ANTHONY ASHLEY COOPER  
FIRST EARL OF SHAFTESBURY  

[A Character of Henry Hastings]

Mr. Hastings, by his quality,\(^1\) being the son, brother, and uncle to the Earls of Huntingdon, and his way of living, had the first place amongst us. He was peradventure an original in our age, or rather the copy of our nobility in ancient days in hunting and not warlike times; he was low,\(^2\) very strong and very active, of a reddish flaxen hair, his clothes always green cloth and never all worth when new five pounds. His house was perfectly of the old fashion, in the midst of a large park well stocked with deer, and near the house rabbits to serve his kitchen, many fish ponds, and great store of wood and timber; a bowling green in it, long but narrow, full of high ridges, it being never leveled since it was plowed; they used round sand bowls,\(^3\) and it had a banqueting house like a stand, a large one built in a tree. He kept all manner of sport-hounds that ran buck, fox, hare, otter, and badger, and hawks long and short winged; he had all sorts of nets for fishing: he had a walk\(^4\) in the New Forest and the manor of Christ Church. This last supplied him with red deer, sea and river fish; and indeed all his neighbors’ grounds and royalties\(^5\) were free to him, who bestowed all his time in such sports, but what he borrowed to caress his neighbors’ wives and daughters, there being not a woman in all his walks of the degree of a yeoman’s wife or under, and under the age of forty, but it was extremely her fault if he were not intimately acquainted with her. This made him very popular, always speaking kindly to the husband, brother, or father, who was to boot very welcome to his house whenever he came. There he found beef pudding and small beer in great plenty, a house not so neatly kept as to shame him or his dirty shoes, the great hall strewed with marrowbones, full of hawks’ perches, hounds, spaniels, and terriers, the upper sides of the hall hung with the fox skins of this and the last year’s skinning, here and there a polecat\(^6\) intermixed, guns and keepers’ and huntsmen’s poles in abundance. The parlor was a large long room, as properly furnished; on a great hearth paved with brick lay some terriers and the choicest hounds and spaniels; seldom but two of the great chairs had litters of cats in them, which were not to be disturbed, he having always three or four attending him at dinner, and a little white round stick of fourteen inches long lying by his trencher, that he might defend such meat as he had no mind to part with to them. The windows, which were very large, served for places to lay his arrows, crossbows, stonebows,\(^7\) and other such like accouterments; the corners of the room full of the best chose hunting and hawking poles; an oyster table at the lower end, which was of constant use twice a day all the year round, for he never failed to eat oysters before dinner and supper through all seasons: the neighboring town of Poole supplied him

---

1. Rank, social status.  
2. Short of stature.  
4. A tract of forest, walked over by a groundskeeper; a preserve. Mr. Hastings lived in Dorsetshire, in the West Country, near the English Channel.  
5. Domains, tracts of land.  
6. Weasel, ferret.  
7. Weapons shaped like crossbows, but firing stones.
with them. The upper part of this room had two small tables and a desk, on the one side of which was a church Bible, on the other the Book of Martyrs; on the tables were hawks’ hoods, bells, and such like, two or three old green hats with their crowns thrust in so as to hold ten or a dozen eggs, which were of a pheasant kind of poultry he took much care of and fed himself; tables, dice, cards, and boxes were not wanting. In the hole of the desk were store of tobacco pipes that had been used. On one side of this end of the room was the door of a closet, wherein stood the strong beer and the wine, which never came thence but in single glasses, that being the rule of the house exactly observed, for he never exceeded in drink or permitted it. On the other side was a door into an old chapel not used for devotion; the pulpit, as the safest place, was never wanting of a cold chine of beef, pasty of venison, gammon of bacon, or great apple pie, with thick crust extremely baked. His table cost him not much, though it was very good to eat at, his sports supplying all but beef and mutton, except Friday, when he had the best sea fish as well as other fish he could get, and was the day that his neighbors of best quality most visited him. He never wanted a London pudding, and always sung it in with “my part lies therein-a.” He drank a glass of wine or two at meals, very often syrup of gilliflower in his sack, and had always a tun glass without feet stood by him holding a pint of small beer, which he often stirred with a great sprig of rosemary. He was well natured, but soon angry, calling his servants bastard and cuckoldy knaves, in one of which he often spoke truth to his own knowledge, and sometimes in both, though of the same man. He lived to a hundred, never lost his eyesight, but always write and read without spectacles, and got to horse without help. Until past fourscore he rode to the death of a stag as well as any.

1859

8. Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, the standard Protestant martyrology, found in many homes of the period.
9. Side; “pasty”: pie; “gammon”: side or flitch.
1. Lacked.
2. I.e., syrup made of local herbs to flavor his wine.