

pressure of Wagner's egocentric vitality she dealt the 'pure fool,' von Bülow, a wound that would not heal. And within the framework of her local policies at Bayreuth she sometimes treated even her own father unfairly. Yet she took upon herself the blame for her actions, suffered under it, and defied the strict rules of society in the interests of a magnificent cause. As in the case of Wagner himself, the shadows in Cosima's character, the contradictions between ideas and actions, fade and merge into the reality of a destiny whose roots spread out extensively and of work which represented and at the same time influenced an epoch. If her autonomous conception of life and her far-reaching artistic and cultural achievements are to be considered significant, it is not too much to say that Cosima Wagner was the most important woman of the nineteenth century.

Lawn tennis may do more than naval conferences to promote international goodwill. Here is a timely study of Anglo-German rivalry on the courts.

DAVIS CUP

By J. B. PRIESTLEY

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IT IS ALWAYS HOT when I visit Queen's Club. Baron's Court does not figure in my mind as a part of London, but as some sizzling little tropical town, with red roofs quivering in the heat. It was hot last Friday afternoon, when I went to Queen's to see the second day's play of the Davis Cup match between Great Britain and Germany. When there was no play going forward, women put up sunshades; the players used their towels very freely; many of us felt that our shoes were too tight; it was that kind of afternoon; we might have been sitting on Bar-

bados. When you consider that it was still April and that a day or two before we had all been shivering in our thickest overcoats, you will admit that it was very odd. It seems as if I have only to move in the direction of Queen's to send the temperature soaring. It would have seemed cooler, perhaps, if the play had been on a grass court. There are few things in this world that look hotter than a new hard court in full sunshine. It looks angrily hot. Staring down at it, you can imagine the most terrible of the deserts. How absurd it is that the hell-for-leather game that is played on these fierce brick-red surfaces, and played by athletic men who are soon drenched with sweat and gasping for breath, should still be called 'lawn tennis'! It is a name with the mildest associations. It suggests a companion pastime to croquet, a refined, late-Victorian thing, bright with petticoats and delicately clouded with curates.

Some people still think of lawn tennis as a namby-pamby affair. When I told a friend of mine, some time ago, that I was playing a good deal of lawn tennis, he assured me solemnly that it was useless to him because it was 'a soft ball game.' This amused me, for my own lawn tennis, poor though it is, is far fiercer, more dangerous to life and property, than his cricket. I fancy that if he encountered a few of Tilden's services, Borotra's volleys, or Gregory's smashes, he would, after pausing for breath, arrive rapidly at the conclusion that the game was not quite so contemptible to his fierce masculinity. Contemporary lawn tennis is not a dangerous game (though the great Borotra himself was once laid out, unconscious, by a terrific drive that hit him on the forehead), but it is very fast and very hard. It demands more and more from its champions. If you imagine that all modern French literature is written in a sad, defeatist spirit, read Lacoste on tennis. The French have put all their grand military energy into the game. Racquet in hand, they have made some of their magnificent raids.

THE national character peeps out of the game as it is played by these various representative champions. As I have already suggested, the lawn tennis of the great French players is characteristically French. Watch the Orientals patiently driving from the base line hour after hour, and you can see the East at play and can understand its multitudinous pagodas and temples and its bewildering carving. Consider the Americans, their coolness, their tremendous efficiency. The match between Great Britain and Germany last week was more characteristic of these two peoples than their efforts during the War. The Germans, though magnificent sportsmen, were grave and anxious fellows, who rarely permitted themselves even a smile. They returned the ball over the net like tennis machines. They were, you felt, officials of the racquet,

and had successfully passed many examinations on the game and could easily have given very long and very intelligent lectures on it. The swarthy and amiable Prenn did not look very German, but there was the patient genius of Germany in his extraordinarily accurate play. Nothing could have been more Teutonic than the broad, stiff back of Dessart, who toiled away in the doubles like an irreproachable civil servant. The English, as usual, were more casual and cheerful, sometimes breaking into sheer high spirits. They were very much the amateurs. Sometimes they did idiotic things, hitting wildly, even breaking down. There was nothing official about them. They could not have passed an examination on the game or lecture on it. They were not always fully aware of what they were doing. But, on the other hand, there was in their game real personality and an occasional flash of genius.

On Friday, I watched Gregory and Collins, that great doubles team, completely overwhelm the German pair. These two fine players of ours are perfectly matched. Collins is not a brilliant player (though he is a tremendously hard hitter), but he is cool, patient, watchful, impossible to ruffle or depress. When he waits, his tall, angular figure all tense, to kill a lob, you know for a certainty that in another ten seconds that lob will be lying dead on the court. Gregory is far more erratic, but at the same time he is also a far more brilliant and splendid performer. He is one of the great personalities of the game. It does your heart good to watch this burly and bouncing young man on the court. He is by profession a doctor, and I seriously advise him to send his more depressed patients to see him in a doubles match. He is Elizabethan England breaking out into lawn tennis. Chapman would have roared his approval of him. No machinelike accuracy, no clever little tactics, no examinations and lectures for him. When he puts on his flannels, he leaves science behind him, and arrives joyously at art. Time after time, he can, with many a comical look of despair, drive the ball into the net, hurling points away. Time after time, he can serve faults. But then he will suddenly do something huge and Homeric, whip up a colossal drive, volley from some crazy angle, and smash so that the ball bounces clean over the stand. To play against him must be like trying to argue with Dr. Johnson. The two Germans, the other afternoon, were overawed by him, but I suspect that it was not merely those tremendous smashes of his that did the trick, but that it was also his bounding zest and his high spirits. His huge grin bewildered them. They were dominated not only by his skill, but also by his fun.

IT WAS impossible not to like the members of the German team. They may have been grave and anxious, but they were real sportsmen, quick

in their courtesy. This amateur lawn tennis seems to be one of the last refuges of sportsmanship in this world. In spite of all the fuss, the 'ballyhoo,' the articles and photographs and autographs and all the nonsense, these young lawn-tennis players, though they may be occasionally rather too conceited (in which, of course, they are not at all like authors, a singularly modest and self-depreciating class of persons), seem to me to behave toward one another in an altogether admirable knightly fashion. They all want to win, but not at any cost. They have no desire to cheat their way to a championship. They do not regard their opponents as men who have to be done down one way or another, by fair means or foul. The smile and handshake at the end of a game still have a friendly significance, and are not the formal antics of professional boxers. Moreover, although little incidents will sometimes happen, they are not forever appealing to the umpire, nor does the watching crowd go baying at him.

That is one reason why lawn tennis is so pleasant to watch, and it seems to me nowadays one of the best of all games for a spectator. (Though I prefer the men's game to the women's, which is apt to be very monotonous and, curiously enough, far less graceful and imaginative.) The one drawback to a person who tries to play, like myself, is that the sight of these delightful services and forehand drives, with top spin and undercut backhand drives and the rest, makes your own game all the more futile and pitiful. I remember the first time I saw Tilden play, I came home with lovely strokes sailing through my head and tingling in my fingers, rushed to change and get out on to the court, and then promptly made the most miserable exhibition of myself. I must revenge myself for that by reading his novel, which, if one may judge by the reviews, seems to be rather like my lawn tennis.

LETTERS AND THE ARTS

MASEFIELD

IF ALL RAMSAY MACDONALD'S actions met with as much approval as his recent recommendation of John Masefield to succeed Robert Bridges as poet laureate, the troubles of the Labor Party would soon be at an end. No living poet who writes the English language represents more adequately the genius of Great Britain. Mr. Masefield's sympathy for the oppressed classes, the result of many years of vagabondage, must have recommended him strongly to a Socialist Prime Minister, while the deep patriotism that fills many of his poems makes him entirely acceptable to those who admire a nationalistic as well as a national bard. Indeed, the appointment even pleased Bernard Shaw, who remarked, 'The King could not have appointed a better man.' Other leading literary lights share this opinion. Mr. Galsworthy said, 'It is the greatest delight to me to hear that he has been appointed.' Mr. Chesterton was more specific, 'He is an extremely fine poet and I am very glad to hear it. I hope he will go on writing poems about the drunkenness of the pirates.' Mr. John Drinkwater also approves: 'I don't think a better appointment could have been made. I think he is just the man for the post.'

Mr. Masefield himself is extremely modest, but he did consent to give an interview expressing his satisfaction:—

'I am very happy. It is delightful to receive any honor, particularly a splendid honor of this sort. My only regret is that Dr. Bridges had not lived for another ten or fifteen years. I knew him very well, and I was fond of him and his work. Dr. Bridges was so splendid a man that we thought he might well have lived to be a centenarian.'

The new laureate has rigid views about the kind of verse that his position de-

mands of him and asserted that he had no intention of grinding out poems to suit any occasion. 'I do not think that any man can really write unless he is deeply stirred,' he stated emphatically. 'Wordsworth once said that poetry is the overflow of powerful feelings. I feel that is a profound definition of poetry.'

Mr. Masefield refused to express an opinion on his contemporaries, but he has optimistic views about the future of English poetry and definite opinions as to what his own activities will be:—

'In Mr. Robert Nichols, Mr. Siegfried Sassoon, and Mr. Blunden we have young poets of a very high standard. In some respects they are even better than the late Rupert Brooke. Rupert Brooke wrote the poetry of youth. The poetry of the more seasoned man is more interesting. In him we had splendid promise, and in those young men of to-day who are slightly older we have achievement instead of promise. Many poets have died young who might have been world famous in their own lives if they had lived normal lives.

'I do quite a lot of lecturing,' he added, when asked if he was to come more into public life, 'and I find my own work gives me quite sufficient to do. There is one thing more: I do not intend to enter politics.'

MAYERLING AGAIN

THE QUESTION of whether Archduke Rudolph of Austria and his mistress, Marie Vetsera, killed themselves in a suicide pact or whether they were the victims of a political assassination has become the subject of a lively dispute between two Paris journalists. Some months ago we printed an article from the *Mercur de France* deriding a so-called historical novel entitled *Taïa* by a certain M. t'Serstevens, who built up a sensational story around the theory that Francis