

PATTERN OF ENGLAND

BOOK TWO

by

C. E. ECKERSLEY, M.A.

AND

L. C. B. SEAMAN, M.A.

Illustrated with Maps and Photographs



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By C. E. Eckersley, M.A.

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PREFACE

The chief aim of *Pattern of England* is to give a general picture of England to-day, of rural England, urban England, industrial England, England at work, England playing cricket and football. It surveys briefly the literature, music and drama of England to-day. It shows how the Englishman is governed, how he spends his leisure, how he is insured, what newspapers he reads, how he chooses his politicians. It tries to give an outline of English Law, English Education and English religious life. It doesn't neglect (who could?) the English weather.

The England depicted is essentially the England of to-day. The story of the country's growth through the centuries is told briefly, as a necessary introduction to an understanding of present-day problems; but we have made every effort to ensure that our account of the institutions of contemporary England is as up-to-date as possible. We have also sought to strike a balance between a description of the forms and an examination of the spirit of English institutions; in short, to present as comprehensive a picture of the life of modern England as is possible within the limits of the printed word.

But the book has additional aims, viz., to enlarge the student's general English vocabulary, to exercise him in grammatical construction and to increase his power of expressing himself in English with ease and clearness. Each section of the book, therefore, is followed by copious exercises based on the subject matter of that section. Special attention has been paid to the idiomatic usage of such words as *keep*, *put*, *take*, *lie*,¹ etc.

The vocabulary of this work has been very carefully controlled but not stringently limited. The starting-point is the vocabulary of the four books of *Essential English*. If the student knows that, he should encounter

¹ See pages 21, 52, 98, 174, etc.

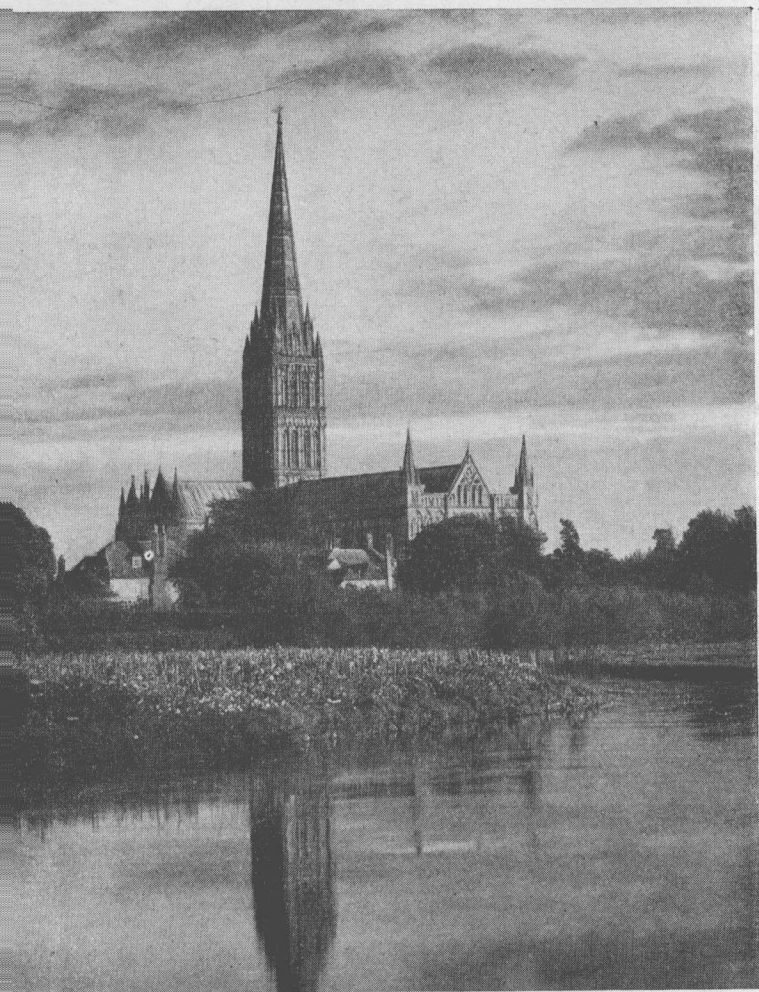
little difficulty with the vocabulary of *Pattern of England* for though in the course of the two books he will be introduced to about 1,000 new words, every one of these words is defined within the *Essential English* vocabulary in a glossary at the end of the volumes.

C. E. E.

L. C. B. S.

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Salisbury Cathedral

A. F. Kersting

PART ONE

ENGLISH LEISURE

In a section in Book One we watched the Englishman at play. In a later section of this volume we shall see that he devotes more time than is generally realised to the enjoyment of the arts. But there is much else with which the Englishman may occupy his hours of leisure. There are times when he is too tired to play games and when the effort of going to a theatre or a concert is too much for him; besides, the weather can sometimes be bad enough to prevent him from playing games, and there are still thousands of English people who live a long way from a theatre and whose chances of going to concerts are few. What, then, is there to do instead?

For the ordinary Englishman, the answer is probably that he will 'go and have a pint at the local'; that is, he will go to his local public house and have a glass of beer. There are of course voices in the land to tell him that strong drink is bad for him; but for the most part those voices fall on deaf ears, and night after night, in village and town, tens of thousands of Englishmen walk into the bars of their 'locals' and call for 'a pint of mild and bitter' (that is, a mixture of mild and bitter beer) or perhaps, if they are very well known, just for 'a pint of the usual'.

English pubs are of all sorts and sizes. Some are small ancient inns, as much a centre of the life of a remote village as the church which as often as not is next door or just across the road. Some are grim, ugly buildings where only a very strong liking for the contents of one's glass can reconcile one to the ugliness of the surroundings in which one drinks. Others are more spacious, with armchairs and glass-topped tables and an air of being very much a product

of the twentieth century. Others again are no mere pubs, but hotels, and these again vary greatly in character. Some are quiet, solid and rather dull. Others are bright and gay. The food and accommodation provided by some will be found a little unimaginative; but in town and country alike there are many of these larger pubs where a visitor may feel thoroughly at home.

What very many pubs have in common is their lack of comfort and gaiety. They are not often merry places. Even the large ones are often overcrowded, and in most of them the majority of the customers have to drink standing up. Indeed, regular frequenters of pubs stand around the bar when they drink almost as a matter of habit. That shrewd observer of England, Caryl Chessman, in his *Letters from England*, says 'In place of cafés, where one can sit, drink and talk, the English have invented bars where one can stand, drink and hold one's peace.' The only regular 'sitters' in pubs are the old men, who, having no jobs to worry about, are free to arrive at opening time and to stay—drinking but little and making one or two glasses last a very long while—until closing time. It is therefore in the pubs of England that one sees coming most nearly true the saying that the English take their pleasures sadly. In a crowded room, thick with tobacco smoke, and in an atmosphere smelling of stale beer, they nightly stand, grave-faced and unexcited, not as if enjoying themselves, but as if solemnly doing their duty as rightminded citizens. On Saturday nights there may, it is true, be something in the nature of a leaden-footed Bacchanalia: a middle-aged gentleman of uncertain musical gifts may seat himself at the piano and play a selection of popular songs: but they are usually songs of the fairly distant past, and the bar as a whole will join in singing only the more heavily sentimental of them—with a particular preference for those which can be sung very slowly with a kind of sleepy melancholy.

There are two important peculiarities about pubs. One is that they have strictly limited hours of opening, which vary in length in different areas, each local government

*Having a pint at 'The Local'**Crown Copyright Reserved*

authority¹ having power to fix its own 'licensing hours' as they are called. Roughly one may expect to find a pub open between 11.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. and again from about 5.30 p.m. until 10.30 p.m. but it is best not to try to be more accurate than to say that it is almost impossible to get strong drink in England in the early morning, in the middle of the afternoon, or at midnight or later.

The second peculiarity is that most pubs are divided into at least two separated bars: the public bar and the saloon bar. The English take their snobbishness with them even when they go out for a drink and whereas the poorest customers go into the public bar, everyone with any claim to respectability goes into the saloon bar. The differences between the two are that the saloon bar is less uncomfortable, it has chairs and linoleum, whereas the public bar will have wooden benches and perhaps a floor sprinkled

¹ See Book I.

with sawdust, and the beer costs a penny or two more in the saloon bar than in the public bar.

Every pub has its name. Some celebrate royalty in their names and are called The Crown, The King's Arms or The Prince of Wales. Others commemorate famous soldiers and sailors, such as The Lord Nelson and the Duke of Wellington. Some recall the heads that were painted on the sign that hung outside the inn in the days when

*Fox Photos*

A Country 'Pub'

few people could read—The King's Head, The Bell, and The Nag's¹ Head. Others are as rural as their surroundings still are, or were once upon a time, and both in village and town one may drink one's glass at The Plough, The Fox and Goose, The Hen and Chickens, the Coach and Horses, or at The Waggoners. Some names are imaginative—The World's End; some are apparently meaningless—The Case is Altered; and one, in London, which gives its

¹ Nag=old-fashioned slang for *horse*.

name to a whole district, is called The Elephant and Castle.

The smaller pub, whether in town or country, reflects in many ways much of the English character. Once one gets used to the lack of comfort and gaiety one slowly comes to appreciate the friendliness of both the pubs and the people in them. A pub (unlike an English railway train) is a place where one may talk to a perfect stranger without being thought rather odd for doing so. The conversation will be humdrum: pubs are not places for sparkling witticisms. It will begin—inevitably—with the weather. It will go on from that to the state of the country and the policy of the government; both, one will be given to understand, are not what they should be. If the conversation survives long enough to exhaust these two topics, there is no knowing where it may wander. Englishmen have even been known to express their philosophy of life in public and saloon bars. But even if the talk confines itself to less lofty topics it will nearly always preserve its peculiar English quality: it will be slow, unexciting, and matter of fact, but somehow also solid, comfortable and reassuring.

Just as the Englishman's day is divided into hours of work and hours of rest and recreation, so every working week has its week-end of leisure. The English week-end appears to have first attracted notice in the last years of the nineteenth century, and what is now a democratic institution began, like so many democratic institutions, among the wealthy. Those who came to England to do business with its financiers, or to negotiate with its diplomats and high officials, discovered that from Friday night until late on Monday morning they were not to be found. They had all escaped from their offices to their own or other people's country houses, there to forget everything but good food, good company and the varied pleasures of the open air. Even in these more strenuous days it is unusual to find the House of Commons very full on a Friday, or for the Cabinet to meet on a Saturday or a Sunday; and the aim of the trade unions is to ensure that eventually all the workers too have a week-end that, like

the traditional country house week-end, lasts from Friday night until Monday morning. As it is, almost all factories and offices are shut on Saturday afternoons and Sundays: and although shops (other than those in the centre of London and other large cities) keep open on Saturday afternoons, they close on one weekday afternoon instead. The chosen day, known as Early Closing Day, varies from town to town, but is usually either Wednesday or Thursday.

In addition to the week ends, there are the Bank Holidays. Ever since 1871 English banks have closed (apart from Sundays and Christmas Day) on only four days in the year: on Easter Monday, on the Monday in Whitsun week, on the first Monday in August, and on the day after Christmas Day (known as Boxing Day). All these days are general ('public') holidays for all but certain workers in essential services such as transport. The English year thus has four clearly defined holidays—the Easter and Whitsun week-ends, the August Bank Holiday week-end, and Christmas.

Christmas is the great family festival. Christmas Eve is not part of the holiday, but is given over to preparations. The excitement really begins on the morning of Christmas Day, when the children awake to find that during the night that mysterious being, 'Father Christmas', has 'come down the chimney' and left them all sorts of presents. The climax is Christmas Dinner, when the roast meat of the ordinary Sunday dinner gives place to roast chicken or roast turkey, followed by Christmas pudding and mince pies—and nuts. It is one of the many small mysteries of English life that nuts are to be found on the table on Christmas Day but hardly at all at any other time of the year. Rooms are decorated with coloured paper chains, and (if father is ingenious) with little coloured electric lights: while still more presents for the children are found hanging on as large a Christmas Tree as can be procured. The huge Christmas dinner lasts so long that it is no easy matter to enjoy to the full the delights of the Christmas cake that makes its noble appearance, splendid

beneath its sugar icing exterior, at teatime. After tea, the children are with difficulty convinced that even Christmas Day has to end with bedtime; but once they are safely upstairs, their elders settle round the fire for talk, or for card games, and of course for still more eating. Wine, rarely seen in the average English household, now makes a general appearance, and in an atmosphere of comfortable good humour the evening prolongs itself well into the small hours of Boxing Day.

On Boxing Day one rises rather later than usual, and in theory if not always in practice, one distributes Christmas presents (or 'boxes') to one's servants (if any) and to the postman, the milkman, and the boy who brings the daily paper.

It is interesting to notice that the English reveal an oddly international spirit in their Christmas traditions. They borrow their Christmas tree from the Germans; Father Christmas or 'Santa Claus' is the Saint Nicholas of Russia; and a favourite English Christmas Carol (dating only from the nineteenth century) proclaims, in terms that apparently bear no relation to his real character, the extreme kindliness at Christmas time of a certain Good King Wenceslas of Bohemia.

Easter and Whitsun are springtime holidays, but they depend for their success on the uncertainties of the weather. With luck they may take place when the weather is at its loveliest: but both may be 'washed out' by the rain. Ideally, they are both occasions for the year's first trips to the countryside.

The fixing of a Bank Holiday on the first Monday in August is proving rather a mixed blessing in modern England, for it has had the effect of making August the chief summer holiday month of the year. This caused overcrowding of railways and seaside resorts even before the Second World War, but nowadays the situation is far worse. Since 1938 it has become increasingly the rule for employers to give their workpeople 'Holidays with Pay', so that the number of people who take an annual holiday of

a week or more is much larger than it used to be when many workers could only have such a holiday if they were prepared to lose pay while they were away. In 1937 for instance it was estimated that just under 15,000,000 people went away from home for a week or longer in the summer; but in 1947 the figure was said to be nearer 24,000,000. And the majority of these millions all try to take their holiday during the short period of six weeks between the middle of July and the end of August, with the heaviest concentration in the Bank Holiday week. The task of finding room for all these holiday makers at the places to which they want to go has suddenly become a social problem. Having queued for most things all the year round, the Englishman and his wife now find that they have to queue throughout their summer holiday as well, whether it is for a chance to get on the seaside train (they hardly dare hope to get a *seat* on it) or merely in order to buy an ice cream.

Not unexpectedly the great increase in the holiday habit of late years has led to attempts to introduce a greater variety into the Englishman's ideas of how his holiday should be spent. The standard form of holiday has always been to go to the seaside and stay at a boarding house or in lodgings: and for families with young children this is still the favourite kind of holiday because of the delight that the young mind takes in playing on the sands and in splashing in and out of the sea. Unfortunately the service provided by seaside landladies and boarding houses is not always very good: and this situation is made worse by very high prices and by the fact that many boarding houses refuse to take in children at all.

Dissatisfaction with these conditions is largely responsible for the development of holiday camps in Great Britain. Several of these have been established at the seaside by a certain Mr. William Butlin, who aims at providing within the limits of his camps everything—literally everything—necessary for the amusement of his patrons. Families are accommodated in little one- or two-room bungalows (called 'chalets' because the word