in tournaments. It should be put on immediately after a strenuous match, however hot the day. There is the great danger when overheated of contracting a chill. The coat should be of a thick warm material--blanket is very popular and serviceable--and it should reach to the end of your skirt, if not beyond.

I do not think it is wise to wear bracelets when playing unless they are plain and tight to the wrist. Although you might not think it, ornaments, however small, can and do get in your way. I remember one match that was entirely lost because of the presence of a gold curb bracelet with a small dangling chain attached. Putting up her hand to adjust a hairpin, the owner did not know that the chain had caught on to her fringe-net, and, bringing her hand down quickly, the fringe-net and most of the hairpins were dragged from her hair. The result was that the player, who might easily have left the court and fixed up her hair again firmly, adjusted it as best she could, her hair blowing about in all directions. In between every stroke she had to clutch wildly at stray portions that blew across her face and into her eyes. This diversion naturally upset her game, and I think that was the last time she wore a bracelet in court.

Training for match play is rather a difficult subject for me to write about, for I have never gone in for proper "training." The great secret is to keep perennially fit. Remember that an important match is a great strain, a challenging test of stamina. To come through the ordeal

successfully you must be in a good condition of health. If you are not, you ought not to be playing. Personally I know what it means to play an important match when feeling really ill. Honestly it is not worth it. It is no enjoyment to yourself, and it is no pleasure to your opponent to beat you when she knows you are unfit. Besides, it is very injurious to your own health. On the other hand, if you are in good condition, and leading a healthy outdoor life, a well-contested match cannot harm you; it is most beneficial in every way. Therefore I think the best training for an important match is to be always in "training"; not to have to alter your habits before a match is the secret. To change your diet and mode of living suddenly, as some players do, is more calculated to upset you than to make you fitter for the ordeal. Common sense must of course be used. For instance, you should not eat a heavy meal just before playing. I generally prefer bread-and-cheese, a milk pudding of some sort, and perhaps a little fruit for lunch if I have a match, in the afternoon. I find this diet very satisfying and sustaining, and of course much lighter than meat. Bananas or apples go very well with the cheese. As I like this sort of lunch at any time, I do not have to change my diet materially before a match. After the day's play is over, I make absolutely no difference, eating for dinner in the evening whatever is going. Lunch is the chief meal over which care should be exercised, for important matches generally begin about two o'clock. A heavy meal would make me slow and sleepy. I know of one well-known player who never has any breakfast at all. She may play hard matches all the morning, and when the luncheon interval arrives she has only bread-and-cheese and fruit. Of course this is a very exceptional case, and I should not care to try it myself. I find a good breakfast a necessity before a long and hard day at a tournament. But the no-breakfast regime certainly suits the player in question. She is always "fit," and has great stamina, coming through exhausting matches without showing the slightest sign of distress. I need not add that sleep is one of the chief factors for making you feel buoyant and well; if you have not had your right measure of sleep the night before an important contest, you are greatly handicapped. Remember, too, how necessary it is to sleep in a well-ventilated room with the windows open.

As to Courts, there are so many surfaces now used for the game, such as grass, wood, asphalt, cement, gravel, and sand, that it is possible to play the game all the year round, under cover or out in the open. I think, however, most players will agree with me that a good grass court is the ideal surface for lawn tennis. The sensation of playing a genuinely hard match with evenly balanced players on a good grass court, under ideal weather conditions, has only to be experienced to be appreciated. It is then you realize what great enjoyment this game gives to any one who loves it. Alas! the really good grass court and ideal weather are very hard to get in England. I suppose there was scarcely a day in 1909 that could be described as perfect for lawn tennis; and our good grass courts are few and far between.

The climate we cannot control, but I often wonder why there should be such a dearth of true grass courts at open meetings. Of course maintenance involves a certain amount of expense, but surely many clubs are quite well enough off to command at least one or two really good courts. Can it be ignorance, or is it a want of necessary energy and constant attention? Lawn tennis seems to suffer in this respect more than most games. There are hundreds of splendid golf greens and cricket pitches all over the country, but for some inexplicable reason a good grass lawn tennis court is, as Mr. G.W. Hillyard has remarked, "almost as rare a sight as a dead donkey." Happily we get this rare spectacle at Wimbledon under Mr. Hillyard's able care and management.

[Illustration: GROUP OF PLAYERS AT THE NEWCASTLE TOURNAMENT, 1902]

What a difference a general improvement in surface would mean! I am convinced that if courts were better the standard of play would advance more rapidly. It is marvellous what beneficial effect a good court has on play. I have seen an average player, who had always played on bad courts, with cramped surroundings and poor background, put up a really good game the very first time he played on a first-class court--I refer to a well-known private court at Thorpe Satchville, perhaps the best in the country. That player surprised himself and every one else present. He performed about half-thirty better than his usual game. The moral is that if other players had the opportunity of playing regularly on a true and fast court they must essentially improve. On bad courts you can never be sure what the ball will do; it is a toss-up whether you get a false bound or not. A player once told me that he thought it a good thing to have these bad courts at your house or club to practise upon. When you went to tournaments, he argued, you would not mind what you found there, as the conditions could not be worse, and might be better, and you would always be in the happy frame of mind of not expecting too much and never being disappointed. Your game would not be put off by depressing conditions--you were so used to them! But that is poor logic. After all, we play the game for pleasure, and there can be no enjoyment in playing on wretched courts. Many unfortunate players, if they wish to play the game at all, are forced to play on what Mr. Mahony used to call "cabbage patches"--("Sorry, partner, it hopped on a cabbage," was his favourite expression after missing a ball in a double); but I cannot understand any one voluntarily choosing such a surface.

A wood floor has such an absolutely true bound that it must provide very good practice, and one winter's play on the indoor courts at Queen's Club is to my mind a quicker way of improving your game than two or three seasons on grass courts which are not of the best. These covered wood courts are very scarce, and it is a thousand pities there are so few of them. Would that this winter game were in the reach of everybody! On the other hand, you can overdo the game by playing continuously; and if you have been playing all through the summer with scarcely a break, it is a good plan to rest during the winter months, taking up some other game to keep your eye in and your condition fit.

Since true grass courts are so scarce in this country, I sometimes wish we could dispense with turf altogether, and have at our tournaments the same surface which finds favour abroad, at places like Cannes, Homburg, and Dinard. The bound of the ball on these courts is absolutely uniform, the surface being hard sand. One great advantage they possess--we should welcome it over here--is that when it rains play is quite out of the question. Wading about in the mud and playing in a steady downpour, often our lot in England, is unknown on the Continent. And foreign courts also dry quickly after rain, and often play better for their watering.

CHAPTER V

TOURNAMENT AND CLUB MANAGEMENT

I wish an "Order of Play" could be used more at English tournaments. That is to say, I wish matches could be arranged to take place at a

certain hour, following the plan adopted at Wimbledon and at all the meetings on the Continent. Such an arrangement would greatly add to the comfort and enjoyment of competitors, and would, I imagine, be a great boon to the referee. Spectators, I know, would welcome it. I think a time-table might prove unworkable where handicap events are concerned, but in the case of open events I feel sure it could be introduced with great advantage to all concerned. I have so often sat hour after hour at a London tournament (having only entered for the open events), perhaps playing one match, perhaps not playing at all. If I had been told overnight that I should not be wanted, or exactly at what hour my match would take place, it would have been so much more satisfactory and saved so much wasted time. This waiting about takes away half the pleasure of playing in London meetings. Even if there are good matches going on you do not care to watch them incessantly; there may be a chance of your playing off a tie, and it would tend to put your eye out. On one occasion, having a long way to go to a tournament in which I was only entered for the open mixed doubles, I telephoned to know whether I should be wanted or not. "Well," replied the referee, "if I call you and you are not on the ground, I shall scratch you. In your own interest you had better come over." For my partner's sake, as well as my own, I was bound to go. As I expected, I sat the whole afternoon and evening doing absolutely nothing. When I begged to be allowed to play, as I had come some distance for this one match, the referee examined his programme and said, "Oh, it is quite impossible to-day. They have not played the round in front of you yet!"

[Illustration: AFTER THE LADIES' FINAL AT WIMBLEDON: TEA ON THE LAWNS]

This sort of thing implies gross mismanagement, besides resulting in unnecessary wear and tear for the competitors. If there was an order of play arranged for each day, all the bother would be obviated. I believe that business men who cannot get away in the early afternoon have their matches timed and arranged for them. Why are not all competitors treated alike?

While I am on this subject of "waiting about," let me say that I think ladies do not take nearly enough care of themselves after playing. They ought to wrap up well if they have not time to change before their next match. Men are much more careful. They put on their coats immediately they leave the court, and change their clothes as soon as they can. But you will see girls chatting after a match, and even having tea, without deigning to put on an extra wrap. It is courting disaster. The colds and more dangerous ailments that arise from this little want of care naturally afford people a line of attack when they object to girls engaging in violent exercise.

You cannot be too careful after strenuous play. I am well aware that ladies are catered for very badly at most of the tournaments in regard to changing-room accommodation. Some places we have had to put up with are disgraceful. I think most lady players will agree with me when I say that Wimbledon and Queen's Club are about the only two grounds where you can change with any degree of comfort. This is not right, and I am sure if men had to experience the changing-room accommodation afforded for our use there would not be many of them competing at tournaments. I think the two clubs I have mentioned are the only two where we even get a bathroom! Some tournaments provide a draughty tent for our use. Moreover, there is generally only one dressing-room, and feminine spectators often crowd round the one looking-glass, staring at the players as if they were animals on show! It is sometimes even impossible to sit down to rest after a hard and tiring contest.

I appeal to secretaries of tournaments for some reform. A number of lady players have asked me to use this opportunity to point out some of our most pressing grievances. I hope these remarks, which are none too strong, may bear fruit. Visitors who come over from other countries are always loud in their complaints, and I am not surprised. I believe the Beckenham authorities are doing all they can to impart a little more comfort to the ladies' changing and resting-room, and they have greatly improved their accommodation. It is time other meetings followed their example. At the seaside meetings it does not so much matter. Most of the players stay near the ground and can go to their own rooms and be back in time to play again, if necessary; but in London tournaments, where there is often a long drive or train journey before one reaches home, it is most important that there should be a good changing-room.

[ILLUSTRATION: A TOURNAMENT HOUSE-PARTY AT NEWCASTLE _Front row (left to right _): THE LATE MISS C. MEYRE, MR. G.W. HILLYARD, MRS. HILLYARD, MRS. LAMBERT CHAMBERS, MR. N.E. BROOKES, MR. A.J. ROBERTS]

There is another improvement which I feel sure would be greatly welcomed by competitors, and that is a separate tea-tent for their use. Often a player has only a few minutes to get her tea, and, with the general public engaged in the same amiable pursuit, she is not able to be served and has to go away tealess. If there were a competitors' tea-tent, a player could obtain her tea in comfort when she wanted it.

Always bear in mind that a referee at a tournament has a most "worrying time of it." Players can and should help to make his task lighter. There are many ways in which they can assist to make the tournament as successful as possible. One is by being punctual and ready dressed to play when wanted, and another is by umpiring when they are disengaged and have not an important match just coming on. "Taking the chair" may help them not to dispute an umpire's decision when they are in court themselves. They will realize how difficult umpiring is, and that bad as umpires often are they are doing their best. To dispute a decision or to argue with the umpire never helps matters; it usually makes him nervous. A bad decision must be taken as a fortune of war, and borne in a sportsmanlike manner. But you must never allow the crowd to influence the umpire. It is a hopeless expedient, for many people who watch matches are ignorant of the rules of the game.

Sometimes--I suppose it is Hobson's choice--an umpire is chosen from the "gate." If he knows little or nothing of his duties the result is disastrous. Should there be difficulty in getting an umpire who knows something of his work, I think the match should take care of itself. I have experienced umpires who do not even know how to score!

And now a word or two about _Clubs._ It is very difficult to manage a lawn tennis club successfully; much tact is required. I think it is almost impossible to prevent a club being "cliquey," and I should always advise a player who wishes to improve her game to join one which is more concerned with its tennis than its social side. Some clubs still use the game for a garden-party, where long trailing skirts, sunshades, and basket chairs predominate. Perhaps a game or two is played in the cool of the evening. That sort of club should be avoided if you are a keen and enthusiastic player.

The committee of a club should be a small one, consisting of members who are devoted to the best interests of the game. Their aim should be to keep in touch with all the latest developments, and above all to keep up to date, advancing with the times. A committee sometimes embraces old supporters of the club who have been members for years and years. They

have old-fashioned ideas, are very conservative, and do not like innovations of any sort, even if changes are obviously necessary for the benefit of the game. A committee should see that their club has a good match-card, for inter-club contests are excellent practice for the members, and there is nothing like fostering a spirit of friendly rivalry. Care should be taken to choose players who make a good pair and combine well together. A committee should do all in its power to improve the standard of play, and that can only be accomplished by having well-tended courts and good balls. Many clubs are not equipped with side-posts for the single game. That is a great mistake, because a player will practise without them in her club, and then when she enters for a tournament will have to use them. It is bound to put her off her game. Such details make all the difference between good and bad management of a club.

[Illustration: "MY SISTERS AND MYSELF" _A picture postcard sent to Mrs. Lambert-Chambers by Miss May Sutton from her home in California_.]

It is an excellent plan for members of the committee to drop in at some of the tournaments and see how things are done there. Developments may have occurred of which they know nothing, and they could pick up many a wrinkle by a tour of inspection. Before one secretary of a fairly large tournament went to Wimbledon he had never seen a canvas background.

CHAPTER VI

SOME PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

I have been asked to write what I can remember of my earliest tennis days. This is rather difficult, as it is now thirteen years since I entered for my first tournament in 1896. It is never easy or pleasant to write one's own biography, but I have been assured that readers will be interested to hear something of my career in court.

I have said that 1896 was the first year I entered for a tournament, which is quite true; but I always reckon that my tournament experience did not really start until the year 1898, because in the two previous years I only entered for one tournament (The Gipsy), and only in the handicap at that, and I came out first round. In 1898 I played in three tournaments, and in more events at each one.

My earliest recollections of a racket and tennis ball go back to when I was quite small. My greatest amusement was to play up against a brick wall, with numerous dolls and animals of all kinds as spectators--really as big a gate as we get now at some tournaments! Each toy in turn was chosen as my opponent. Needless to say, I always won these matches. My adversaries took very little interest in the proceedings. This was some years before I even played in a court, and I think it was a very good way of starting the game.

I then played in a court we had at home, which was not very good; gooseberry bushes prevented our running outside the court at all. I next joined a club at Ealing Common, and at the age of eleven won my first prize, the Handicap Singles at our club tournament. Of course I was receiving enormous points, and I remember to this day how bored the best lady players in the club were when they had to play me. My game then, from all accounts, involved a sequence of very high lobs. I am now quite

envious of the accuracy of my lobbing in those days. I had absolutely no pace, but was active and very steady, and desperately serious and keen about the game. At this time also I used to play at college, preferring tennis to cricket, which was the exception. Cricket was the great game. Tennis was pushed into the background, and very little interest was taken in it, even when the matches were played to decide the winner of the racket presented each year to the best player in the school by some kind parent. I won this racket one year, but could never use it, as it was heavily weighted with an enormous silver shield on which was a lengthy inscription. Of course the balance of the racket was absolutely upset.

There was not much chance of improving at school, because nobody took the trouble to have the court or net of the right dimensions. The rules of the game were not even known. Every ball that touched the line was given out. I remember a very heated argument I had with a mistress who was umpiring a match for me, the result of which was that I had lines to write for impertinence!

In 1899 I joined the Ealing Lawn Tennis Club, and won the singles championship cup three years in succession, thus keeping it for my own property. At one time Mrs. Hillyard and Mrs. Sterry had both been members of this same club. Curiously enough, Mrs. Hillyard, Mrs. Sterry, Miss Sutton, and myself have all lived, at different periods of our lives, very close together--Mrs. Hillyard at Greenford, Mrs. Sterry and myself at Ealing, and Miss Sutton at Acton. I think about this time I very much improved my game by constantly playing singles against the best men in the club, and also doubles with three men. This was undoubtedly excellent practice for me.

[Illustration: AUTOGRAPHS FROM MY ALBUM]

In 1898 I won my first prizes in open tournaments, the handicap singles at Chiswick Park and Queen's Club. At Chiswick I received 15.4, and met Miss C. Cooper in the semi-final. I remember quite well my "stage fright" when I went into court against this famous player, even at the tremendous odds of owe 15.3 and give 15.4. I lost the first set easily, and the game was then postponed until the next day owing to failing light. After that first set, a friend said to me, "If you could only forget it's Miss Cooper, I am certain you could win." The next day I tried to follow out this advice, and eventually won the match with the score of 3/6, 6/1, 6/4. At Queen's I met Miss C. Cooper again. She was owing 40 and I was receiving 2/6. I again managed to win, this time in two sets, 6/2, 6/3. At Eastbourne the same year, my third tournament, I was in the second-class handicap owing 15, and survived a few rounds. Miss C.M. Wilson was also in the second class at 4/6, but we did not meet. Miss A.M. Morton, Miss A.N.G. Greene, Miss Garfit, Miss Robb, Mrs. Hillyard, Miss Dyas, Miss Austin, and Miss C. Cooper were in the first class. The classification for that year (1898) was:

Miss C. Cooper	Scratch
Miss Austin	1/6
Miss Dyas	1/6
Mrs. Hillyard	1/6
Miss Martin	1/6
Miss Steedman	2/6
Mrs. Pickering	3/6
Miss Robb	3/6
Miss Garfit	4/6

Mrs. Kirby	4/6
Miss Legh	4/6

The first player of any repute that I beat in Open Singles was Miss E.R. Morgan, whom I defeated in 1899 at Chiswick Park. I was beaten in the next round by Miss B. Tulloch after a severe tussle. I again won the Handicap Singles at Queen's. I was on the scratch mark, the farthest back I had yet been. Miss Austin was back-marker at owe 30.3.

The classification for 1899 was:

Mrs. Hillyard	Scratch
Miss Martin	Scratch
Miss C. Cooper	1/6
Miss Austin	1/6
Mrs. Durlacher	2/6
Mrs. Pickering	3/6
Miss M.E. Robb	4/6
Miss Steedman	5/6

Miss Bromfield	15
Mrs. Kirby	15
Miss Tulloch	15

In 1900 Miss Marion Jones, then American lady champion, came over to England. I played one of the most exhausting matches against her that I have ever experienced. It was at Queen's Club in the Handicap Singles. I was owing 3/6 and Miss Jones receiving 3/6. There was a good deal of discussion at the time about this match, and in spite of the tremendous heat (we do not get such summers now) we were persuaded to go into court. In truth it was a gruelling day. I remember men walked about the streets fanning themselves. We played for hours in a blazing sun, and I eventually won, the score being 8/10, 6/2, 7/5. After the match Miss Jones was taken to the dressing-room in a fainting condition, and when I reached home I had an attack of sunstroke, and had my head packed in ice. The umpire was also seriously ill for some time. It was only the international element in the game and the controversy about the relative points that made us fight it out to the bitter end.

We both thoroughly agreed with the notice of this match which appeared in Lawn Tennis the following week:

"The ladies had their example of untiring effort and splendid patience in the second round of the Handicap Singles, when Miss Marion Jones, the American champion (receive 3/6) met Miss D.K. Douglass (owe 3/6). The tie was played off under exceptionally trying circumstances. A fiercely hot sun was pouring its rays on the court, and there was scarcely a breath of air, yet for 2-1/2 hours, without hats, did these ladies strive for mastery. The first set fell to Miss Jones after 18 games had been played. The second was secured by Miss Douglass with comparative ease, neither the odds nor the previous exertions appearing to affect her. The third set brought out a remarkable display of patience, determination, and cool judgment, for when it stood out at 5 games to 1 in Miss Jones's favour, Miss Douglass won the next 6 games right off, each game being fought out with great resolution. It may be doubted whether either for tennis' sake or 'kudos' such a contest under such conditions is wise. I was not surprised to hear it mentioned that not only had both competitors severely felt the strain, but that even the umpire had suffered."

This year (1900) it is interesting to note that the champion of to-day,

Miss D. Boothby, won the Handicap Singles at Beckenham, receiving 15.4. This year, too, saw my first appearance at Wimbledon. I was not in the lists very long, meeting Miss L. Martin first round. I do not think the game lasted long, and I have only a very faint recollection of it; but I remember thinking Miss Martin's strokes were the finest I had ever seen. At Eastbourne a couple of months later I was lucky enough to meet Miss C. Cooper on a very off day and run her close in the open singles. The match caused quite a sensation. We started rather late, in the tea interval, and nobody took the least interest in what was considered a forgone conclusion. However, when it got abroad that Miss Cooper had actually lost the first set, people came hurrying round the court in great consternation lest Miss Cooper, whom they all knew so well, should go down to a play who was quite unknown; I had been in the second class only the year before. Miss Cooper eventually secured the match, 3/6, 9/7, 9/7. I met Mrs. Sterry on many subsequent occasions before I could get anything like so close to her. I really used to get quite weary of being beaten by her. When the Handicap Singles came out the day after this match I was put to owe 15 in the first class, which pleased me immensely. Miss Robb, Mrs. Greville, and Miss C. Cooper were owe 15.3 and Mrs. Hillyard owe 30. I was in the classification for the first time at the end of this year.

Mrs. Hillyard	Scratch
Miss C. Cooper	1/6

Miss Martin	2/6
Mrs. Greville	2/6

Mrs. Pickering	3/6
Miss Robb	4/6
Miss Bromfield	5/6
Mrs. Evered	5/6
Miss C. Hill	5/6
Miss Longhurst	5/6
Mrs. Winch	5/6
Miss Lane	15
Miss A.M. Morton	15
Miss Tulloch	15
Miss D.K. Douglass	15

In 1901 I won my first Challenge Cup in an open tournament, beating Mrs. Greville in the challenge round at Beckenham. Mrs. Greville's defeat came as a great surprise to every one. It was her third year for the cup, and this may have accounted for her being much below her usual form. I had certainly improved a great deal, even in that one week, for I had had a hard match every day, meeting Miss Tulloch, Miss Morton, and Countess Schulenberg (with whom I had a tremendous three-set match) in the preceding rounds. Mrs. Greville, on the other hand, had been standing out--the custom at Beckenham, one that I personally always find a great disadvantage. I was easily beaten this year at Wimbledon by Mrs. Sterry. Classification for 1901:

Mrs. Sterry	Scratch
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Mrs. Hillyard	1/6
Miss Martin	1/6
Miss D.K. Douglass	2/6
Mrs. Durlacher	3/6
Mrs. Greville	3/6
Mrs. Pickering	3/6
Miss Robb	3/6

Miss Lowther	4/6
Miss A.M. Morton	4/6
Miss Thomson	5/6
Mrs. Winch	5/6
Mrs. Evered	15
Miss Lane	15
Miss Longhurst	15
Miss Tulloch	15

At Wimbledon, in 1902, I had two very strenuous matches, which improved my game immensely. The first, against Mrs. Durlacher, I just won. The second, against the late Miss Robb, I just lost, after one of the closest matches I have ever played. Miss Robb won the championship this year. It was a great fight; and though of course it is hard to judge, I always feel I played in that game as well as I have ever played. The score in Miss Robb's favour was 6/4, 2/5, 9/7. Thus we both won seventeen games. This year I paid my first visit to Newcastle, a tournament which I always look forward to and enjoy as much as any meeting. The management is all one can desire, the people so keen and hospitable. I had a good hard fight with Mrs. Sterry, losing 7/5, 7/5, and winning with her the Ladies' Doubles cups. At Brighton I was again beaten by Mrs. Sterry, although managing this time to get a set. At Eastbourne the following week I won my first match against Mrs. Sterry in Open Singles, the score being 5/7, 6/2, 6/3. I was simply delighted, after so many reverses, to win a match against this player. I had been beaten so often by her, and sometimes felt as though I never should be rewarded by a victory to my credit. The classification of players for 1902 was as follows:

Miss Robb	Scratch
Mrs. Sterry	Scratch

Miss D.K. Douglass	1/6
Miss L. Martin	1/6
Miss Longhurst	1/6

Mrs. Hillyard	2/6
Miss H. Lane	2/6
Miss A.M. Morton	3/6
Miss Greville	3/6
Miss Steedman	3/6
Mrs. Durlacher	3/6
Miss C.M. Wilson	3/6
Miss Lowther	3/6
Miss Bromfield	3/6
Miss Thomson	4/6
Mrs. Pickering	4/6

In 1903 I paid my first visit to the Northern tournament, held at Manchester that year. I won the All England Mixed Doubles Championship with Mr. F.L. Riseley, and was beaten in the challenge round of the Ladies' Singles by Miss L. Martin after a very hard struggle: 4/6, 7/5, 6/4. It seemed a great pity that Miss Martin was not able to play at Wimbledon that year. It was a lean year, and for me a lucky one, for with so many of the best players not competing for the championship (Mrs. Hillyard, Mrs. Sterry, Miss Robb, and Miss Martin were all absentees) I was given a chance of winning the coveted title. I met Miss E.W. Thomson in the final, who had beaten Miss Morton and Miss Wilson in the preceding rounds. I had had a good fight against Miss Lowther before reaching the final. Although I was expected to beat Miss Thomson, and actually did win the match, I scarcely deserved my triumph. Miss Thomson

played by far the better tennis, and it was really very hard luck on her that she did not succeed. At one time she was a set up and four games to one, and I was forced to play on the defensive nearly the whole time. Miss Thomson played beautifully, placing with great accuracy down the lines and across the court. Indeed, her placing was so good that I always seemed to be yards away from her return, when I had thought there was plenty of time to get to the ball. It has always been a marvel to me how I won that match; but I think it was chiefly condition--Miss Thomson was never a very good stayer.

[Illustration: SOME OF THE FRUITS OF VICTORY. _In the centre is the All England Championship, won by Mrs. Lambert Chambers in 1903, 1904, 1906_]

By the way, Miss Thomson and I were introduced to each other at the Gipsy Tournament--my first tournament. I had no partner for the Ladies' Doubles Handicap, and the secretary put us together on the programme. Little did I dream then that we should one day fight out the final of the Championship on the centre court at Wimbledon, or as a pair twice win the All England Doubles Championship. Classification for 1903:

Miss D.K. Douglass	Scratch
Miss L. Martin	Scratch
Miss E.W. Thomson	1/6
Miss Lowther	1/6
Miss C M. Wilson	2/6
Miss Greene	3/6
Miss Morton	3/6
Miss Longhurst	3/6
Miss Bromfield	4/6
Miss H. Lane	4/6
Mrs. Greville	4/6
Miss Kendal	5/6
Mrs. Houselander	5/6
Miss Stawell-Brown	5/6

In 1904 I again won the championship, beating Mrs. Sterry in the challenge round. This year and 1906 were my most successful years. I was fortunate enough in both to go through the season without a reverse in open singles. Classification for 1904 was as follows:

Miss D.K. Douglass	Scratch
Mrs. Sterry	1/6
Mrs. Hillyard	1/6
Miss C.M. Wilson	1/6
Miss Thomson	2/6
Miss Morton	2/6
Miss W. Longhurst	3/6
Miss V. Pinckney	3/6
Miss Greene	3/6
Miss Lane	3/6
Mrs. Greville	4/6
Miss Stawell Brown	4/6
Mrs. Winch	4/6
Miss Garfit	5/6
Miss Kendal	5/6
Miss D. Boothby	5/6
Miss M. Coles	5/6
Miss A. Ransome	5/6

Miss E. Longhurst	15
Miss Squire	15
Miss Eastlake Smith	15
Miss Paterson	15
Miss Tootell	15

In 1905 I paid my first visit to the South of France. I was unlucky enough to sprain my wrist; but in spite of this mishap, the change of conditions, courts, and surroundings were all so novel that I thoroughly enjoyed my visit. The courts at the Beau Site, Cannes, are absolutely perfect, both as regards surface and background; and when one has got used to the different bound of the ball and the rather trying glare of the sun, one could not wish for better conditions for good tennis. Many a famous match has been fought out on these courts; and situated as they are in the beautiful grounds of the Hotel Beau Site, where most of the players stay, the environment is ideal. I was only able to play in the Monte Carlo tournament, after a few days' practice on the Beau Site courts, for it was just at the start of the Nice tournament that the accident to my wrist occurred. It was very disappointing to default after coming so far to take part in these tournaments. Several months elapsed before I could use my wrist again, and I was not able to play in any of the tournaments before I defended my title at Wimbledon.

[Illustration: THE CHALLENGE ROUND AT WIMBLEDON, 1905: MISS SUTTON (AMERICA) _v_. MISS D.K. DOUGLASS]

This year Miss May Sutton, the American lady champion, paid her first visit to England, and carried all before her, winning the championship of England and many other events, all without the loss of a single set--truly a wonderful performance. If any one had pluck it was Miss Sutton. To come to a strange country, practically friendless (Miss Sutton made many friends over here, but she came over alone), and to play and defeat one after another of the best players in this country, was a feat which filled us all with unbounded admiration.

[Illustration: MOTOR CARS WAITING OUTSIDE THE ALL-ENGLAND GROUND AT WIMBLEDON DURING THE LADIES CHALLENGE ROUND, 1906]

I have played Miss Sutton five times, losing three and winning two of the matches. Of the three matches I lost, two were at Wimbledon, in the challenge rounds of 1905 and 1907, and the third at Beckenham in the challenge round of 1907. My two victories were both gained in 1906, in the challenge rounds at Liverpool and Wimbledon. Certainly the most exciting match I have ever played, and the one that gave me the most pleasure to win, was my match at Wimbledon against Miss Sutton in 1906. The match itself was not exactly enjoyable--the strain was too great; so much seemed to depend upon me, both for my own reputation, and that of my country. When Mr. Palmer, secretary of the All England Club, escorted us into the centre court and left us, with a word of encouragement in my ear, I felt helpless and destitute. You cannot realize what it means to face four thousand people and know that so much depends on your own exertions and coolness. Miss Sutton, I think, must have felt this loneliness in a still greater degree, for she was away from her country, her own people and friends. I have never had such a craving to speak to some one as I had in this match--just one friendly word to tell me whether I was playing the right sort of game or not. I confess my feelings were very strung up.

I remember in the second set, when Miss Sutton led at three games to love, I said to the umpire as we crossed over, "I wonder, have I gone off, or is she playing much better?" But, of course, his face was like a

mask; he didn't vouchsafe a word. Not that I expected him to speak, but I felt I simply must say something to some one. He told me afterwards he wanted to say, "I don't know; but stick to it whatever happens!" Concentration on the game in this match was terribly difficult, as the crowd was so huge and seemed so excited; it was almost impossible to forget the people and lose yourself in the game. I can quite well remember a dispute going on in the open stand for quite a long time during the first set. I think a lady would not put down her sunshade; there was quite a commotion about it. And then people near would shout advice to me, or scream out, "It's over! Run!" This happened two or three times; and although I knew they were trying to help me, which in itself was cheering and encouraging, it was very distracting and disconcerting. But after some time I lost it all, and became engrossed in the game. I think in 1907 Miss Sutton was much steadier and played a better all-round game, but I do not think she had quite the same terrific fore-hand drive as in the first two years she was over here. Her strokes were safer perhaps, but not so formidable and powerful.

[Illustration: WIMBLEDON, 1906: MISS DOUGLASS (NOW MRS. LAMBERT CHAMBERS) WRESTING THE CHAMPIONSHIP FROM MISS SUTTON, THE HOLDER.]

One of the great charms of playing in various tournaments is the means it affords of visiting all the different towns and countries. It may involve considerable travelling and expense, but the touring abroad is both an education and a delight. Monte Carlo, Nice, Cannes, Homburg, Baden-Baden and Dinard, all bring the pleasantest reminiscences. Many of us have travelled about together, which is the jolliest way of doing the tournaments. I remember one most enjoyable trip, when Miss Lowther motored the Hillyards and myself through Germany--an ideal way of "doing" tournaments! The place at which a meeting is held, its surroundings, also the facilities it offers for amusement in the evening after your day's tennis is over, add to the enjoyment and make a material difference. It will always be one of my chief delights, in thinking of my tennis career, to remember the hospitality and many courtesies I have everywhere received, and the many friends I have made, who I trust will remain friends long after my tennis is a thing of the past.

It is extraordinary how naive the general public sometimes are. People will watch first-class tennis, sitting for hours together perhaps in great discomfort, and yet display a lamentable want of knowledge about the game. In fact, to many its object is a mystery! This seems hardly possible, but it is quite true. I once overheard a lady who was watching a match in the centre court at Wimbledon remark, "There, that's the very first time that man has hit the net with the ball, and he has had hundreds of tries!" I thought the man mentioned must be playing pretty good tennis! One really wonders why these onlookers spend so much time round a court, or where the pleasure can come in for them.

At a garden party not so very long ago where tennis was on the programme, the visitors, arriving on the court, found one solitary ball, tied round with a long piece of string, the other end being attached to the net. To a natural inquiry the hostess replied, "Oh, they lost so many balls in the shrubbery last year, I really couldn't afford it, and thought of this plan. It has been most successful. This ball has lasted for ages!" Another lady at Eastbourne, whom I had noticed because she never left her seat, bringing her lunch with her so as not to lose a moment's play, asked me at the end of the week, while watching a double, whether the partners were side by side or opposite, as in bridge!

One of the most rooted mistakes in the public mind is that the

first-class player is a professional. Many times people have said to me, "You must be making quite a nice bit of pocket-money from your tennis." "Making?" I say. "Spending, you mean!"--which always makes them stare in amazement. This fallacy annoys me very much, and is, I find, very common. Let me take the opportunity here of pointing out that there are no professional lawn tennis players excepting a few coaches at Queen's Club, London, and at some of the clubs abroad; these men, of course, cannot compete in open tournaments.

CHAPTER VII

MY MOST MEMORABLE MATCH (BY LEADING PLAYERS)

The following contributions, in response to a request for some account of their most noteworthy encounter on court, have been kindly furnished for this volume by leading lady players.

MRS. G.W. HILLYARD

(_Champion_, 1886, 1889, 1894, 1897, 1899, 1900)

One of the most exciting matches I remember was the final for the Championship at Wimbledon, played on the centre court on July 6, 1889, between Miss Rice and me. I started very nervously, as Miss Rice had given me rather a fright in the Irish Championship the month before, when she appeared in Dublin as a "dark horse." On that occasion I had only scraped through 7/5, 7/5. I began the match at Wimbledon by serving a double fault, and lost several games by doing the same thing in the first set. My length was awful, and Miss Rice was playing well from the start. She had a very fine fore-hand drive, but, like myself, a bad back-hand. She led at 3 games to 1, and took the first set at 6/4. In the second set I regained my confidence a little, winning three love games out of the first four; but Miss Rice won the next four games in succession, the score being called 5/3 and 40/15 against me. At this point, in my despair, I said to Mr. Chipp, who was umpiring the match, "What _can_ I do?" His grim answer was, "Play better, I should think." I then fully realized that I had not been playing my best game, and that to win I must hit harder. This I did, with the result that my length improved and I snatched this game from the fire--although Miss Rice was three times within a stroke of the match--and I eventually won the set at 8/6.

The last set was well fought out, for, although I began well and led at 3/1, Miss Rice won the next three games in succession and reached 40/30 in the following game. This was her last effort, as I ran out at 6/4, winning the Championship for the second time. I think it was one of the closest matches I ever played, and I see by _Pastime_ that I only won 18 games to her 16, and 110 strokes to her 100, and I felt I was most lucky to win at all.

[Signature: Blanche Hillyard]

MRS. STERRY

(_Champion_, 1895, 1896, 1898, 1901, 1908)

Of course it goes without saying that my most memorable and exciting matches will all be those in which I have excelled or been the most distinguished person at the immediate moment! Let me just say that I am not going to give details of any match, as that is beyond my power and, I assume, of little interest to the reader.

Winning my first championship of the Ealing Lawn Tennis Club at the age of 14 was a very important moment in my life. How well I remember, bedecked by my proud mother in my best clothes, running off to the Club on the Saturday afternoon to play in the final without a vestige of nerve (would that I had none now!), and winning--that was the first really important match of my life.

Another great game will always be imprinted on my memory, and that was in 1894, the first year that the late Mr. H.S. Mahony and I won the All England Mixed Championship. We beat Mrs. Hillyard and Mr. W. Baddeley in the final. The excitement of the onlookers was intense, and never shall I forget the overpowering sensation I felt as we walked, after our win, past the Aigburth Cricket Ground Stand, packed to its limit. How the people clapped and cheered us! It was tremendous.

[Illustration: MRS. HILLYARD]

[Illustration: MRS. STERRY]

[Illustration: MISS V.M. PINCKNEY]

[Illustration: MISS D. BOOTHBY]

Another memory--the year 1895. Certainly I must be honest and say it wasn't exactly a good championship win, for Miss Dodd, Mrs. Hillyard, and Miss Martin were all standing out. Any of these could have beaten me. Nevertheless it was a delightful feeling to win the blue ribbon of England, especially as my opponent in the final, Miss Jackson, had led 5-love in both sets! By some good fortune I was able to win seven games off the reel in each case.

One more match--in 1907. I had heard a great deal about Miss May Sutton (who made her first appearance in England in 1905) beating everybody without the loss of a set. I had also heard she was a giant of strength, and that the harder one hit the more she liked it. The first time I met her was at Liverpool in 1907--I did not play the previous season. I was determined to introduce unfamiliar tactics, giving her short balls in order to entice her up to the net. The result was that many of her terrific drives went out, and I think this was primarily the reason why I was the first lady in England to take a set from her. I recollect her telling me, after the match was over, that my game was very different to any other she had ever played, and that she was not anxious to meet me again--remarks I took as a great compliment.

There are scores of games just the reverse of pleasant which are imprinted on my memory, but I am not going to revive them at my own expense, hoping they have been forgotten and forgiven to my account, by any unfortunate partners I have ever let down.

[Signature: Chattie R. Sterry.]

MRS. DURLACHER

_(Doubles Champion, 1899; _Mixed Doubles Champion of Ireland, 1898,

1901, 1902)_

A match that remains in my memory perhaps more than any other was the final of the Irish Championship Singles at Dublin in 1902, when Miss Martin and I met and had a long struggle for supremacy. At one time it really seemed as if I must win this match, as I led at 5 games to 1 and was within a stroke of the match. But I could not make that one point. Once when I had the advantage and only wanted an ace to win the match, one of my returns ran along the top of the net, and then, unfortunately for me, dropped my side. Miss Martin stuck to her guns persistently and eventually pulled the match out of the fire, winning the next six games straight off and thus becoming Irish Champion for 1902. It was very disappointing to lose after being so near victory. The score in Miss Martin's favour was 6/8, 6/4, 7/5.

[Signature: Ruth Durlacher]

MISS V.M. PINCKNEY

(Champion of London, 1907, 1908)

In recalling the most remarkable lawn tennis match that I have ever played, I do not think I can do better than give the Open Mixed Double semi-final that took place on the final day of the Kent Championship Meeting at Beckenham on June 1, 1908. Mr. Roper Barrett and I met Mr. Prebble and Miss Boothby, and the story of the match is one of startling lapses and recoveries. In the first set Mr. Prebble and Miss Boothby profited by the combination born of frequent association in Mixed Doubles. Miss Boothby was very good from the back of the court and Mr. Prebble seemed to make mincemeat of my returns. It was their set by 6/4. In the second set Mr. Roper Barrett was quite wonderful, and killed every ball that he could possibly reach. The result was that the set was easily ours by 6/1. Our opponents, however, had something in reserve, and, I playing badly, they ran away to 5/0 in the third set. All seemed over. My partner and I made a great effort and got one game, and we congratulated ourselves on saving a love set. Then the excitement began, and we added game after game to our side. I am sure the crowd beamed intensely interested, and quite worked themselves up as we drew to 5 all. Mr. Barrett at this time was simply invincible, and I managed somehow to keep the balls out of Mr. Prebble's reach and play everything to Miss Boothby, upon whom devolved the responsibility. My partner volleyed at all kinds of remarkable angles, and, as The Sportsman in describing the match, remarked, "sat on the net and was in complete command." We took seven games consecutively and won the set at 7/5, and with it a memorable match.

[Signature: Violet M. Pinckney]

MISS D. BOOTHBY

(Champion, 1909)

Without doubt my most exciting match was the final last year at Wimbledon. In every player's heart there must be a faint hope that one day she may win the All England Championship. At least it has always been in mine.

From Christmas and all through the spring my family and friends had

dinned into my ears that now was my chance, and if I did not win this year I never would. Only when I was leading one set up and 2-love in the second did all these things flash across my mind. I suddenly got nervous. Oh, the misery of it! I served double fault after double fault (I learnt afterwards that I gave away sixteen points in this way), and my friends told me that it was a relief to them when my service went over the net at all, however slowly. My opponent, Miss Morton, caught up, won the set 6/4, and led me 4/2 in the final set. All this time I had been fighting hard to regain confidence. At last my nerve came back--I was determined to win, and, only after a very great effort, just succeeded in capturing the Championship with the narrow margin of 8/6 in the final set.

It was not until I had finished and had come off the court that I realized how very excited I had been, and how relieved I was when it was all over. Only those who have had experience can know how exhausting it is to concentrate one's whole thoughts and efforts, without cessation, for an hour or more. Fortunately you do not feel the strain until afterwards, when it does not matter, and then you can look back with very great pleasure and satisfaction on a hard-won fight.

[Signature: Dora P. Boothby.]

MRS. LARCOMBE

(_Doubles Champion_, 1903, 1904; _Mixed Doubles Champion_, 1904, 1905)

My "most memorable match" was in the All England Mixed Doubles Championship at Liverpool in 1904. Mr. S.H. Smith and I were playing Miss Wilson and Mr. A.W. Gore, and we had a great struggle for victory. I do not remember the exact score, but at one time our opponents were within an ace of the match. Miss Wilson served to me in the left court--a good service out on the side line. I played a straight back-hand shot down the line, passing Mr. Gore's forehand--rather a desperate stroke, as if it failed to pass him it meant certain death from one of his straight-arm volleys. Perhaps he was not guarding his line so well as usual, under the impression that I would not have the courage to try to pass him at such a critical moment--anyway, we won the point; and eventually the match and the championship, beating the holders, Miss D.K. Douglass and Mr. F.L. Riseley, in a most exciting match--almost as "memorable" to me, because I hit Mr. Riseley three times with smashes. I remember that side-line stroke and those three "hits" with great joy!

[Signature: Ethel W. Larcombe.]

MRS. LAMPLOUGH

(_Covered Court Champion_, 1907)

I find it a matter of some difficulty to decide which is the most memorable of the more important matches in which I have played. Four or five as I recall them seem, each in turn, to have left a lasting impression on my memory for one reason or another. Yet none of them appear more worthy of note than the others. The match which I think I shall remember long after many others are forgotten took place last year (1909) in the comparatively small and little-known tournament at Romsey. For the first time for some years I had missed winter practice on the covered courts at Queen's Club and in the South of France, and when I

started again late in June, on moderate club courts and against none too keen opponents, I found myself looking forward with apprehension to my first effort in public. In the semi-final of the Ladies' Open Singles at Romsey I met Miss Sugden, whose well-merited reputation as a lawn tennis player is more or less a local one, chiefly for the reason that she has not competed in any of the first-class tournaments. It was a close afternoon, and the court being heavy we both felt the heat very much as the game progressed. I never really looked like winning the first set; my opponent led 4/1, and though I managed to equalize she easily ran out at 6/4. It was in the second set that the real struggle took place. In spite of all my efforts, Miss Sugden won game after game, until the game stood at 5/1 against me and 30 all; but by good luck I snatched that game and the two following. At 5/4 and my service we had deuce quite ten or twelve times, but in the end I managed to win and took the set at 7/5. After that I felt better, and with renewed confidence and steadier nerves I won the final set at, I think, 6/3.

There was nothing particularly remarkable in the match, but somehow I felt that confidence in myself for the future depended in a great measure on my success in this event, and, in spite of having a very sporting opponent, I never felt more relieved in my life than when the last stroke was played.

[Signature: Gladys S. Lamplough.]

MISS A.M. MORTON

(_Runner up for the Championship_, 1909)

[Illustration: Mrs. Larcombe]

[Illustration: Mrs. Lamplough]

[Illustration: Miss A.M. Morton]

[Illustration: Miss A.N.G. Greene]

I feel I owe an apology to Mrs. Luard for writing about a match in which I happened to beat her, as she is, and was then, a player altogether a class above me. No doubt it became "memorable," as I certainly never expected to win at the outset, and still less so when I was undergoing one of those ghastly "creep-ups" in the final set. It happened in 1904 at Wimbledon, on the centre court, in the semi-final of the Championship. Miss Wilson (as she then was) started well and won the first set 6/3, the second went to me at 6/4, and the third set seemed as if it would go to either of us in turn. Everything went well for me till I actually got to 5/1 and it was 15/40 on her service; then I lost two points quite easily--those winning shots are so hard to make! And at deuce we had a tremendous rally, which ended in a good side-line shot by my opponent that I couldn't get to and didn't even try. The linesman called "out," which I contradicted, and general confusion took place, the spectators joining in the fray--and it all arose through the ball being given "out" in the middle of the long rally when a train was passing, and we neither of us heard it. I never knew the explanation till after the match and was quite convinced I had "sneaked" the point, and somehow I went all to pieces, and everything went as badly as it had gone well before, till Miss Wilson crept up to 6/5. Then I made an expiring effort just in time. I dare say she was tired, for I won that game fairly easily. We had a great fight for the thirteenth, which I fortunately won, and finished the match with a love game. And no one was

more surprised than I.

[Signature: A.M. Morton.]

MISS A.N.G. GREENE

(East of England Champion, 1903, 1905)

It is difficult to decide on the most memorable match one has ever played. Each in turn seems at the time to be the most important. One which I found very exciting at the time was against Mrs. Luard in the final for the Cup at Felixstowe. I won the first set 6/3, and led 5/1 and 40/30 in the next, when Mrs. Luard sent me a short easy ball--a certain "kill" at any other time. I sent it out. Four times after that I was within a point of the match, but could not quite pull it off, and Mrs. Luard, playing up brilliantly, not only won that set, but led 5/2 in the third. Then I made a final effort, and though it was always touch-and-go I managed to make it 6/5. In the next game Mrs. Luard was 40-love, but after a great struggle I got it, and so won the match, though it was anybody's game to the end.

[Signature: A.N.G. Greene.]

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