

## WINGS, MAIKS, AND CURDIES.

**L**ET those under fifty years of age read this at their peril, for it deals with things beyond their comprehension, things which were, and are no more; nor will tears or sighs bring them back again.

The title lets you into the secret. What are "wings?" What are "maiks?" What are "curdies?" And yet but yesterday they denoted coins of the realm, coins which, bestowed on small boys and girls, brought to their owners a joy such as is unknown to the present sophisticated generation. For with a "wing" (a penny) an unbelievable quantity of "cheuch jeans" could be procured; with a "maik" (a halfpenny) the proud owner could get two long "shoogly" strips of "slim-jim"—a monarch of confection long since dethroned by worthless trash; and with a "curdie" (a farthing) it was possible to buy one cake of plain "medalion" chocolate, the nibbling of which brought delight such as King's banquet never knew.

The joys of yesteryear—gone! Who, for instance, knows anything about "moshie?" And yet, not so very long ago it was the game of games.

The pitch was a patch of earth, laid out with three holes in a straight line, some two or three yards equidistant. The qualification to play was the possession of a "jaurrie" to play with, and a "glessie" to lose, if the player happened to be defeated. Up the course and back again, and then up for "smowt"—that was the game. If you struck an opponent's "jaurrie" away, you got another shot; and there was a system of

"spanging," the rules of which at the moment I cannot recall. Believe me, it was a game without which the world is a poorer place to-day.

How we used to envy the boy who possessed a good "nicker." A nicker! There you are again—I told you not to read this. A nicker was the acknowledged aristocrat of "jaurries," firm, finely moulded, well tempered, capable of nicking out an opponent's bool, and sending it far from the mosh. A "bool," I may say, was an alternative name for "jaurrie," but was only used by boys whose fathers went out about nine in the morning. The modern name is marble—a namby-pamby makeshift. When "jaurries" and "bools" became marbles the ancient game of moshie gave up the ghost in disgust, and quite right too!

Then here is a thing I could never understand. Who decided the rotation of games? In spring one's thoughts turned to "tops" and "peeries," but if it was a "top" year it was a "top" year, and if it was a "peerie" year it was a "peerie" year. We had no say in the matter. There it was, and there we were with our tops *or* our peeries, never with our tops *and* our peeries.

A top, I may explain, was distinguished from a peerie by being flogged into spinning life, the instrument used being a "scurge"; a peerie was spun by means of a string, which we with poetic acumen called "twine." That form of recreation was the strict preserve of boys; girls played "peeever." If a boy chanced to play "peeever" he became at once a social outcast.

Again there was "cat and bat." In this, both girls and boys could join without fear of losing caste. As a result it was never taken up with much enthusiasm, and if boys happened to be engaged in it, the sight of

a "dooker" was enough. For a dooker held immense and romantic possibilities.

A dooker! I told you; this article holds nothing for anyone born after the mid-eighties. A dooker, if you will persist, was a piece of moist clay attached to a long string. Nothing much in that! You wait. Hast heard of a "stank"? No! Caught again. Well, a stank to-day is known as a grating, a polite subterfuge. To us boys, of course, the important point was that a stank was a place where booty might be found. So off we trotted, the owner of the dooker the acknowledged king by right of possession. Down stank after stank we peered until a discovery was made. It might be a wing, or a maik, sometimes a knife, on rare occasions a tanner. When times were hard we would expend untold energy and ingenuity in bringing up even a hairpin. Down dropped the dooker, up came the booty; not so easy as all that, for small objects were hard to get, but we were nothing of not persevering.

Closely allied to the dooker was the sooker—a flexible piece of leather well moistened, and, like the dooker, attached to a string. It worked by suction as its name implies, and it could be made to lift quite heavy objects. The owner of a sooker, however, had no particular following; it was a source of amusement only to the one operating it at the moment. But still I must have heard this many times: "Gie's a shot o' yer sooker an' I'll gie ye a sook o' my orange."

Speaking of oranges the old cry: "Sweet Seville oranges—three a penny," has gone the way of all cries. Not however, before it left on record the best example of economy in words I know—one fruitseller following another along Argyle Street, the first woman crying:

"Sweet Seville oranges—three a penny!" and the other crying: "Same's Mary!" (Pronounce Mary *Merry*, please.)

Yes, the old games and the old ways, and the old words are dying out. That being so, it is pleasant to be able to record that a jawbox is still a jawbox, at least in circles where tradition is respected; and it is not so long since I heard an old lady, scorning pharmaceutical impositions, speak of "masking" the tea. I am convinced that tea which is "masked" must always, in the nature of things, taste better than tea which is "infused." "That's a guid maskin' of tea." There's a statement for you. Put it the other way: "That's a good infusion of tea." The word simply breaks down, suggesting nothing but a chemist's dose. No, give me "masking" every time. To "mask" tea is an art; to talk of infusing tea is only an attempt to appear scientific. If we will, in words, be ashamed of our poor relations we must be prepared to pay the price in terminological inexactitudes.

And the same old lady talked of making some "kitchen" for the tea. What is "kitchen," think you? Simply something cooked. A tea of that kind is known to-day as a high tea." Give me "kitchen," thank you, and give me tea that is masked. I am willing to forego moshie, to resist the lure of sookers and dookers, to hold cheuch jeans and slim-jim as dim but succulent memories; I simply insist, however, on having my tea masked, and kitchen to it into the bargain. Let Pollok-shields and Mosspark infuse to their heart's content; let them call me a common person; I throw my "ham and haddie" in their face, so to speak, and stand firm, likewise unrepentant.