



Boulter's Lock, River Thames, on Ascot Sunday.

Topical Press.

Holidays In Other Lands

Christmas will soon be here, and from force of habit, certainly not because the weather suggests it, we are beginning to make plans for our yearly holiday. We are all secretly anxious to capture "that holiday feeling" which comes over us, when we leave behind our usual selves and habits, and embark on a fortnight, three weeks or a month of a new life. "Let's go mad," we say quietly to ourselves, and so we do, in our various ways.

This is how the many weird and wonderful ways of holiday making have come into being. In New Zealand we like to run wild, to get back to nature. "Ain't Nature grand?" we say to each other as we stand barelegged, straight-haired, powderless, freckled, in our most disreputable garments on the deck of a yacht, or lie in bathing costumes on sun-baked beaches, or wear a collection of old clothes mountaineering. We are not fastidious about our holiday wardrobes, or whether the hotels or boarding houses have the very latest in comfort and diversion.

Other lands, other holidays! A favourite holiday with London girls is "on the river!" "If only" plays a big part in the preparations for such a holiday, and refers mainly to the weather. No more miserable a holiday can be imagined than a wet fortnight spent in a small punt on the River Thames. One might just as well spend it in the London



tube—because crouching under the low green awning of the boat is as stuffy with far less room. Supposing the sun should shine for a whole fortnight! (It never does, but we're talking about holidays, which are always full of "supposings.") Well, supposing it does, then we are in for one of the most delightful holidays imaginable.

Our river tour shall start from Maidenhead. From the moment we step into our punt with its gay chintz cushions, and settle ourselves luxuriously, we get "that holiday feeling." A punt lends itself to picturesque attitudes, and the experienced river girl makes the most of these opportunities. She lies lazily against the cushions, carries coquetishly her gay coloured silk parasol, and trails her pale fingers in the water! Her companion looks very workmanlike in immaculate white flannels, sleeves turned up, and uses the punt pole with skill and grace that only comes with practice. Punting looks so easy, but just try it and see. Often have I seen men who laughed it to scorn, in the most undignified positions, looking like

monkeys on a stick. The pole sticks in the mud, the punter sticks to his pole, and the boat goes sailing on!

"Our holiday has begun," adventure beckons, and if romance should blossom forth, well; could any setting be more perfect! The river is not too wide at Maidenhead, and flows along peacefully. I don't know which side is more beautiful—the right with its steep embankment covered with the beautiful beeches of Clevedon Woods, which hang far over the river, or the softly undulating hills, patchworked with squares of ripening corn, waving green crops, and the well wooded parklands of large estates on the left. Upstream we go, paddling lazily with no settled plan or timetables. A shady backwater where the branches of the trees interlace, invites us to rest and we tie up to a tree, have an *alfresco* meal, snooze quietly and listen to the music of a banjolete or decaophone.

There is no need to be dull on the river. Every few miles a village or a town crops up, where riverside

hotels offer good orchestras, jazzing and attractive meals. There's "Skindles" at Maidenhead with its beautiful grounds and balcony overlooking the river, where well-known society and theatrical people foregather. There's "The Bell," a quaint little Inn with old panelling and pewter, at Hurley, a village between Cookham and Henley, where well-known politicians have been known to stay for idyllic, if unofficial, week-ends. The Phyllis Court Club at Henley Society's riverside rendezvous, lives up to River traditions and offers members facilities for moonlight excursions and champagne suppers for the trifling entrance fee of 20 guineas and annual subscription of 10 guineas. Further up the stream is Oxford, where the night ashore can be spent at the fine old "Mitre Hotel."

To get charming scenery, let's make for Cockham, Marlowe, Hurley and Sonning, where the sweet peace of the river casts its spell over everything. During the sunny day we will lie dreaming under the trees, while the blue dragon flies dart about the flowers on the river's brink, and the swans sail majestically towards our boat. Then as evening falls let us drift silently down stream, watching the moon rise and make its silver path on the calm water. Romance claims the river for its own on warm summer moonlight nights and who would have it otherwise?

(Continued on Page 37)