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By W. W. K. K. K.

HUNTING AND SPORTING.

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PRACTICAL LESSONS

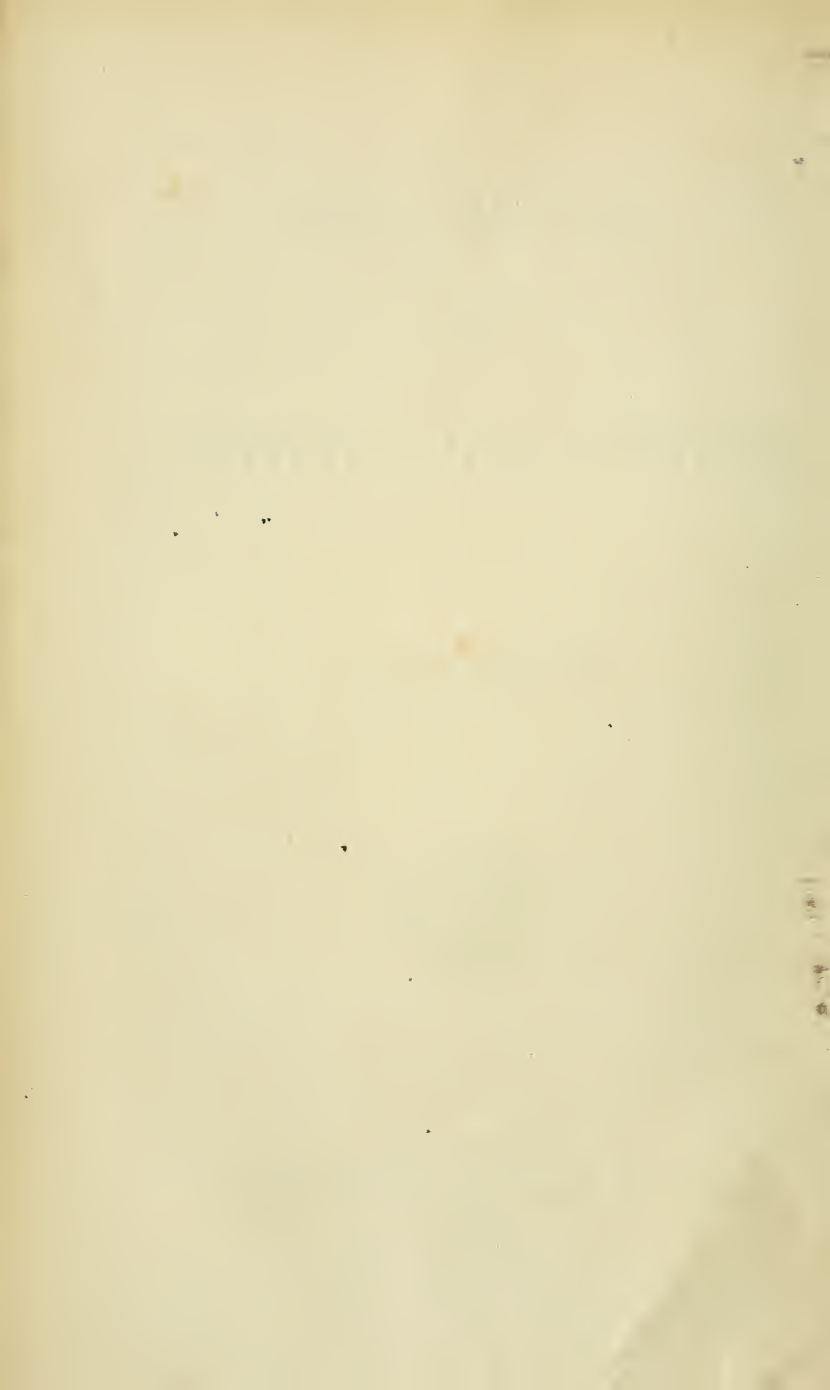
ON

HUNTING AND SPORTING.

BY SCRUTATOR.



LONDON:
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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
Preparatory Lessons for young Fox-hunters and young Fox-hounds—Schooling and Cub-hunting—Romantic method with the ancient Romans of entering young Hounds to Deer—Blood will tell, as well as vice, through succeeding generations—Necessity of early training—Something about the killing of Cubs—Not to eat too many at one time—Cubs are not Foxes	1

CHAPTER II.

<i>Meus novitatus est avida</i> —Is there anything new about Fox-hunting?—The era of Fox-hunting in Norfolk something of a novelty—The Prince of Wales patronizing the Sport—Stuffed Foxes not seasonable for Sport—Abundance of this animal in the old Warwickshire Hunt, notwithstanding a day's Shooting in the old style—The first Woodcock—The Sport of the Million—Some reasons why Foxes do not always run straight—Fox-hunting peculiarly a British Sport—Its recommendations in a social point of view	15
---	----

CHAPTER III.

Masters of Fox-hounds—Their Privileges, Duties, and Responsibilities—The Hunting-field not to be turned into a Bear-garden—Oi Polloi—Admitted on sufferance—Certain characters must be excluded—A case in point— “When poor, weak women go astray, Their stars are more in fault than they.” Man triumphs over woman's fall—Punishment in all such cases is inflicted on the weaker sex—The Author's difficulties in forming a Fox-hunting country	26
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

	PAGE
Masters of Fox-hounds divided into three classes, Independent, Partly Dependent, Wholly Dependent—Customs and Rules of Fox-hunting—Different Breeds of Foxes—The Author of “The Noble Science”—Mr. Delmé Radcliffe’s Opinion of the responsibilities of Masters—Tom Fool pays for all	43

CHAPTER V.

BELVOIR CASTLE KENNELS.

Description of Kennels—The Hounds—Extraordinary Production of Whelps in a Week—Members of the Belvoir Hunt a hundred years ago—The Castle, its Origin and Antiquity—Magnificent View from it—Princely Hospitality of the late Duke of Rutland—Family likeness in the Pack—Their late Huntsman, Goodall	62
--	----

CHAPTER VI.

Nothing derogatory in a Nobleman or Gentleman hunting his own Pack of Hounds—Necessary Qualifications of a Huntsman—A Stentorian Voice not requisite— <i>Vox et præterea nihil</i> —A Good Eye and a Quick Ear—The First Check—Large Fields of Horsemen antagonistic to Sport—Changing Scents—Beckford’s Opinion—Great Fault in handling Hounds too soon—The best runs when Hounds beat the Horses—Fox-hunting on a cheap scale—Killing heavy Vixens—Number of Fox-hunting Establishments—Osbaldeston and Assheton Smith—Jealousies between Huntsmen and Whippers-in	72
--	----

CHAPTER VII.

Poultry Exhibitions—Increased value of the Farm-yard Stock—Farmers of the Old and Modern School—The Grey Mare often the Better Horse—Farmers’ Wives and Foxes don’t agree—How to scare the latter from Poultry-pens—Reynard deterred from breakfasting on Ducklings—Fox-hunting friendly to Farmers—Melton and the Provinces—The renowned “Star of the West,” Jack Russell—Rabbits more injurious than Foxes—Game-preserving on a large scale—The Old Squire and the Cotton Lord	91
--	----

CHAPTER VIII.

	PAGE
Cheap Articles generally the reverse, except Cheap Literature —The Adventures of Bill the Butcher-boy and the Spavined Mare—Pheasants and Foxes—The Great Battue Man and the Little Captain—A “Jack Careless” in every Fox- hunting Field—The use of such men to a Master—Plough- ing with the Heifer—The Fair Sex favourable to the Sport —A Subscription Master resembling Pussy without Claws in a certain Dark Region—The advantage of giving Balls to other animals besides Horses	106

CHAPTER IX.

The first Hunting Countries—Winter quarters—Melton too fast a place for any save fast men—Leamington, Chelten- ham, Bath, Northampton, and Warwickshire—Division of large Fox-hunting Countries productive of more Sport— North and South—Mr. Baker’s cross between Fox-hound and Blood-hound—Rugby a Central Situation within easy distances of many good Fixtures—The Dunchurch Country —Knighton Cross—Large fields with the Pytchley—A scene with the Royal Buck-hounds in the New Forest	123
---	-----

CHAPTER X.

The Old Warwickshire Fox-hounds—A few more words about Distemper, and the management of young Hounds—Former Masters—Lord Middleton and Mr. Corbet—The late Sir Tatton Sykes’ Pack—Visit to his Kennel—The old Northern Hound—A Scion of that Stock engrafted into the South— My Performances—A long Day’s hunting at the beginning of the Season, with an old Fox— <i>Finis coronat opus</i> — Drawbacks on Subscription Packs from the too frequent change of Masters and Huntsmen	136
---	-----

CHAPTER XI.

The Pytchley Country second only to Leicestershire—Fre- quent change of Masters—The Earl of Chesterfield’s Premier- ship difficult to be surpassed—An Interregnum—Hambleton Tom Smith succeeds to Office—George Payne—Lords Alford and Hopetoun—The Hon. F. Villiers and Lord Spencer—The Huntsman Charles Payne—Remarks on the Pack—Trojan, and a Tale about his Welsh namesake	146
--	-----

CHAPTER XII.

	PAGE
The Fox-hunter's Opening Day—Ancient and modern Nimrods—Mr. Meynell and his Establishment—The Golden Age of Fox-hunting—Talented Masters of that period—Contrast between the past and present Generation—Pace everything—Second Horse in the Field—Letters from Will Long—What Whippers-in had to do in his early Days—A fast Huntsman—Fox and Firefly—Increase of Railroads detrimental to sport—Aëronautic Age—Fox-chase in the Air—“ Hunting Follyes,” in verse, by a Dissenter	154

CHAPTER XIII.

Hare-hunting a good Preparation for the more noble Science—Harriers of the present Fashion too fast for their Game—Beckford and the traveller—‘Æsop’s’ Opinion on Hare-hunting—Severe Chase after a wild Fallow-deer—Encounter with a Red Stag—Jolly Green, his blue Mottles and the Bagman—A Sawbones rightly served for attempted Vivisection—Jolly Green takes to Calf-hunting—His Finale—The Author does not indorse all Beckford’s Dicta	177
---	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

A Visit to the Hon. G. Fitzwilliam’s Kennels—Style of Hounds—Old Tom Sebright—Courtesy of Hon. C. Fitzwilliam—Milton Abbey—A short Notice of it—Picture of Mary Queen of Scots, presented by herself to Sir William Fitzwilliam on the morning of her Execution—Stained Glass from Fotheringay Castle—Parks and Pleasure-grounds surrounding the Abbey—The Milton Country—Fine Woodlands and stout Foxes—A severe one for Hounds and Horses	189
---	-----

CHAPTER XV.

THE BADMINTON PACK.

Its Origin and Antiquity—Enduring quality of the Hounds—Huntsmen from the time of Will Crane—Whippers-in don’t always succeed on promotion—Philip Payne and Couplings—A new Order of things—The present Duke handling the Horn—Wide extent of the Badminton Country—Scrutator as M. F. H.	200
---	-----

CHAPTER XVI.

	PAGE
The Equine Race—Difference in the Treatment of the English and Arab Horses—Attachment to their Masters when kindly used—The general neglect of this most noble Animal a reflection upon Christian Countries—Colt-breaking—Rough Usage productive of rough Tempers—Training for the Hunting-field—The old System.—Voice <i>versus</i> Whip—How to keep a Hunter—Lord Stamford's late Stud—Whitehall's management—Natural and Artificial State—Feeding to be regulated by work—General ignorance of Grooms—Walking Exercise preparatory to Hunting—Ventilation of Stables—How a thirsty Horse was cured of his craving for Water—Stable Statistics.	213

CHAPTER XVII.

What to do with Hunters in the Summer—Different Men have different Opinions—The too common practice of Firing and Blistering condemned as cruel and unnecessary—Rest and Cooling Diet after the Hunting Season—Lucerne—All Green Food given fresh from the Scythe—The effect of early Spring Grass—Ditto of Dew and Moisture upon the Feet—Big Ben of Oxford without a Hoof—Objections to turning Hunters out in the Summer Months discussed—The Author's System—Clipping and Singeing—The late Henry Hunt's method of Treating his Horses.	231
---	-----

CHAPTER XVIII.

A few Words on the Game Laws—Rearing and selling Game—No Law to preserve Foxes—Scene between Old John and Old Reynard—Wanton Destruction of any Animals reprobated—The Acclimatization Society—Pet Partridges—The Bustard—Cross between the Bison and our Domestic Cattle—The Hon. Grantley Berkeley's Opinion—Taymouth Castle	247
--	-----

CHAPTER XIX.

Huntsmen and Game-keepers—In what respect they assimilate—Big Bill and Big Tom—Attacks upon Keepers by the Poaching Fraternity—Pheasants <i>versus</i> Cochin China Fowls—Quality and Quantity—Directions for raising young	b
---	---

	PAGE
Pheasants and Poultry—Enemies to Game—How to trap them—Servants' Perquisites—James Jehu and his Master's Ideas about Chicken—Foxes fascinating Pheasants—Breaking Pointers and Setters—Instinct prevails when Philosophy fails—Truffle-hunters and Turnspits—So-ho and To-ho, a puzzle to young Pointers—Down Charge . . .	258

CHAPTER XX.

Hares and Rabbits without the Pale of the Protective Law during the Breeding Season—The injuries inflicted by the latter on the Farmers' Crops—Rabbits as Food when in Season—A learned D.D.'s poetical Grace over Coney Meat—"As mad as a March Hare"—Its interpretation—Coursing the most ancient of old Field-sports—Nimrod, the mighty Hunter—The Gazehound—The Scotch and Welsh Deerhounds—Something in favour of Cambrian Hospitality, although the Goddess of Chastity not overmuch regarded by this People—Welsh Rabbits—Ferretting and its Concomitants—Scene with a Ferret, Retriever, and Terrier—Rivers in North Wales—Salmon-poaching—Supposed Origin of the Welsh Language	276
--	-----

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BRISTOL RIOTS; OR, AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF
AN M. F. H.

Wielding the Sword instead of the Horn—Troublesome Times—Incendiary Fires—Smashing Machinery—Formation of a Yeomanry Corps—Scrutator heading the Mob—Bristol Riots—Bonfire on a large scale—Jem, the Head Whip, turned Soldier—Sacking the Bishop's Palace—Missing Magistrates— <i>In vino veritas</i> —Parley with leader of the Mob—Charge of the 14th Light Dragoons, led by Captain Musgrave, up a flight of Stone Steps—One of the Mob decapitated—Miserable fate of the Rioters—Horrible Scene among the Ruins—A Cornet's Duties—Patrolling at Night—Pickwickian Adventure—Troops dismissed— <i>Io triumphe! Dulce Domum</i>	290
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PRACTICAL LESSONS
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CHAPTER I.

Preparatory Lessons for young Fox-hunters and young Fox-hounds—
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—Something about the killing of Cubs—Not to eat too many at one
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12
WE should have supposed in these enlightened and utili-
tarian times, when every individual appears anxious to
obtain the *sobriquet* of a sportsman, that no one would
have confessed himself so innocent and green as to ask the
question, "What's the use of cub-hunting?" Did he ever
ask himself another, "What's the use of sending boys to
school?" Little enough to some, I suspect, who require
hammering at both ends—top and bottom—to force any
knowledge into them at all. Now-a-days every nincom-
poop rushes into print, voluntarily—eagerly—(I wish I
could get out of it, wielding the horn instead of the pen)—
no matter how ridiculous the figure he cuts there; and the
questions we see asked in sporting papers, a fiftieth part
of which are perhaps only noticed, do not suggest to us.

the idea of the schoolmaster being very much abroad. To follow up the inquiry however, we may say that cub-hunting is as necessary for young fox-hounds as schooling is for young gentlemen. We ought perhaps to have added, for young ladies also; but not being an advocate or an upholder of "Seminaries for young ladies," where they acquire a knowledge of some things by no means desirable, my forbearing to make any further allusion to such establishments must not be construed into any intentional disrespect or disregard for young ladies individually, my objection being only to the course of tuition or cub-hunting adopted in such places. Boys at school exhibit as great a variety of character and capacity as young puppy-dogs when taken into their school of learning—the woodlands. Some boys enter freely and *con amore* to Latin and Greek; so do some young hounds to a fox-scent—some gradually, others slowly, but willingly, who require encouragement; and many boys won't enter at all willingly to their proper game, preferring a game at marbles instead, like young wild puppies breaking away to riot, and doing the reverse of what they are instructed to do. Such boys, I need scarcely observe, require a certain *quantum* of birch twigs to keep them to the true line, as wild mischievous puppies call down upon their delinquent carcasses Jack's anathemas and whipcord. Some are so obtuse that they won't enter at all: and I remember an instance of a boy at our school who could not comprehend how Hector was dragged round the walls of Troy until the master seized him by the heels, and pulled him on his beam-ends round the school-room.

The use of cub-hunting is to make young hounds steady, respectable members of the pack, as that of schooling is to render boys intelligent, clever, well-informed members of society in after-life, when *their* cub-hunting is over. The ancients commenced their hunting in a very different style to ours. They did not, however, fancy fox-hunting: to them it would have been merely an idle, unremunerating occupation. They were *pot-hunters*, fond of venison and hare soup, the chase of the stag and hare having been their favourite amusement: and we find old Horace or Juvenal (I forget which, for to the latter I bade adieu with my gown at Oxford, a precious number of years ago, so that I trust to memory only) giving us certain information on this matter, thus:—“*Ex quo cervinam pellam latravit in aula militat in sylvis catulus.*” They had a queer notion of entering young hounds to a deer scent in those times; and I should like to see Charles Payne’s face, if directed to halloo on a couple or two at a time of his young entry at a stuffed fox, set up in a corner of the kennel yard as a preliminary introduction to the *personale* of the animal before proceeding to extremities with him in Rockingham Forest.

There is, however, another account of the chase by one of these heathen chroniclers of sports and pastimes in the dark ages, by no means inapplicable to our chase of the fox in more civilized times—“*Ingenti clamore virum &c.,*” which will not sound very unfamiliar to some of our modern Nimrods, when translated thus:—‘With horn and hound and thundering shouts they drive the flying stag’—many of our hunting men doing a pretty good business in the halloaing and screeching line, when a fox breaks

covert. In cub-hunting, however, we say—“*Procul, oh, procul est profani!*” Worshippers of Discord instead of Diana—screechers and screamers, we don’t want you here. Better, far better were it for us were you “nid nid nodding in your beds at hame,” when early morning purples the east, and we sally forth at peep of day to wake the woodlands with the cry of our spangled pack.

Cub-hunting is a quiet, tame amusement in comparison with fox-hunting. “Well,” our novice may exclaim, “are they not one and the same thing? a cub is a fox, and a fox is a cub.” Is a cow, then, a calf? Once in his life the fox was a cub, as every cow has been a calf; and I suppose he knows the difference between beef and veal. So cub-hunting is not exactly fox-hunting; and we pursue the one in a very different spirit to that of following a full-grown dog-fox over the open, when regular hunting has commenced. We want no noise, no excitement, no cracking of whips, no halloaing or screeching in cub-hunting. Our business then is, to instruct the young hounds in the first lesson of hunting, with patience and encouragement. They are to be led, not driven, into the pursuit of an animal, which will be the sole business of their future lives to stick to, and follow through gorse, bush, or tangled covert; over pastures green, or barren moor; through evil report or good report; amid pelting storms and cutting winds; o’er dusty or greasy fallow fields; until, by patience and perseverance, they have him at last. It is an observation of Beckford’s, “that a good pack of harriers would hunt a cub quite as well as the highest bred fox-hounds.” But I think he adds—not having read his book

for many years—that they could not finish an old fox in the same style, and in this opinion I quite coincide with him; but in cubbing, an old thistlewhipper would do quite as well with young hounds as the cleverest professor of “The Noble Science,” for, in fact, he has little or nothing to do but to sit quietly on horseback and let the young hounds alone. It will be time enough when they know what a scent is, and to discriminate between the right and the wrong, to interfere with the rating of whippers-in. The first business is, to get their heads down, their noses on the ground, to induce them to stoop to a scent—to any scent, rather than not try to hunt at all. They must be taught the use of their noses first—that is the primary lesson.

It was a custom in some fox-hunting establishments many years ago to commence hunting hares with the young hounds, merely to teach them to stoop and work upon a scent, and see in what manner they would conduct themselves in the open country, by which it was supposed their characters and dispositions would be more readily and clearly developed, before being added to the pack. But irrespective of this objectionable mode of teaching young hounds to hunt a scent during one month from which they were to be broken the next, I do not see how the result of such an experiment would be conclusive or really satisfactory, except that flash and dash being almost instinctive qualities in high-bred fox-hounds, they would exhibit such tendencies more certainly in the open fields than in large thick woodlands, where their actions are so much screened from observation. This, no doubt, was one

of the principal reasons why huntsmen of the old school adopted this practice ; and another perhaps that they could here also detect after a fair trial any early disposition in the young hounds to too much freedom of tongue. As a trial of speed it would have been unnecessary, and not likely to have been pursued on that account by men who built their chief hopes of sport upon the goodness of their hounds' noses. By the law of nature, like begets like, not in form only, but in disposition and temper also ; and there is almost a certainty that young hounds, like other young animals, will bear a strong resemblance in their characteristics to their parents ; and if those are selected with judgment and care, more from respect to innate good qualities than outward prepossessing form, these having again descended from well-known and well-tried blood, there need be little apprehension as to the offspring turning out well also. As, however, colour will come out sometimes in a very unexpected manner, so will vice show itself occasionally after several generations, if there has been a bad cross many years before. At what precise period of life this vicious disposition may break out, is very uncertain, but most probably not in the first season of the young hounds' entry. Woodlands are decidedly the proper school for teaching young fox-hounds their duty. These are the haunt of their game, and there they ought to be first instructed in finding it. Here may be ascertained whether they possess the more sterling qualities of courage and resolution in facing briars and thorns, and stoutness and perseverance in following their game through opposing difficulties.

Let a good steady old lot of leaders be selected as guides to the young hopes of the family, and by working these constantly together, without the addition of one or two season hunters, the entry will soon become handy and steady to their legitimate game. As we do not draw stubble or turnip-fields to find foxes, like harriers their hare, we ought of course to accustom our young hounds to those places where they are to be found. And this is one use of cub-hunting—a very obvious one—and of primary importance, since according with the old saying, ‘We must catch our hare before we eat her,’ so must we find our fox before we can hunt him. Another use of cub-hunting is to rout the young varmints, and teach them to extend their field of operations—to make them travellers, instead of lazy, stay-at-home animals, which they would become, without rousing up; and the earlier this can be done in the season the better. A thorough good rattling puts them on the *qui vive*, and renders them too wide awake to become the victims of shooters’ or poachers’ dogs. Every litter of cubs requires tithing also. We must blood the young hounds with some of their carcasses—one or two at least of the lot may be eaten, according to the supply and locality they inhabit; but every litter of cubs should be moved up once before the end of October. There is little gained by sparing a pet litter in a pet place until the opening day of regular hunting. I did so once, and killed four out of five the first day we drew a favourite covert. The young foxes had become lazy and indolent from inactivity; and singularly enough the pack divided twice, each killing

their own fox, without our being able to prevent them.

The first day's cub-hunting should be short and decisive. It is better that young hounds should long for more, than have too much of a good thing at first starting; and if they are engaged with a large litter of cubs, the whipper-in may open one of the earths, and standing near them, let one or two go to ground—a couple of hours' work being quite sufficient for the pack on this occasion. Sufficient attention is not generally paid by huntsmen to the condition of their hounds *before* they begin work, and that is the reason why we see in some kennels such a sudden falling off of flesh after the first few days' hunting. There is more severe work to be encountered at this early period than at any other time of the whole season in thick woodlands, from the meuses or runs being unbroken, and generally filled up with briars and grass, by which hounds are sadly scratched and torn about the arms and shoulders; but the harder their condition, the less will be their suffering from this cause.

In August and September the heat is often very oppressive, with sometimes scarcely sufficient breezes to stir the leaves on the highest trees. The effect, therefore, of hard work under such circumstances, upon hounds in a flabby state of body, will become very quickly and unpleasantly apparent. It is a poor way of doing things, to work hounds into condition *by* cub-hunting; they should be trained gradually by long exercise, physicking, and galloping, if necessary, over downs—*before* cub-hunting. Get them in good wind, and their muscles firm, with no super-

fluous flesh on their frames and no fat in their insides, and there will be no sudden fall of condition with the hardest work. From inattention to this necessary preparation, young hounds are very often attacked by the yellows, and sometimes a return of distemper, just at the very time their services are most required, and huntsmen will attribute this visitation to every cause but the right one. We know very well that the autumn is a trying season of the year to horse and hound ; but I have felt thoroughly convinced, when hearing complaints of young hounds falling off during cub-hunting or immediately after, and being attacked by unaccountable maladies, that these things are attributable to one cause only—*neglect of early and proper training before cub-hunting*. A sudden reduction of fat and flesh cannot be effected without injuring the vital and corporeal powers, and impairing the constitution of any animal, whether man, horse, or hound.

During the first few days of cub-hunting, we do not wish the pack to break away from covert, even after a young fox, unless the hounds are well together, and close to him ; but it often happens that a sulky vixen will hold to the woods until sharply pressed ; and unless the huntsman is quite certain on this point, it is wiser to stop them at once from going away, and stick to the one remaining, which will answer the double purpose of letting a willing young fox escape, to show sport another day, and killing a bad one in his place. Where foxes are numerous, some huntsmen adopt the plan of having the earths *put to*, or closed in the morning, instead of being stopped at midnight. This is one way of reducing the number, and may

be done sometimes in particular places ; but should a heavy fall of rain take place during the night, the young foxes will be underground, and the old ones only above it the next morning. It is a far safer plan to stop as usual, to prevent accidents of this kind occurring ; and as I have before stated, if there are too many on foot, the whipper-in can open one or two of the pipes belonging to the main earths, and let some of those get in which are not wanted for the day's diversion. By having them all barred out, you will also be a better judge of the actual number of your stock in trade, and of how many you can afford to dispose, without depending upon the representation of others. My plan was to see them all out—all above board, and the number of each litter was entered in my hunting ledger in a debtor and creditor account with the keeper or earth-stopper. These gentry are up to a pretty many tricks, and a master must be up very early in the morning and wide awake to be even with them.

We had one season two good litters of cubs laid down in a favourite covert, and thinking there would be too many on foot for the young hounds, I ordered the keeper to put to the earths in the morning. It blew a gale of wind that night, and not one cub did we find above ground the next morning ; and, what seemed more singular still until the murder came out, we did not find a fox in that covert during the whole season, although the two litters had been seen by the whipper-in several times before cub-hunting commenced, and paid for. The fact was this : the keeper had got his money for the litters, and strictly obeyed orders in well stopping the earths, but they were

unfortunately in a rock at both places; he battened both litters down tightly enough, but he *forgot to open the hatches again*, and starved them all to death, for the rabbits were his perquisite. I was rather green at that time with the horn, or, if you prefer the term, a green-horn; but the wholesale murder of these innocents taught me two lessons—never to have earths *put to* in the morning during cub-hunting, and never to pay for a litter of cubs *until the close of the season*; for it is a very common trick with keepers to take care of the cubs until they are found and seen all right by the master or huntsman, pocket their fees, which are often too readily paid on the first delivery of the animals over to the hounds, and then taking such very good care of them afterwards that we never see their pretty faces again. The gentleman in velveteen, to whom I have above alluded, having got his discharge at the end of the season for pocketing pheasants as well as rabbits, which were not intended as perquisites, let the cat out of the bag about the cubs at a public-house, and as those gentry will when drunk boasted “how he had done the young ’Squire.” He was, however, the first and last of his fraternity who could ever boast of *doing me again*; and this little experience proved more than *value received* for the four guineas I paid this artful rogue.

Masters of fox-hounds, don’t complain of having too many foxes, for if an evil, it is one of easy cure. Disperse and squander them about the country by frequent visitations, but let them beware of the battening down system, and not have the earths or drains *put to in the morning*, unless they can send one of the whippers-in the

next day to see that the earths are opened again. From want of attention to this supervision, many foxes *are buried* every season in drains and rocky earths, from which they cannot scratch out, either by the carelessness of earth-stoppers or wilful neglect of keepers. Besides the main earths, there are often some large rabbit burrows where cubs amuse themselves like children, playing at hide-and-seek ; and when barred out of their home, they will take refuge in such places, from which, when blood is wanted for the young hounds, they may be extracted with little trouble ; and although disturbing a main earth by pickaxe and shovel is quite unjustifiable, yet there is no harm done by breaking into a rabbit pipe ; in fact, it ought to be done occasionally, to teach the young entry to mark their fox to ground. In the winter season, digging out a fox is cold, uncomfortable work to the lookers-on, and should be dispensed with, except upon very particular occasions ; but in cub-hunting it is quite a different affair, and may be considered as appertaining to a young hound's education.

We had been one morning at work with a strong litter of cubs for about an hour and a half, when all, save the one the pack were sticking to, disappeared. The cub they were running got into a rabbit pipe, close before the hounds, and the terrier after him, when, knowing Viper's propensity to squeeze foxes very hard, I sent directly for a spade and pickaxe, and in about ten minutes, not only one, but three dead cubs were dug out—two stifled to death, and the other killed by the terrier. This wholesale destruction was not contemplated, for I never would, if it could be avoided, kill more than a brace of

cubs at a time out of the same litter. There is no merit in killing cubs, for a whole litter may be picked up in a morning with little trouble, as they often get tired altogether by the hounds chopping and changing from one to the other; since cubs will continue trying the earths in the hope of getting in; and it is almost impossible to prevent hounds changing, when every cub is hanging about them. If *noses* were not to be counted on the kennel door until after the 1st of November, it would save the wanton destruction of many young foxes, whose premature and unfair end may be lamented before the 1st of February. Huntsmen are too fond of parading their number of slain, as demonstrative of their prowess and skill; but such victories, gained over such helpless animals as cubs, are nothing to boast of. Foxes, like pheasants, are preserved to be killed when wanted. Some of them must be killed when young and tender, for the sake of the young entry, and more or less according to the stock in the country; but I would never permit *one* to be killed *unnecessarily* at this early period of the season, and those who do such things are properly punished by blank days afterwards.

It may not be known generally that wet weather, so destructive to other young game, does not prove detrimental to young foxes, as part of their food is much more abundant in a rainy than a dry season. One reason why cubs do not suffer from wet weather is, that they have a dry, healthy lodging in the bowels of the earth, or in crevices of rocks, which, when drenched to the skin, they can retire to, and snuggling close together, keep each other warm.

Another is, that a fox has naturally a warm temperature of body, which renders him less sensitive to cold; and a third, that his close, woolly jacket protects him from feeling the effect of the damp weather. Cubs, when able to leave the earth, ramble about in search of beetles, slugs, and frogs, which they eat greedily, whilst their parents are gone off in search of more substantial food, the dog fox generally assisting, as well as the vixen, in supporting their young family until they are strong enough to provide for themselves, which seldom happens before the middle of September, unless a wounded bird or young rabbit falls in their way. I have frequently watched a litter of cubs at play amongst rabbits, trying many artful dodges, behind and through bushes and long grass, to outmanœuvre their coveted prey, with very little reward for their clever tricks, the old rabbits, by stamping with their hind feet, putting all the rest upon their guard. In fact, up to a certain time, cubs do very little in the poaching way, being almost dependent upon their parents for support, except when they can find beetles, mice, or frogs.

CHAPTER II.

Meus novitatus est arida—Is there anything new about Fox-hunting?—The era of Fox-hunting in Norfolk something of a novelty—The Prince of Wales patronizing the Sport—Stuffed Foxes not seasonable for Sport—Abundance of this animal in the old Warwickshire Hunt, notwithstanding a day's Shooting in the old style—The first Woodcock—The Sport of the Million—Some reasons why Foxes do not always run straight—Fox-hunting peculiarly a British Sport—Its recommendations in a social point of view.

WE have had our say about cub-hunting, we will now say something about fox-hunting. “Can you tell us anything new upon this trite subject?” asks a lover of novelties. “Perhaps I may—but if not, does a good story lose anything by repetition? Or do men become nauseated with the flavour of good wine, when they can get it? Yes—when they can get it!” But I should like very much to know where they are to get it in this adulterous generation. “Can you tell us anything new about fox-hunting?” continues my new light interrogator. It is something new to hear of Norfolk becoming a regular fox-hunting country, and to find that the large game preservers there have thrown open their coverts to the fox-hounds. This is a step in the right direction, upon the basis of “Live and let live” principle. It shows a fair and liberal feeling on the part of the pheasant-men towards their neighbour fox-

men. Sportsmen are all members of one large family, and are bound to aid and assist each other in the various ramifications of their calling. There is no necessity for velveten to be at war with scarlet, because their tastes and pursuits differ. We don't envy you the use of your dog and gun, or your heavy bag of game; but don't from too selfish considerations bag our fox too, which we ask you to let alone, that he may afford us some recreation also. Don't tell us, by way of excuse for rolling over a fine old dog, which would have afforded us a good hour's amusement across country, that you wanted a stuffed fox to set up in your hall at home.

The gentlemen and farmers of Norfolk may well congratulate themselves upon the acquisition of so liberal-minded and excellent a master as Mr. Villebois, who has been long known in the sporting world as a superior judge of hounds, and everything pertaining to the "Noble Science"—a man not less distinguished for his affability and generosity than those other good qualities, which render him beloved in private as well as respected in public life. Mr. Villebois belongs to a fox-hunting family, one of his uncles having presided at the head of affairs for a very long period in the Hampshire country, and the other having been master of the Craven for several years; and I believe no man possesses more zeal in the cause, or a greater knowledge of the business part of the profession, than the justly esteemed master of the West Norfolk fox-hounds.

Norfolk fox-hunters have also the high honour of the heir to the throne being a resident amongst them, under

whose royal patronage the cause of fox-hunting is sure to become popular, even in that game-preserving country. As a good sportsman and first-rate rider to hounds, the Prince of Wales has already obtained golden opinions with those who have had the opportunity of witnessing the performances of his Royal Highness in the field; and a more manly sport he could not have selected, or one more conducive to health and high spirits. We will only presume to add—“*Macte virtute esto.*”

By-the-by the evil disposition of coveting stuffed foxes appears to be on the increase, greatly to the detriment of our sport. Numbers are destroyed annually for this purpose, to be exhibited in private collections of stuffed animals and birds, or paraded before the public eye in the shop-windows of saddlers, poulterers, and others, as an intimation of the sporting propensities of the exhibitors, many dealers in game being dealers in foxes also. And then the stuffers, one or two of whom are to be found in most towns, carry on an illicit trade in fox-skins, of which they have no scruple in boasting. These foxes are purchased of poachers, at sums varying from five to ten shillings each, so that a fox to these men is as good as a brace of pheasants, and so long as there are receivers there will be fox-stealers. The generality of fox-hunting countries are too well supplied with their game at home to require importations from other places; but it was, not many years ago, no uncommon trick for men of doubtful honesty as to fox preserving, to buy a live fox to be turned down in their woods the morning the hounds were expected to draw them. Harrier-men also thought it a

feather in their caps to give their supporters, on the sly, a gallop occasionally with a bagman; so that in those times live foxes sold at a pretty good figure, from one to two guineas being the usual price given for a sound one. The most rascally cruelty I ever heard of was practised by one of these thistle-whipping sportsmen upon an unfortunate bagman, the fore-leg of which was broken prior to being turned down before his lot of curs, lest the fox might escape, and the subscribers be disappointed in killing their victim. Foxes were scarce and costly animals to purchase in those times; but the country is now so well stocked that there is not any demand for foreign supplies, and a premium is no longer offered to fox-stealers to carry on their traffic in this commodity, which has now devolved upon game-poachers, who can sell them only for stuffing.

Shooting and coursing are plain, tame amusements in comparison with the all-exciting pleasures of the chase. There is neither health, exercise, nor cheerfulness to be derived from the battue system of knocking over so many hundred head of pheasants and hares in a day. What is there in this tame slaughter to talk or boast of? Does any man feel himself more invigorated, or his mind more at ease, from standing half the day in a drive, or at a corner of a plantation, platooning away as fast as he can load and fire, at birds and hares walked up to him by beaters, to be shot at without the slightest exertion on his part in the *melée*, save that of raising the gun to his shoulder? Pigeon shooting I have always considered as poor, miserable work, fostered generally by publicans for the benefit of their house; but the lucky fellow who wins

a fat pig by being the best marksman, has something at least to boast of: he had an object to gain, although the means to the end are scarcely defensible. The pursuit of wild game ranks in a far higher class than either of the above—there, work, skill, and cheerfulness are all combined. There is a variety in this sport approaching in some degree to fox-hunting. There is the beating of the ground—the working of the dogs. You pick up a partridge or two in one field—a pheasant perhaps in the next hedgerow. As you are climbing over a hedge and ditch, up gets a woodcock, which, in your excitement to have a shot at, grounds you on your nose in place of himself being floored: he is marked down, however, at the corner of a small hazel coppice. What eagerness—what anxiety to bag him! the first you have seen that season. Ponto stands, backed by Juno. Now we have him! “Steady, old fellow! Push him out, Jack, with your long stick!”

“Look out, master,” cries the boy; “there she goes—such a whopper!” and out rushes an eight-pound hare almost between your legs, quite upsetting Juno’s equanimity, who tries to catch her *en passant* by the scut. Bang! bang! The first barrel missed from agitation, fearing you might hit the young bitch; the second rolls her over. You are picking her up and rating Juno, when Jack again shouts out, “Mark cock!”

“Where? where?” you exclaim in bewilderment, not having had time to load.

“Under the wood-hedge to your left, sir,” cries Jack. “There he goes, skimming along.”

“Down again, by Jove! in the ditch I flushed him from. All right; we shall have him yet.”

Ponto and Juno are ordered into heel. On you walk hastily and nervously—all expectation—both barrels cocked. Jack taps the hedge, but no bird rises. He has run down the ditch. Ponto winds him, and keeps drawing steadily down to the corner of the field. A flutter in the hedge—up rises the woodcock on the other side. You catch a glimpse of him through the boughs of a stunted oak tree. Bang!

“Down he is, sir,” cries Jack, bundling headlong through the briars and thorns. “Got him at last, sir,” he exclaims, holding the bird up exultingly. “And such a fine un; as big as a howl!”

The first woodcock puts you in spirits for the day. You meet with another on your return home. That will do—a couple of cocks. You are as proud of them as a huntsman going home with his fox’s head after a good run. Three brace of partridges, one of pheasants, a hare, a couple of rabbits make up your bag. You are content, happy, and cheerful with your day’s sport. You are loitering along leisurely through a meadow, at the end of which is a small stagnant pool, half covered with reeds.

“I see’d a couple of moorhens here t’other night,” Jack remarked.

“Then you shall have one for your dinner. I want to discharge my two barrels.”

You hear a rustling and flapping in the sedge.

Quack, quack! up they rise, a mallard and a duck. Bang! bang! “*Ohe jam satis!*” you exclaim, in de-

light; "right and left, there they lie. Lemon-juice and cayenne."

This sort of sport, with a merry-hearted friend, throws all the battue-shooting into the shade. This puts a man in spirits and good-humour for a week, and it may be in mind of the chorus of the most quaint old rural song I ever heard sung at a harvest-home dinner, and by a *woman* too, who could pitch and toss a haycock far better than the notes of her own voice:—

"Then why should we quarrel for riches,
Or any such troublesome toys?
A light heart and a thin pair of b——s
Will go through the world, my brave boys!"

Coursing is a dull, unsociable pastime, unless there is a good supply of hares, and even then there is nothing very cheery about it, like the cry of hounds. Soho! there she sits! You put her up, eleu, eleu, eleu! hurry-scurry for ten or twenty minutes. Your blood rises to fever heat, and then for the next half-hour falls down to zero, your teeth chattering like castanets on a cold shivery day. How different the chase of the fox! Here all is animation and excitement. The cry of the hounds, as they rattle him round the covert, sets every man's pulse throbbing—every heart beating with excited expectation. "Tally-ho! he's gone away!" Down go the cigars—the reins are gathered quickly in hand—a hundred and fifty horsemen are in motion with the crack of a whip.

"Come along," cries one. "Go along," shouts another. What a bustle! what anxiety to get a good start! Away we all go, helter-skelter, like a charge of irregular cavalry.

Forward they press, every man anxious to take the lead. Roused by excitement, no obstacle withstands their progress. The horses share the spirit of their riders—hedges and ditches are cleared, gates topped, brooks skimmed over; all are as eager in the chase as if life or death depended upon their exertions. There is no time for cares or thoughts of other things. The cry of the hounds thrills through every heart. The music of their notes enraptures every ear. The impulse to be with them is irresistible. Enthusiasm rises to its highest point—even the ploughman, as you pass him, catches the infection. You see by his sparkling eye and joyful look that he longs to be with you. The burst is over, the hounds are at fault, pressed too much, perhaps, by careless riders, or it may be a flock of sheep or herd of cattle have foiled the scent, or he has been headed back by some man at work in the field. You have now a moment or two to ease your panting horse, and to observe the working of the pack—to notice the instinct of the hound, and the genius of the huntsman. Here is an opportunity of discerning the scientific part of the chase. To the *pace* man, who rides only for the sake of riding, a check is most annoying; perhaps he may call it disgusting. He has lost the advantage he had gained by a good start; he wishes to hold his place; a check to him is a great bore; he may not have the same luck again, for with him it has been more through chance than judgment that he had any place at all. This is the fast man, who never notes the working of hounds, in covert or out. He goes out for a gallop—a drag with a red herring would suit him quite as well as the finest run with fox-

hounds. Many such men there are—very many—too many by half, amongst the professing admirers of the “Noble Science,” who take no interest in anything, from the find to the finish, save their own riding. But such are not fox-hunters, although followers of the animal. Steeple-chasing is more their *forte*. Talk to them of the music of the pack, they will return you the same answer Beckford’s learned friend did.

“Isn’t that delightful music?” asked the enraptured master, when his hounds were running full cry in covert.

“Music, sir?” replied the other; “where? I cannot hear it for the noise of those confounded dogs!”

So sits the *fast* man, lolling in his saddle at the covert side, whilst the hounds are working their fox through the thicket or gorse. “Hang those slow brutes!” he exclaims, all impatience; “why don’t they force him out?”

“Don’t be uneasy, Tom Hasty,” replies Will Steadman; “everything in its turn; this is only the overture before the play begins—the first part of the performance. I like to hear the merry cry of hounds as they make the woods echo back their musical notes.”

The finding of the fox is to the genuine fox-hunter one of the most exhilarating scenes in the whole drama of the chase—the *demidium facti qui bene cepit habet*, the well-finding, leading almost invariably to a successful issue, barring accidents; for hounds which do their work handsomely in covert seldom fail to acquit themselves as creditably in the field. Perhaps one of the chief attractions of fox-hunting consists in its ever-varying character. No two runs are ever precisely alike in all respects. You

may find the same fox in the same covert, run him to the same place, where he beat you before, but it will be most probably under different circumstances of wind, weather, or scent. It is this very uncertainty which makes fox-hunting so interesting. The "*mens novitatis avida*" so inherent in our nature, is gratified more by fox-hunting than any other sport; for although foxes generally take the same line of country, there are continued diversions in this line from unexpected oppositions, or from the difference of scent. The animal has his point to make when he first breaks covert, but he may be induced to change his mind whilst on his road to his favourite place of retreat, like other fickle animals; he may think the hounds too near his brush, and therefore, in the hope of eluding their fangs, turns suddenly right or left to shake them off. He may be met at an angle of a turnip-field by Shag, the shepherd's dog, so unexpectedly as to be obliged to dodge in and out the fence to escape the new enemy. This will cause him to alter his tactics. He may meet John Hodges at work in the next field, whose halloa frightens him out of his way; or he may see an old woman in a lane with a scarlet cloak, the sight of the colour reminding him of his numerous friends, whom he caught a glimpse of when bounding over the first fence, as he stole away from home. Such little variations as these are continually occurring, and diversify the sport.

The passion for fox-hunting seems almost peculiarly belonging to Britons, and we see this exemplified by the introduction of the sport into our other dominions. Melbourne, in Australia, has now set on foot a pack of fox-

hounds, thus showing that Englishmen *cælum non anima mutant qui trans mare current*. The chase of the stag and boar has always prevailed in France, to which has now been added the chase of the fox; but there the gun is generally used as an auxiliary to the sole aim in view, as regards the two first—the certain destruction of the animal pursued. English hunters are satisfied without the death of a good fox who has shown them a first-rate run. They would spare his life for another day. This is the general feeling with the field, although the huntsman and master may desire a different result, and it is natural they should, for the sake of the hounds; but save on this account, they are not more bloodthirsty than the lookers-on. Englishmen are not, in this generation at least, fond of bloody spectacles. The Spanish ladies can look on scenes in their bull-fights with unblanched cheek and steady eye, which would create a feeling of horror and disgust in the heart of an Englishman. The dark ages have passed away from us, and we read with loathing the accounts of cruelties practised by even kings and queens in less civilized times. The ardour, the excitement, the uncertainty in the fox-chase—its difficulties, its labours, its enlivening influence upon the mind, its tendencies to promote good fellowship and good feeling amongst all classes, claim for this sport, above all others, the distinguishing title of “The Noble Science.”

CHAPTER III.

Masters of Fox-hounds—Their Privileges, Duties, and Responsibilities—
The Hunting-field not to be turned into a Bear-garden—Oi Polloi—
admitted on sufferance—Certain characters must be excluded—A case
in point—

“When poor, weak women go astray,
Their stars are more in fault than they.”

Man triumphs over woman's fall—Punishment in all such cases is
inflicted on the weaker sex—The Author's difficulties in forming a
Fox-hunting country.

ONE would imagine that the duties and responsibilities of masters of fox-hounds had been too well understood in this all-hunting age to require either comment or elucidation. Yet such seems not to be the case from letters and remarks which appeared in print upon an unpleasant *émeute* in the hunting-field some time since. It is not my business nor intention to enter into any particulars as to this particular act, which excited sufficient attention; but as there appears to be some misapprehension as to what *is*, and what is *not*, the duty of a master of fox-hounds, I have been asked to give my opinion thereon, which I shall do, without fear or favour, in a general point of view.

Some have gone the length of asserting that the hunting-field is patent to the public, without reservation, and that the master's only duty is to bring his hounds and horses to

the covert side in good condition, and use his best endeavours to afford sport; that he has no right to exercise any control over the persons so collected, beyond preventing them spoiling the amusement, of himself and his supporters; and to confirm this opinion, allusion has been made to other places of public recreation, such as the parks, opera, and theatres, where no invidious distinction is made between virtue and vice, and to which women of known bad character obtain admittance without let or hindrance. There is, however, no parallel between these cases. The hunting-field is patent to the public upon *sufferance*, not by *right*. Strangers cannot, and do not, obtain admission here by buying tickets or paying for their places; and we shall not do such violence to our natural sport as to compare a master of fox-hounds to the manager of an opera-house or theatre, who takes all fish which come to his net, without knowing or perhaps caring a tittle about the character of those who pay their money, and help to fill the house. A master of fox-hounds is placed in a far higher and more responsible situation, and we shall see how he is called upon to fulfil other duties besides the management of a hunting establishment.

In the first place, he has been elected or approved by the landowners of the county he hunts to occupy one of the highest positions to which a gentleman and sportsman can aspire, and during his tenure of office, the direction of the field is entrusted solely to his care and supervision. The noblemen and gentlemen who are his constituents expect of him certain abilities and qualifications, and confide to him the power of representing them in his

place. For the time he is their prime minister, as much as Lord Palmerston is the present head of the House of Commons; and if not as onerous, he has little less unpleasant duties to perform; and since it is impossible to please all parties, he will do what he believes to be right and consistent in maintaining that due order and regularity pertaining to the dignity of his office. Now, if a master of hounds is answerable and amenable for any damage done to the farmers' crops and fences over which his followers ride—of which there can be no doubt in point of law—it is equally clear that he has a perfect right also to prevent wanton mischief being done by any one who comes out to meet his hounds; and if, after proper warning and reproof, the offender should persist in this course, the master is undoubtedly justified in warning such an individual off the field; there can be as little doubt that his conduct in this respect will be approved of and supported by both landowners and landholders. In short, he must be omnipotent in the field, or he has no business there at all, although from their individual position as landowners in the county, some masters can exercise greater authority than others.

The question yet remains to be answered, To what limit does this authority extend? And it is no stretch of his prerogative to say, that as he is bound to prevent wanton mischief to the farmers' crops and fences as far as possible, so is it incumbent upon him to maintain the social interests of those who have invested him with this supremacy; that is, he is not to permit the hunting-field to become a bear-garden, to the exclusion of those who, as

owners of the coverts, have the best and indefensible right to be there. In short, a master of hounds has, in my opinion, no option in the matter more than the stewards of a county ball. He must exclude those women who are known to belong to a certain class, whatever his own private feelings may be; for much as in these latitudinarian times vice be tolerated, its brazen head must not be permitted to be raised on a level with virtue and modesty. Yet, as one fact is worth a hundred fancies, I will state what once occurred to myself, when a master of fox-hounds, as a case in point.

A gentleman—for he was one by birth and education, although wild and vicious—appeared one morning at the place of meeting with his mistress, not much to my surprise, I must confess, for I knew him to be a dare-devil; but no sooner did my eye rest upon the person by whom he was accompanied than I sent by a friend an intimation to the gentleman that I must request the favour of his withdrawing this person from our company, or that I should be under the necessity of preventing him ever riding after my hounds again. My friend had not returned from executing his commission—a very delicate one, for we both desired to spare the feelings of the lost one as much as possible—when an owner of coverts rode up, and addressing me, said—

“Are you aware of the insult Mr. D—— has passed upon the wives and daughters of your supporters”—there were several ladies out—“by bringing his woman here to confront them in this public manner, since all know he is not a married man?”

“Yes,” was my reply; “I have just become aware of the fact, and have already sent to inform him of the consequences which will result from his unwarrantable conduct.”

“And what are those?” he asked, rather impatiently.

“That if the offence is repeated, I shall use my best endeavours to prevent him ever following the hounds again.”

“You have done quite right,” he said, “and may depend upon every gentleman of the hunt upholding you in this resolution; and from remarks which have reached me, I am quite satisfied that every respectable yeoman in the field shares our opinion in this matter.”

This gentleman had scarcely left me when another member of our hunt came up, and spoke in much stronger language, declaring that others, with himself, had determined to horsewhip the offender out of the field unless he immediately withdrew the obnoxious person. These two gentlemen stood high in the county as land-owners and fox-hunters, and both had spent some years during their earlier life in the great Shires; so that, although entertaining no doubt what my course ought to be on the occasion, which was adopted without hesitation, still I had the satisfaction of finding my own opinions endorsed by two first-rate sportsmen who had seen more of fox-hunting in the best countries than it had been my lot to witness. But irrespective of my own feelings upon the subject, and the duty I owed to the fair equestrians who attended my fixtures, it was clear that the voice of every right-judging man in the field was with me.

Let it not, however, be supposed that I am one who would press heavily upon this most unfortunate class of women, hundreds and thousands of whom are more sinned against than sinning, who, infatuated and deluded by false promises and professions, have been led to take that false step upon the flowery-looking though treacherous path which ends in desolation and destruction. Who that has a heart to feel does not pity rather than censure their lost estate—their degradation and misery? Who that feels what woman is, and ought to be in purity and modesty—for a woman with purity of thought and soul is an angel, and an angel without it would be a devil—does not mourn over the fate of these lost ones? Who can witness the ruin of some of the fairest flowers of the creation, humbled in the dust, and trodden under foot, without deep compassion? Their lot is indeed a fearful one to contemplate, and more fearful still will be the retribution on the heads of those who have lured them from the paths of virtue—the reckless plunderers of woman's dearest heritage. The man who robs her of that most precious of all treasures, honour—stalks about boasting of his triumph, and leaves his deluded victim to bear alone in ignominy and disgrace the consequences of her sin, the burden of which should rest upon the tempter. Although such is the way of the world, that the greatest criminal in this case generally escapes punishment and disgrace, yet he is the person—not the less guilty—to be dealt with by a master of fox-hounds, should he presume on bringing a person of this description into the hunting-field.

We have all heard of what was termed “the Cheshire

difficulty" some time ago, and the sensation caused by it in the fox-hunting world; and although some masters of hounds are not more particularly strait-laced than other people, yet it has been shown that derelictions of a certain kind will not be tolerated by country gentlemen: and by the same rule, as representing them, a master has no difficulty in discerning his duty, it being obviously absurd to suppose that he has no jurisdiction in such a matter. A huntsman may bring the hounds to the covert side, and do everything required in the business part of hunting. He knows as well as his master what earths require to be stopped, what coverts are to be drawn, and his authority is generally sufficient to prevent injury to his hounds or the sport of the day; still, he is but a servant, and can go no further. He is not in a position to redress grievances or settle disputes which may arise in the hunting-field. Gentlemen would not in such emergencies listen to his dictation. We know that one of the highest attributes of fox-hunting is, to promote social intercourse amongst all respectable classes. All are welcomed to the covert side—coats of all colours—men of every profession, even down to a sweep on his donkey. Fox-hunters cannot be accused of being exclusionists. They gladly encourage every man, however humble, to partake in their amusement. The commonest labourer, who trudges on foot to the place of meeting, losing half his day, for the pleasure of seeing a fox found, receives a gracious smile and kind word from the master.

“Well, John, you are come out to find fault with us, I suppose?”

“Noa, noa, Squire, that you know I baint; but just to see that old gentleman turned out again, as beat ye last time where the roads meet at Piper’s Corner; but he won’t come that dodge again.”

“How so, John?”

“Bekase you see, Squire, I know’d of the drain there, when I was doing a bit o’ hedging vor Varmer Sparshott, and thinks I to myself, as I got up afore light this morning, I’ll step across, and bar ’un out o’ that door at any rate; but I’ll undo the bolt agin at nightfall, for I’m a thinking it aint an unlikely place for a litter—it be used uncommon, Squire, and nobody knows on’t ’side myself.”

“Thank you, John, and as one good turn deserves another here’s something to make amends for your lost time.”

“Noa, noa, Squire, put back the siller. I doan’t want it, I tell ye. I loiks the spoort as well may be, arter my fashion, as you gentlefolk. I didna do this, to fetch the money out o’ yer pocket.”

“That I know well enough, honest John; but if you don’t pick up that half-crown lying at your feet, I’ll horse-whip thee, thou obstinate old fool.”

“Aweel, Squire, I won’t dispute your bidding; but you shall hae out the vally, in the wee bit earth-stopping.”

If not the inclination, it is clearly the interest of a master to obtain the goodwill of every man he meets in the field, down to the poorest peasant; for a common hedger and ditcher has it often in his power to batten down a good fox in a drain, without anybody being a whit the wiser as to the cause of the animal’s disappearance.

But we have now to do with a horse of another colour. The whipper-in rides up, and tells his master—"There's Bill Burrows on the hill above the gorse, sir, with his bull terrier, which bolted the fox we ran to ground in Hazlewood bank last week, and he sold him for half a sovereign."

"Then you go, Jem, and tell him from me, to leave the field directly, and if he does not part with that dog, he shall be noticed off every rood of land in the hunt."

"Very well," said Bill, when the message was delivered to him, "I must budge, I suppose; but your master and I shall fall out about this job. I know where his shoe pinches, and tell un, with my 'spects, Master Jem, I shan't forget the favour I owe un."

"None of your sarce, Bill Burrows. Come out like an honest man, and welcome; but you shan't come out to watch our foxes as run to ground, and then catch 'em afterwards like a skulking thief. You had one on 'em last week."

"Ah!" muttered Bill, as he turned away, "and I'll hae another 'fore this week's out, and a turkey o' the Squire's to keep Christmas wi'!"

Many little disputes of this kind have occurred to me when a master of fox-hounds, and through many dark nights have I tramped along with Jem and Jack and my keepers, to throw down traps or unstop earths, to save foxes from poachers; and many the threats I have had, in consequence, from these lawless depredators. One night, in particular, we were threatened with annihilation by a body of these men, who, during a fall of snow, had traced

a fox to ground, and set up a live trap made with stones, in the form of a witch, at the mouth of an earth, which was situated upon a common : and here, they maintained, I had no right to interfere with them. My answer was, "The lord of the manor has authorized me to hunt over this common, and preserve foxes there ; he has the right to everything beneath the soil, and all game upon it. That fox belongs to me, and I will have him ; besides which, you have committed a trespass by breaking the soil ;" and, notwithstanding their menaces, we threw down the trap and set our fox free. I could relate scores of little incidents of this kind, when, as master, I have been obliged to take the law into my own hands during the absence of proprietors, or where we had not time to obtain their written legal authority to warn off trespassers ; but sufficient authority had been delegated to me to act without hesitation in all matters of this kind, and to maintain proper order in the hunting-field.

There are few, if any, masters of fox-hounds now living, who have encountered more difficulties in this respect than myself ; for, at the commencement of my career, I had to form a country as well as a pack of fox-hounds, a great part of which had never been hunted at all, and others at very wide intervals ; and no man could have broken ground there, without being a resident gentleman of the county, and well known to the proprietors of the coverts. With the exception of one other young and ardent fox-hunter like myself, I had to fight my way through a host of objections raised by game preservers, and *non-hunting* men ; and when looking back upon those days, I am surprised at

my own resolution and perseverance in a cause which at first sight appeared hopeless ; but having passed through the ordeal, from the beginning to the end, of forming a new fox-hunting country, I may be supposed to know, by long and hard experience, something of the original rules and customs by which hunting countries are regulated and held together ; for I have little doubt that every hunting country now established has originated in a manner very similar to my own.

I possessed certain coverts, which I could do with as I pleased, and over others belonging to friends and neighbours, I could exercise control ; but these were few in comparison with the extent required for the preservation of foxes which travel long distances from home ; and it would be of little avail beyond cub-hunting, my preserving them within a radius of some four or five miles, unless I could obtain protection for them, when venturing beyond our home coverts. A task lay before me—a very stiff one—and, like an awkward fence, the more one looks at it the less one likes it ; so I got upon my horse, and set my face regularly to encounter the difficulty, my friend sallying out on a similar hopeful expedition, upon his side of the country. We had each a large landed proprietor and game preserver to deal with, and we knew we had our work cut out for that day. The gentleman upon whom I called, seemed astonished at first at my impudence in asking him to throw open his pet preserves to fox-hounds ; but as he was fond of coursing, possessing a good kennel of greyhounds, I assailed him on this point, and by degrees began to gain a little in the argument, saying that “there

was not much difference in our pursuits, and that his partiality to hounds of one sort was equalled by mine for another."

"Yes," he replied, "that may be true enough, but we have no foxes here, and they have always been treated as vermin. Moreover, I could not throw open my coverts, to have the game driven over into adjoining woods, where they would be shot."

"Well," I said, "upon that point you need have little apprehension, since the owner of these woods is known to me, and your pheasants and hares shall not be destroyed; and this is one of my reasons for asking your permission to draw your woods. My foxes will, when disturbed at home, seek refuge here, and my first request is, that you will not permit your keepers to kill them for the trespass, and that if they are caught in traps you will be kind enough to send them back to me alive."

This point being conceded, I proceeded a step further by saying it would give us a gallop to send our foxes home before the hounds, instead of their being carried in a bag by one of his keepers.

A smile passed over his features at this suggestion, and he replied, "Well, well, my young friend, upon certain conditions I will grant your request. I shall hold you responsible for all wilful damage to my own or my tenants' property, by yourself and followers, and for their orderly conduct in the field. You will admit no poachers upon foot or horseback into my preserves to spy out the nakedness of the land—that is, to take cognizance of the runs through which my hares pass. In short, I give you the

same authority to control all that come within my precincts, as I should exercise myself over a party of coursers—you, and you only, for I will give no pledge to extend this permission to any other gentleman, who may succeed you in keeping fox-hounds.”

Thus far, then, I succeeded beyond my expectations; but my friend failed utterly in his mission with the other owner of large coverts, who received him very gruffly, and pooh-pooh'd the attempt to establish fox-hounds in that locality.

“You had better go yourself,” he said, when we met, “for he is a confounded crabby old chap, and I could do nothing with him.”

I went. It was a long ride to the place, and I expected anything but a warm reception.

“So,” he said, after I had been admitted to his sanctum, and explained the object of my visit; “so, you come and ask me to throw open my coverts and park to all the tag-rag and bobtail of town and country, and play the devil with my game, under the pretence of finding a fox. Now, I wish to know, if you are not yourself aware of the exceeding impudence of such a proposition?”

“Well, sir, I did not view my application in that light before, but, upon reflection, you are no doubt in the right. It is rather a barefaced proposal, although I am not generally thought to possess much brass. My zeal has carried me too far perhaps, and I must apologize for the liberty I have taken in asking such a favour of a gentleman, who, although well known to me by name, I have never had the honour of meeting before.”

“Hum!” the old gentleman muttered; “you have had a long dirty ride, sir, and it is nearly the hour of luncheon.”

“I am much obliged by your kind offer of hospitality, but with garments in this soiled state, I am not fit to sit down in ladies’ company.”

“You decline, then, to eat salt with me because I have not acceded to your request?”

“No, sir, not on that account.”

“Then you will remain.”

I was ushered into the dining-room, and was introduced to two lovely girls, his daughters. An hour was spent over the table, but fox-hunting was not mentioned. The ladies rose, so did I, to open the door for them; then, turning to my host, and thanking him for his hospitality, requested permission to ring for my horse.

“Sit down,” was his reply, “and take another glass of wine; we have not said much about fox-hunting.”

“It appeared an unpleasant subject,” I remarked, “and therefore I could not renew it.”

“Hum!” he continued. “You know a young friend of mine at Oxford, Mr. S——. He gives you a good character for firmness and steadiness, and your behaviour pleases me, particularly the diffidence with which you have refrained from pressing your cause. It is granted. You have permission to draw my woods, and I will preserve foxes for you conditionally—that you show that firmness for which you are given credit; if you fail in keeping those fellows who follow your hounds in proper order, when hunting over my property, I shall withdraw that permission.

You are invested by me with full authority to do so, and to admit none to join your hounds who will not submit to your directions.”

I expressed my sincere thanks for this unexpected favour, and we became ever after staunch friends, and to himself and his son I felt indebted for some of the happiest days of my life.

I have related these two incidents—and they are strictly true—merely to show in what position I stood, when forming a new hunting country, with regard to the public and the landowners. The noblemen and gentlemen to whom I applied were almost to a man averse to fox-hunting. They would not recognize it in any way as a public amusement; and it was by my own individual exertions and influence, personally and through friends, that I became the master of the country, which I hunted for thirty years—with what result, many who are still living can testify. The public were nothing to me: I was a free, independent master, owing no allegiance to any, save the landowners and owners of coverts; and from them I derived full authority to act as I thought proper. It was not imperative upon me to publish my fixtures. I could have drawn a large tract of country without apprising a soul of my intentions—and some of my friends would have been better satisfied seeing me alone with my own servants and hounds; in fact, I was restricted in some instances from making my fixtures public. Such was my first commencement as a master of fox-hounds. Things improved afterwards. Similar to mine has been the original state of nearly every fox-hunting establishment

in the kingdom, originating with a few ardent sportsmen ; and this once little plant has flourished until it has become a large tree, its offshoots transplanted into every county.

I have been drawn into rather a long dissertation upon this subject from seeing it objected in print to a máster, upon a late occasion, that he had been guilty of an *illegal* act, in warning an objectionable person off the field ; and have endeavoured to show that such a proceeding was not, as alleged, an illegal act at all ; and so far from its having any injurious effect upon fox-hunting generally, it will, in my opinion, have precisely the contrary effect, as there was wanting in these days some such little incident to prove to the *oi polloi* their true position—that those who have no stake in the country—of whom, in fashionable localities, nearly half the field is composed—are admitted to partake in the sport upon sufferance only. Once attempt to establish their right to ride over the lands of a country gentleman, with or without permission, and a bomb-shell would be thrown into every hunting country, rending our sport into fragments. As well might you assert that because a nobleman throws open his house and grounds to the public, one or two days in the week, from free goodwill, that he has not the right to exclude any persons he may object to. A master of fox-hounds hunts his country upon the same conditions. Any landowner can prevent him riding over his fields or drawing his coverts. By the landowners he stands or falls. He recognizes no other power to interfere with his conduct in the field ; and it would be something new to see a body of these gentlemen, who have wives and daughters joining in the sport, censuring his

conduct for maintaining the respectability of his company. To hear people talk of the *law* of fox-hunting, one would suppose such an enactment existed in the statute books of Great Britain. There is no such law—but, on the contrary, the law of the land is against it, or trespass of any kind upon any other man's property. Usages and customs there are among masters of fox-hounds, but these are merely conventional—by some regarded, by others ignored. Let well alone. The bundle of sticks has hitherto held pretty well together; don't burst the band by ripping up absurd grievances. Black is not white, neither is vice, however prettily decked out, to be tolerated by the side of virtue.

CHAPTER IV.

Masters of Fox-hounds divided into three classes, Independent, Partly Dependent, Wholly Dependent—Customs and Rules of Fox-hunting—Different Breeds of Foxes—The Author of “The Noble Science”—Mr. Delmé Radcliffe’s Opinion of the responsibilities of Masters—Tom Fool pays for all.

STRICTLY speaking, there is perhaps no such person in the present generation as a thoroughly independent master of fox-hounds, for few if any of our largest landed proprietors possess sufficient property of their own to hunt four days a week without trespassing upon lands not belonging to them, although some noblemen might maintain a two days a week establishment, without laying themselves under obligations to their neighbours. Even in this case, however, there is some *angulus ille* intermixed with their own acres, not to be purchased or rented upon any terms, the owner of which, feeling his importance from the occupation of this patch of gorse, slip of underwood, or sandy hedge-row, with a head of main earths in it, may be disposed to set at nought the pretensions of the aristocratic lord, by killing his foxes, and forbidding him riding over his estate. *Nemo est ex omni parte beatus*, or, according to the old proverb, “Every man

has a skeleton in his cupboard." It is well—better for us all, that the case should be so, to teach us that wholesome lesson, which the lion learnt from the mouse; for however rich, however powerful, however exalted, and proud of his exaltation, man in his best estate is still a dependent creature—dependent upon the very menials he may despise in his heart, for the every-day comforts and conveniences of life. What would the highest duke in the land do without his valet and cook? He might brush his own clothes, dress himself without assistance, and his dinner also; but that is a poor, comfortless way of doing things, although, at a pinch, kings, queens, and princes have been obliged to perform such offices.

I was once shown my dependence even upon a poor cottager, who had built a mud hut upon a long slip of "No Man's Land" at the end of a common, out of which, from long usage, he could not be ejected. We were running our fox very sharply, in fact running into him after a long chase, when he dashed through the hedge of this man's potato-field, Jem and myself in close attendance upon the hounds, and all eager for his brush. There was no time for turning out of our line, had we felt so disposed, and Jem made for the gate, at which the cottager stood, pitchfork in hand, threatening destruction to him and his horse if he dared to ride at it.

"Get out of my way," cried Jem, flourishing his heavy whip above his head, and over he went like a bird, his opponent crouching down behind the post to avoid the threatening thong. We had a triumphant finish, pulling down our fox in an open deer-park; and we were the

more delighted with this successful issue, from having the greater part of the entry out that day, early in October, this being their first regular good scurry across country, with every hound up at the finish. On our return home-wards we passed the cottage close to the roadside, where Jem had encountered the owner in his garden, and there he stood safe inside his wicket gate, and as I approached, said in a surly tone—

“Ah! ye won’t foller he dro’ my g’rn agin, cutting poor folks’ greens and taters to bits wi’ yer high horses and stinking dogs.”

“What’s the matter?” I asked very quietly, pulling up.

“Matter enow, I do think! Ye baint satisfied wi’ doing damage, but that ere chap o’ yourn on the grey hoss wur inster in the death o’ I, riding at a Christian man as if he were a hodmidod; but there, I’ll stop this warmint in his travels next time hur comes this gait.”

“He will never travel this road again,” I said.

“Oh! is hur wull—I know hur run dro’ the hedge, and I’ll put summit ther to stop the traffic; foxen be but warmints a’ter all’s said and done, and I’ll hae the ould chap’s brush afore to-morrow night.”

“Here,” I said, with a laugh, taking the brush from my pocket, “you shall have it now if you like.”

“Whoy! dang it all, ye haen’t a kitched un, hae ye? Well I be glad on’t; but ye shouldn’t damage poor volks’ wittles nuthless; I and old woman be bound to eat ’tators and dripping for dinner and zupper six days o’ the seven; bread be dear, and hard times for ’un as can’t get reglar work.”

“I know it, my poor man, and if that will be sufficient to cover the damage we have done to your pôtatoes and cabbages”—offering him a five shilling piece—“we shall be quits on that score.”

“Noa we shan’t, sur—you haen’t a done so much mischief as that comes too,—a shilling’s enow.”

“Then give your old woman the other four to buy her a pound of tea.”

“I say, Squire, I won’t hae it all,” he halloed out after me as I rode away.

“Then keep the change till I come again.” *Hoc jungit amicos servit que junctos.* Not so much the silver as the kind word, and, when spoken in due season, how good is it! We know very well that a silver or gold key will unlock the hearts of most men, but that alone is not sufficient to keep them open. Many think tóo lightly of the poor—of their feelings and ideas—that the former are as hard as the ground they till, and the latter only a trifle removed from the cattle they tend. But amongst that class I have seen more depth of feeling, more true generosity of heart, than I have met with from their superiors in knowledge and worldly wisdom. Many a poor man would share his last loaf with a neighbour in greater distress than himself: would a rich man do the same?

I am digressing, as usual, although not upon a false line; but we may say more of this in another place.

Masters of fox-hounds may be divided into three classes—the independent, the partly dependent, and the wholly dependent. The first who hunts a country solely at his own expense, and we need scarcely remark that such a

man is, and ought to be, thoroughly appreciated by his fox-hunting neighbours. There are several, if I may so call them, hereditary establishments of this kind, where fox-hounds have descended from father to son, as heirlooms in the family; and from the local influence possessed by these high personages, there is little fear of interruption to the continuance of this privilege. Custom, in these cases, has merged almost into a right; and it would be nearly as difficult to disturb them in their tenure of this prerogative as to dispossess her Majesty of her throne. For many generations the ruling dynasty has been acknowledged by the other large landed proprietors in the country. From time immemorial the Duke of R——, or Lords F—— and G—— have drawn their coverts and hunted over their lands; and this mastership in one family has been conceded as a matter of course. If not upon visiting terms exactly with all their neighbours, there are annual presents of venison or game from the nobleman's park or preserves, which tend to keep up cordial feelings between them. The duke has interest at Court, or at the Horse Guards; and should his political party be in power, he may have opportunities of assisting his country supporters with situations under government. He may have influence, also, in the county as Lord Lieutenant; and, last of all, there is the Hunt Button, which, as a distinguished badge of honour, is prized by some men more than a Crimean medal. But irrespective of these considerations, a duke is a duke, after all—a lord, a lord; and whatever radicals may *say* to the contrary, even the most venomous of this rebellious class *think* it a feather in their caps to

receive a bow of recognition from either. A millionaire may purchase land in his hunt, prate about merchant princes, and their contempt of the aristocracy, and in his insane virulence threaten destruction to the House of Lords; declare his resolution to resist this sort of feudal power claimed by his Grace's family to hunt over his lands, and threaten annihilation to every fox upon his property. But what does all this amount to? The duke hearing of this intended wholesale murder of the foxes, begs the duchess to call upon Mrs. Spindle and invite herself and husband, with two grown-up daughters, to their annual ball on Twelfth Night.

"Oh my gracious!" exclaims Mrs. Spindle, when her *worse* half returns from a walk with his head keeper, "what do you think has happened, my dear, during your absence?"

"One of the chimneys on fire, perhaps."

"Nonsense, nothing of that kind; but there's the duchess been a-calling, and asking us all to her ball next week; and she's such a nice, quiet, homely body—no airs nor affectations about her; she took little Billy upon her lap so kindly, and talked to Priscilla and Angelina as if she had known them from their cradles."

"Hum!" mutters papa, "then I've been doing a nice morning's work, in helping Stockman to bury the fox that killed your peacock the other night."

"Oh! drat the peacock! You can get me another when you go to London; but I won't have Stockman kill any more foxes, or the duke may hear of it; and who's to say the young marquis won't fall in love with our Priscilla at his mamma's ball?"

“Pooh! pooh! my dear, that’s all nonsense, and I wish you had not accepted the invitation; but we can send an excuse.”

“That I shall not do for one, Mr. Spindle; the girls and I shall go, if you don’t. Poor things! their prospects in life shan’t be damaged for the sake of two or three nasty foxes. Let his Grace hunt them, if he will, with his dogs; but Stockman shan’t kill another, or I’ll let him know ‘who’s who.’”

“Well, well, my dear, you need not get out of temper. I suppose we must all go now, so there’s an end of the matter.”

In this case the grey mare proved the better horse, for Mrs. Spindle being the only child of a wealthy citizen, and having contributed her *plum* to the family pudding had generally her own way.

Barring such little drawbacks as these, consequent upon landed property changing hands within the precincts of the hunt, the master of such may be called independent, although in every country there are some disaffected who do, and will gin foxes *upon the sly*; but few dare openly oppose him under terror of that bugbear—public opinion—which forces many to walk in a straight path, although at heart they may prefer a crooked one. It is no trifling advantage to country squires, with large families and small means, to have their lot cast in a country where they are not called upon to draw a cheque upon their bankers annually, on or before the 1st of November, for fifty or twenty-five pounds to support the fox-hounds; and it is, of course, their interest, and that of every fox-

hunter within its boundaries, to support through thick and thin the independent master. Their fathers and grand-fathers have done the same, and they look upon the old-established pack as much belonging to their country as the master considers the country belonging to him. His position therefore may be viewed as impregnable—unassailable—as long as he comports himself with even common courtesy towards the gentlemen of the county.

These are the *rari aves*—for few save the very wealthy can maintain at their own cost a fox-hunting establishment in the present age. Things were done very differently in the past century by the old-fashioned squire: his twenty or thirty couples of hounds, and six or seven horses, which afforded more real sport than these flashy establishments of our time. We have got now into very luxurious and expensive habits; moderation and economy being altogether pooh-poohed. We must hunt four or five, or even six days a week—many would hunt on Sunday if they could. The master in a crack country must keep his seventy or eighty couples of hounds in his kennel, and fifty or sixty horses in his stable—and those of the right stamp, too. His men must be well mounted; and if the under-whip's horse be a little groggy on his fore-legs, he is at once denounced a screw, and the impertinent inquiry reaches the master's ears, "How can Jack be expected to do his work on such ribs as those?" Then, as to the appointments and dress of the staff, everything must be in tip-top fashion, and trim, even to the tie of Jack's neckcloth. This is the age for carrying all these things into absurd extremes. We do not, of

course, find fault with the neat and appropriate equipments of man and horse, agreeing with the old adage, "that what is worth doing at all is worth doing well." I like to see huntsmen and whips turn out well shaved, well washed, and well dressed at the place of meeting; but looking like *workmen*, in their woollen cords and mahogany-topped boots, as the lamented Will Goodall of the Belvoir appeared, when I saw him for the last time, trotting away with his black and tans from the kennel door.

"Will Goodall," I asked before he mounted, "will you give me your receipt for boot-top stuff?"

"Willingly, sir; it is simple enough, and don't require writing down: just dip your sponge into the copper, and wash them well over; it gives them a good polish of the right colour."

Ah! poor Will! he was one of the right sort himself, in kennel and out, for a huntsman, although his rivals over the Border would indulge sometimes the joke at his expense—a very far-fetched one—"that when running a fox late at night in the Home Wood, he hung up lamps in the long drive, that he might see how to halloa him over."

In his estimation, white leathers and tops looked *wishy-washy* upon men of business; and I am quite of his opinion. They may do very well for gentlemen who have sufficient stock in hand of such articles, to indulge in a clean pair every day they go out hunting; but huntsmen and whips have not much time to devote to this pipe-claying work. The great fault of many of our

present fox-hunting establishments in fashionable districts is, that they are conducted upon too large and expensive a scale; and even now many countries are too large to afford good sport, for the foxes are never half knocked about. Formerly, it is true, they were of far wider limits; but foxes were then too scarce, as they are now too plentiful.

When I first commenced keeping fox-hounds there might have been a leash left of the true greyhound sort in my whole country. We certainly could not find more during the first season, and of these, as you may suppose, we were very chary. As for trying to kill one of these precious animals, nothing could be further from our wishes or intentions; it would have been to us a great misfortune, the death of the fox, an event *valde deflendus*; we should have bewailed him as a lost friend. Two blank days out of three, as a regular thing, taught us the true value of a living fox in those times, and the finding him a luxury we could only indulge in on high days and holidays. Our two male friends inhabited two large coverts, at extreme points from each other—the lady being left free from molestation, in the hope of bringing us a litter—and these old gentlemen were polite enough to be at home when we called upon them. One lasted us the whole season, always going to ground in a certain rock (some ten miles distant, as the crow flies,) when he had had enough of running. But the fate of the other was as inglorious and distressing as could well be. He was headed back by some farmers when just breaking covert, and his brush seized by Foreman, ere he could gain the

wood hedge. I have never *let loose* at the death of a fox as I did then, and the farmer I selected for my compliments not relishing my *non suaviter in modo* style of address, said, "Well, what do ye come out hunting for but to kill the fox?" "Kill him!" I replied, "I would not have had him killed for a five-pound note. You have spoilt our sport in this part for the whole season."

What will fox-hunters of the present day say to this state of things? They will tell us, in the words of our old ally over the water, *Nous avons changé tout cela*. Very true, my friends, as to the foxes; but how about sport? You have lots of asthmatic, wheezy foxes, which don't go a couple of miles before popping their noses into a drain, or dashing down a ditch for a drink of water, and over which goes Tom Hurry-scurry, with his head in the clouds, and across the next large grass field before he makes the discovery that his darlings have overshot the mark. "Hang the brute!" he exclaims, "I wish he would run straight."

A scientific cast then follows, here, there, everywhere but in the right place.

"He has beaten us, Tom," remarks Harry Hardtohold; "do not bother about him any longer, but let's have another; there's a brace at least in Tucker's Corner."

Yes, that is just what spoils your sport, ten days out of a dozen. You are quite indifferent about losing one fox because you know where to turn out half a dozen others, if needs be. Like the man who has a choice of made dishes before him at dinner, tasting one, then others, but sticking to no one in particular; so it is with your

hunter of the present era; but if he had only one fox for his day's amusement, as a hungry guest one joint to discuss, he would make the most of him. We had only one fox left for the remainder of the season after the untimely fate of No. 2, and he gave us what you call "the run of the season" *once a fortnight*; we could not, in common courtesy, call upon him oftener. It would not have been either politic or polite to do so, since old gentlemen of his class expect to be treated with certain deferential respect, or they won't choose to be at home when you call again. "But why didn't you bar him out?" asks a new light man. Well, we had two reasons for not adopting that course: one suggested by the man who killed the golden-egg-laying goose, and the other, that if we had barred him out, he would have run us out of the year 1823 into that of 1863 before we could have caught him, and most probably not then. "Well, then, you admit you could not have killed this old fox, if you had tried." Just so; he was not fated to be killed by hounds; and no pack in those days or these could have killed him in his prime of foxhood; but the poor fellow, some years afterwards (as I have before mentioned), when the grim tyrant seized him, as if in grateful remembrance of our affection for him, crawled with his last remaining strength to the mat at our hall door, there laid himself down and died.

Ah! very romantic indeed. But it was a reality.

There are some foxes, courteous reader, even in these days, residing chiefly in Taffy-land and over the Border, which will beat your fast men and fast hounds. I put the

cart before the horse, because you have a partiality for that sort of thing, not as a *distinctive* place for the animal rationale; for in this case the canine ought to go before the human species; and as long as you reverse the order of these two animals, putting yourself first and the hounds second, you must pay the penalty for infringing upon their prerogative. We used to do things very differently. "Yes, because your hunters couldn't go faster than I could kick my hat or your hounds either."

Well, there we differ *toto cælo*. We were young once, as you are perhaps now; could go just as straight, and were just as fond of riding over five-barred gates; and the nags we rode could do the trick cleverly, rather more so than yours can do now. But there was some method in our madness. In our sixth season we had still a short though stout lot of foxes, a small but select stud of hunters, and a compact kennel of hounds, the best that could be had for money, and in one part of our country as good a grass vale to ride over as you have in Leicestershire.

The expenditure of fox-hunting establishments in the present day is on too lavish a scale, so that ere long subdivisions must again take place; and when they do it will be all the better for sport, since two small establishments are much more easily supported than one overgrown one, and now that foxes are so plentiful, they require more routing.

There are scores of country squires who might readily keep as formerly a two-day per week pack; but who would shrink from embarking in these large concerns, and very wisely too, for such can only be maintained by men of

large fortunes, or very heavy subscriptions, difficult of collection. There are many masters of fox-hounds—perhaps the largest class—who pay in part and receive in part—who have their own horses and hounds, and hunt countries conditionally, upon so much subscription money being added to their own purse, to help bear the burden of the expenses. Men are actuated by various motives to keep fox-hounds; some by ambitious views or vanity, others by the love of sport, or the love of the hounds; and there are men who take the management of a fox-hunting establishment like managers of a theatre, to see what can be made out of the subscription beyond the current expenses, to pay for their trouble in undertaking the concern.

The mastership of a pack of fox-hounds is ostensibly an enviable position, invested with considerable dignity and importance. The private gentleman, little regarded perhaps in his own sphere of life, distinguished by no great talents or endowments amongst his friends and neighbours, rises at once, as a master of fox-hounds, to a kind of imperial power in the field. He feels his consequence; his mien and manner assume an air of authority; he carries his head higher than before; there is more stiffness in his bow, less of cordiality, more of formality, in the tender of his hand, than heretofore. He is a great man now in his own opinion, if not so regarded by others. His hounds and his servants wait at the place of meeting for the master. Nothing can be done until he arrives.

“Where are you going to draw to-day?” a subscriber asks of his huntsman.

“Can’t say exactly, sir, till master comes. But here he is, sir, a-riding up the green lane on his hack.”

“Ah! here he is,” as, entering the field, he canters up to the group surrounding the hounds, saluting them with “Good morning, gentlemen,” and a hat raised as high as the bit of elastic cord will admit. A stir is caused amongst the hounds upon hearing his voice—Jem and Jack in vain attempting to keep them back—and there he sits with a *negligé* air in his saddle, the reins thrown loosely upon his horse’s neck, and his darlings wagging their sterns, the vehicle of a dog’s emotions, with looks of love and joy around him. It is a proud and happy moment, of which any man may be fairly vain. And not more proudly sits the monarch on his throne arrayed in his splendid robes, and attended by his courtiers and ministers of state, than the master of fox-hounds on his horse’s back, dressed in his bit of pink, with the members of his hunt and his faithful spotted favourites in close attendance to await his pleasure. When time is up, and the word of command given to move off, what field-marshal looks more dignified? Even the pack, as they strut jauntily along in their sleek coats, with heads and sterns erect, seem to have imbibed some of their master’s consequence. He has done all things well. Men, horses, and hounds look as they ought to do. He feels he has some right to be successful in his sport, and if such be the issue of the day—if *finis coronat opus*, he returns home one of the happiest men in the world.

In social life, too, amongst the assembled guests at a dinner-party, the master of the hounds is accorded a place

of precedence suitable to his status. If popular, moreover, he is *fêted* by the gentlemen, and petted by the ladies; even the prettiest girl in the county, and an heiress too, thinks it an honour to dance with the master of the hounds, although a married man. Such are some of the sweets of office, the bright colours in the picture. But there are others of a darker hue. He has a deal of work to do, and that most difficult of all labour—to please all parties. Politics must not be discussed by a master of fox-hounds, unless wholly independent of assistance from others, for nothing engenders so much bad feeling in a county as politics. There are the every-day little grievances to redress. Mrs. Grumbler has had her poultry-house broken into, and half her cocks and hens carried away by the foxes of course, although this sort of gentry don't travel about the country with bags at their backs, albeit sometimes in bags on other people's backs. But the artful thief who stole Mrs. Grumbler's chickens scattered the feathers all the way down the field to the gorse; so this being considered strong circumstantial evidence against Mr. Reynard, the master is obliged to bail his friend, or have him snapped. The last day the hounds were out, half a score of Mr. Grainger's ewes, heavy in lamb, were driven into the brook on Rushmead Farm, and drowned. Mr. Grainger can't afford to put up with the loss. The gentlemen and hounds do him damage enough by riding over his young wheat and turnips, and he must be paid for the sheep, bating the skins—he will throw them back. Another day Farmer Stubbings comes with a very long face. “I be sorry to trouble ye,

Squire, but some o' your young gentlemen drove my yearling bull yesterday afternoon over the stile in Barton Close, and he broke his hind leg, so we were obliged to have un killed. He was a pure shorthorn, sir, and cost I twenty pounds last Michaelmas."

"Hang the bull!" mutters the master.

"Ay, sir! he wur hung up by the hind leg atween the timbers, and the bone broke off as short as a carrot."

"Well, farmer, I am exceedingly sorry to hear of the accident; but what do you expect me to do?"

"I don't think, sir, a ten-pound note is anything more or less than fair, as you be so often galloping across my fields."

We might enumerate scores of little incidents like these, so exceedingly interesting to masters of hounds. And then come those insatiable cormorants in velveteen jackets, with their complaints about the loss of their perquisites, the rabbits. In short, as to these matters, I cannot do better than quote the words of the talented author of "The Noble Science," a work which contains the most practical and scientific knowledge on the subject of fox-hunting ever written:—"Remember, however, after all this, you will never have your hand out of your pocket, and must always have a guinea in it." These constant calls upon a man's purse are disagreeable enough; but in other respects a master is considered public property and all that he possesses. If a landowner, he must give a day's coursing to one man, a week's shooting to another. If a breeder of sheep, every farmer is at him for a tup—gratis of course—for the season. Then he is expected to keep a

stallion for the use of the county. With regard to his supporters and the gentlemen of the country, he has, moreover, a most difficult game to play. He must be all things to all men—a very Job as to patience. He has to conciliate one, assuage the anger of another, admit that he has hunted one side of his country too much, and the other too little. He has a coppice adjoining that of a neighbouring game preserver, into which the pheasants and hares are driven when the hounds draw his coverts. It is the only one on his property famous for woodcocks, and the master is very fond of those birds. But the battue-man wants the use of this wood to protect his game, and of course he is expected to give it up, or—yes, he knows the consequences of a refusal. The battue man “preserves foxes for *his sport*. He does not care about fox-hunting—never rides out hunting himself.” The inference is obvious enough.

All these little concessions are expected from a master of fox-hounds; and taking such things into consideration, the wonder is that any gentleman can be found bold and patient enough to hold such a disagreeable office beyond a season, just for the honour of the thing. Yet so it is in many cases. Another man keeps hounds, for the love of the hounds. I did so. When a youngster, I was fond of jumping for the sake of jumping, and rode after hounds more on account of the riding than the hunting. But when I kept hounds myself, my ideas became completely changed. The hounds were everything, the fences nothing; that is, my zest for jumping was gone. I did not care whether the hedge was high, the ditch deep, or the brook wide. These were to be encountered now,

as merely obstacles in my way, which must be surmounted to be with the hounds: for them I rode, worked, and toiled to kill foxes, my chief object being to keep them in good heart and good spirits. I felt also great gratification in seeing pleased and happy faces around me, when the joint efforts of myself and my hounds proved successful; and when things went well, of all the beaming smiles mine was of course the most joyous. I possessed the laudable ambition to afford sport to my friends and supporters, but nothing beyond. The ambition for other honour than that acquired in the hunting-field was not mine. For the half of one season I was induced to entrust the horn to another, but it would not do: my spirit and ardour departed with my office, and I felt as one might feel upon beholding the affections of the woman he loved bestowed upon a rival. I should have ceased to be the master of the hounds had I ceased to be their huntsman. Such were my feelings and ideas as a master, similar, no doubt, to those of many others; and these are the men who hold their position the longest time, and fight cheerfully through the greatest difficulties.

CHAPTER V.

BELVOIR CASTLE KENNELS.

Description of Kennels—The Hounds—Extraordinary Production of Whelps in a Week—Members of the Belvoir Hunt a hundred years ago—The Castle, its Origin and Antiquity—Magnificent View from it—Princely Hospitality of the late Duke of Rutland—Family Likeness in the Pack—Their late Huntsman, Goodall.

HAVING in the last chapter spoken of the late Will Goodall, huntsman to the Belvoir, a short account of that celebrated establishment may not be uninteresting to my readers.

These kennels are distant thirteen miles from Melton, eight from Grantham, and about four from the village of Battsford, at which there is a station on a branch of the Northern Railway from Nottingham to Grantham. There being, at the time I was there, no communication by rail between Melton and Belvoir, I was advised by a friend to go from Leicester through Nottingham (although a circuitous route, yet more expeditious) to Battsford, where I obtained a horse and trap to carry me to the kennel, of which, I think, a short description may be acceptable to masters of fox-hounds, as one of the most perfect models of the kind I have ever seen.

The structure of the buildings, comprising the hunts-

man's and whippers'-in houses, with accommodation for the hounds, is on a very large scale, which, however, may be reduced to suit smaller establishments; but the ground plan of the whole is excellent. The principal entrance, with a south aspect, is under a handsome archway, ornamented with stone pillars, flanked on either side by two lodge-like looking buildings (one being used as a straw-house, and the other a granary for oatmeal), which are connected by the outward wall, four feet six inches high, with palisades above it, strengthened at intervals of nine feet by pillars, four on each side of the gateway, which, viewed from a distance, impart to the whole an imposing appearance; the centre building, under which are the feeding, boiling, and lodging-houses for the hounds, with apartments over them for the feeder, being of an octangular form, with an appropriate weathercock, in the form of a fox, over it.

The extreme length of the large passage from north to south, with two large gates in the middle under cover, which being closed form a drawing-yard from which to feed the hounds, is 160 feet by 16 wide; and the other passage, leading from the huntsman's to the whippers-in house, from west to east, cutting through the first at right angles in the centre, is about 130 feet long; the whole area under pavement being almost quadrangular, containing over 20,000 square feet.

On the right-hand side of the grand entrance is the large kennel—the court-yard being 70 feet long by 45 wide, the lodging-room 18 by 16; and at the bottom of this yard are two doors, one leading into a large grass-

yard, and the other into a passage to the whippers-in house. Opposite the large kennel, on the other side of the entrance-passage, is another paved court, 64 feet long by 62 wide in the clear, with boxes on two sides, under an open shed, for bitches to lay down their whelps in. In this yard, eighteen bitches within one week produced the extraordinary number of *one hundred and eighty puppies*, which would be, on an average, ten to each mother, save that one bitch had one whelp only. There are also two smaller kennels, facing the whippers-in house, the courts of which are about 36 feet long by 25 wide, with lodging-rooms to each.

Beyond these, again, is a kennel appropriated to the young hounds on returning from their walks, with a sleeping-room 21 by 16, and a large paved court about 70 by 35 wide, with a door at the bottom, leading into the grass-court. Above this kennel, on the other side of the grand central passage, leading from south to north, is another kennel of like dimensions, as an hospital for sick and lame hounds, close to the huntsman's house, so that he can attend on his patients, at any hour of the night, within a few steps of his back kitchen. The boiling-house is on the right-hand side of the passage, leading from the huntsman's to the whippers-in house, and the feeding-yard just opposite. Taken altogether, nothing can be more complete than the arrangements made throughout this extensive range of buildings for the comfort and convenience of men and hounds. The advice of Somerville is here observed in its most literal meaning:—

“O'er all, let cleanliness preside.”

The courts are paved with large square flag-stones, sloping to the centre, and the drainage so good, that there is an entire absence of the least unpleasant effluvia—generally perceptible in the majority of kennels.

Kennel lameness is here unknown, and the ravages of distemper ameliorated by the extreme cleanliness and sanitary condition of the lodging-houses and courts. On the west side, commanding a beautiful view of the castle and the adjoining woods, stands the huntsman's house, a most comfortable residence. The situation of the kennels is at the lower end of the east park, protected from the north winds by a plantation, or, rather, a small copse-wood, with some high forest trees, and entirely open to the south side, so that the hounds, when let out of kennel, are immediately upon turf; and there is a delightful lounge in the park, during the heat of summer months, beneath the shade of the fine timber and beautiful hawthorn bushes, of great age and size, with which this side of the park is ornamented.

The exact period at which fox-hounds were first kept at Belvoir Castle, it is, unfortunately, through my own neglect, out of my power to state; for the late Duke, some few years since, most kindly sent me several very interesting papers and letters connected with the first formation of the fox-hunting establishment in his Grace's family, of which, from extreme illness at the time, I was unable to take notes. These documents were returned, after being in my possession some weeks, and I have the late Duke's letter, acknowledging their receipt. So that they are no doubt still to be found amongst the records of Belvoir Castle, although I was informed by Will Goodall they had

been mislaid. In the absence of this information, however, I am enabled to impart some other from the same source, which will, I think, be amusing to the sporting world, being a list of noblemen and gentlemen who were members of or attendant upon the Belvoir Hunt, in the year 1758, which will prove the estimation in which it was then held—more than a hundred years ago—and the number of horses belonging to the principal members then and there assembled in and near the good town of Grantham, to do honour to his Grace of Rutland's fox-hounds.

Names.	No. of Horses.	Names.	No. of Horses.
Duke of Rutland	6	— Davison, Esq.	
Duke of Devonshire	4	— Shafto, Esq.	
Marquis Rockingham	8	John Manners, Esq.	
Marquis Granby	4	— Ruckworth, Esq.	
Lord Barnard	6	— Cotts, Esq.	
Lord Talbot.		— Dixon, Esq.	
Lord Wm. Manners	1	— Anderson, Esq.	
Lord Robert Manners	6	— Beresford, Esq.	
Lord Aberdeen	4	— Vovey, Esq.	
Lord John Cavendish	3	— Garve, Esq.	
Lord George Cavendish	2	— Lewis, Esq.	
Lord Robert Sutton	8	— Thornton, Esq.	
Lord George Manners	6	— Thorold, Esq.	
Sir James Lowther	9	— Selby, Esq.	
Sir William Bunbury	5	— Witham, Esq.	
Sir Charles Buck	3	— Turton, Esq.	
— Howe, Esq.	5	— Rowe, Esq.	
Mrs. Howe	5	Henry Pennant, Esq.	
— Duncombe, Esq.	3	— Bertie, Esq.	
Col. Hervey	2	— Pennyman, Esq.	
— Shirley, Esq.	5	— Baily, Esq.	
The Hon. — Watson	8	— Renoldson, Esq.	
Capt. Vernon	3	— Lucas, Esq.	
— Wentworth, Esq.	3	— Digby, Esq.	
— Forrester, Esq.	6	— Anderson, Esq.	
— Medicott, Esq.	6	— Lister, Esq.	
— Boothby, Esq.	6	— Smith, Esq.	
— Bethell, Esq.		— Arnold, Esq.	

Names.	No of Horses.	Names.	No of Horses.
— Middlemore, Esq.		Mr. Grove	
— Haughton, Esq.		Mr. Malchett	
— Willis, Esq.		Mr. Todd	
— Chamberlain, Esq.		Mr. Ayscough	
Capt. Hare		Mr. Dale	
Rev. — Stephens		Mr. Rowley	
Rev. — Stovet		Mr. Frisby	
Rev. — Heron		Mr. Johnson	
Rev. — Stoop		Mr. Hutchinson	
Mr. Skinry		Mr. Dolby	
Mr. Stamford			

Total number of Horses 294.

Of the sport with the Belvoir pack in the hunting of the fox on this occasion, I have no evidence.

Before visiting the Belvoir kennels, I was told by a gentleman, considered good authority on sporting affairs, that I should find the reverse of improvement since the time of old Goosey; but being one of those old-fashioned people who like to judge for myself, I told him he might expect to read my opinion of them shortly; and to compensate for any defect in my vision, I generally had recourse to a little tape measure, an infallible guide as to size and substance, when the eyesight might deceive. Now the fact is, that upon looking over this pack, I felt very much in the position of Captain Macheath, who, when puzzled in his selection of one of two damsels, equally attractive, exclaimed, "How happy could I be with either, were t' other dear charmer away." I was bothered by so many beauties, that I did not know which to choose first. But generally speaking, I am a fastidious old gentleman, of very antiquated ideas about fox-hounds, as well as women.

It was my opinion, many years ago—I will not say how

many, for *fugaces labuntur anni* much more rapidly than one can sometimes believe—but when Goosey was still in his prime, that the Belvoir pack was *sui generis* (that is of a peculiar kind), and in this opinion I have been more confirmed since, down to my last visit. There was a manifest dissimilarity between the leading packs of that time—the Dukes of Beaufort and Grafton's, Lord Fitzwilliam's, Lord Lonsdale's, Sir Thomas Mostyn's, Mr. Ward's, and others—and the Belvoir fox-hounds. All the first-named were clearly of a larger breed, and there was a wiriness of hair, particularly observable in the dog-hounds, which marked them as a distinct variety from the Belvoir, which have a closeness of texture like the short fine wool of a Southdown sheep, in comparison with that of the Leicester, and a glossiness of skin, like floss silk, peculiarly their own. From the high estimation in which this pack has long been held, and the consequent dispersion of the blood amongst other kennels, a great deal of this glossiness of skin is perceptible elsewhere, but its origin may be traced in connection with the Belvoir pack.

As an instance how the characteristics of hounds descend through many generations, I may state that on entering these kennels I immediately pointed out one hound from the rest as of the Beaufort blood. "That hound, Challenger," I remarked to Goodall, "is descended from old Boxer."

"Oh no, sir," he replied, "you are mistaken there, he is no way connected with that sort."

"Well," I said, "you ought to know his pedigree better than I do, but I am quite positive about his relation-

ship to old Boxer ; so try back, and tell me how he is bred."

After a little consideration, Goodall then began tracing his genealogy to a hound in Mr. Drake's kennel.

"And how was that hound bred?" was my next inquiry.

"By Jove, sir," he exclaimed at last, "you are right after all, that dog's mother was old Boxer's sister."

Now, it being then some thirty years and more since Boxer's day, this one selection will show—and I could adduce hundreds of the same kind—how certain characteristics of hounds are preserved through succeeding generations. There is another remarkable feature pervading the Belvoir kennels. With the exception of a very few, all look to be of one family, and the *facies non omnibus una nec diversa tamen*, is here beautifully exemplified. There were two hunting packs, over fifty couples, all of one colour, black and tan, and looking of the same family ; in short, nothing could be more brilliant than the appearance of these hounds when all together. They were worth travelling almost any distance to see. Not in the palmy days of old Goosey were they such as I saw them at this time, although I then thought them the cleverest pack I had ever seen for their inches. They possessed not, however, as many may fancy, thin, narrow heads like greyhounds, and egg-sucking noses, but just the reverse. Their *frontispieces* were wide and square, with plenty of room for brains in the cranium ; and they had the look of great sagacity in their faces—in fact they were what fox-hounds ought to be, sensible-looking animals.

Having finished with the Belvoir kennel, it may be as well to give some little account of this splendid domain. To those who have never visited Belvoir Castle, with its beautiful drives and walks, beneath lofty avenues of trees, winding round the side of the hill, leading into the pleasure grounds, intersected by gravel walks, and ornamented by gay parterres, with every now and then an opening through the beautiful foliage, discovering to view this magnificent castle, which rises high above them, in its almost regal splendour, a great treat is in store. It commands a view over an extent of country of twenty-six miles' radius, including one hundred and seventy-three parishes, in three counties, and among them twenty-five manors of the Duke of Rutland's own inheritance. From this magnificent view originates its name. Its foundations are nearly coeval with the Norman Conquest, being originally built by Robert de Toderic, a noble Norman standard-bearer to William the Conqueror. Lord Roos, first Earl of Rutland, created by Henry VIII. in 1520, restored and rebuilt the castle, which had been in ruins from the time of the civil wars between the royal Houses of York and Lancaster. After that, it again materially suffered in the unhappy war between Charles I. and the Parliament.

Upon the Restoration the castle was again repaired and restored. Great alterations were made, and an entire new arrangement given to the interior by the late Duke, under the direction of Wyatt, at a cost of at least 200,000*l.*; but in 1816, while the improvements were still going on, a calamitous fire broke out, and destroyed the whole north-east and north-west fronts, and the loss of property, in-

cluding the picture-gallery, with most of the fine family pictures, was estimated at no less than 120,000*l*.

Everything connected with this place is on a scale of princely magnificence ; and of the style in which the hospitalities of the castle are dispensed, I may instance the amount of several articles of food, &c., consumed during *the season*, consisting of sixteen weeks :—About four thousand loaves of bread, twenty-five thousand pounds of meat, nine hundred gallons of oil, one hogshead eight gallons of malt liquor daily, and also one thousand three hundred tons of coal yearly. The number of persons dining at the castle during the season is estimated at twenty thousand. Well may Englishmen feel proud of the splendid castles and mansions of our nobility, with their unbounded hospitality, such as can only be found in our own fatherland.

CHAPTER VI.

Nothing derogatory in a Nobleman or Gentleman hunting his own Pack of Hounds—Necessary Qualifications of a Huntsman—A Stentorian Voice not requisite—*Vox et praterea nihil*—A Good Eye and Quick Ear—The First Check—Large Fields of Horsemen antagonistic to Sport—Changing Scents—Beckford's Opinion—Great Fault in handling Hounds too soon—The best runs when Hounds beat the Horses—Fox-hunting on a cheap scale—Killing heavy Vixens—Number of Fox-hunting Establishments—Osbaldeston and Assheton Smith—Jealousies between Huntsmen and Whippers-in.

THERE exists no cause or impediment why a gentleman should not hunt his own hounds, if so disposed, provided he feels confident in the possession of qualifications necessary for such an undertaking. There is nothing derogatory in such an occupation, nothing of which the highest nobleman need feel ashamed, in handling his hounds, a whit more than in handling the reins of his four bays. We have had noble and gentlemen huntsmen in all times, and have still ; and to these high-spirited amateurs are we not a little indebted for the exalted position now occupied by the noble science of fox-hunting, and through them a tone and importance has been imparted to this our national sport. If a gentleman can afford to keep a pack of fox-hounds for his own and his friends' amusement, he may just as well hunt them himself as attend them all day when hunted by

another, provided his taste and talents lie that way, and he feels equal to the task—not a very onerous one in these times, when foxes are so numerous. It was a different matter some years ago, when we had to draw hundreds of acres of woodlands before finding our game. A huntsman then required stentorian lungs to begin with; and his voice often became reduced to a whimper, before the first whimper of a hound was heard upon the drag of a fox. Then it was no joke tearing through low wood and high wood to get into the only solitary drive, not as now, open and wide, but obstructed by briars and woodbines, and the overhanging boughs of trees, the first two threatening to tear your eyes out, or act the part of Calcraft in strangling you, and the other to sweep your head from your shoulders.

I remember once exciting the wrathful indignation of a junior member of our hunt, by sending him into one of these labyrinths, who, although an exquisite of the first order, was not a bad sort of fellow. I don't mean a d——d good sort of fellow, that type of man having been an aversion to me at all times from boyhood to manhood; but an agreeable, cheerful young fellow, of gentlemanly ideas and manners, neither addicted to swearing, hard drinking, or low, vicious habits. I was just letting the hounds go into covert through a gateway leading into the drive, which was tolerably smooth-looking on the outside, when my young friend asked if he could follow me.

“As you please,” was my reply; “although, I think you will repent taking me for your guide.”

“Oh!” he said; “I suppose I can go where you do,” in an offended tone.

So he could in the open ; but being a light weight, he soon discovered his mistake in trying to crush through thick coppice-wood, blackthorn, and reeds higher than his hat ; and to make matters worse, his horse floundered out of the narrow trackway into boggy ground.

“Halloa !” he cried ; “where are you ?”

“In the upper drive—come on !”

“Come on !” he exclaimed. “Come out, you ought to have said, for my horse has been nearly smothered in this confounded bog. I take it a personal insult your dragging me through this infamous jungle !”

“Oh ! you can go where I can, so come along,” as I heard the first whimper of a hound ; but my young friend did not show in the first flight that morning, and he took good care never to follow me again through woodlands.

That is no difficult matter now-a-days, since the *battue* system has come into fashion. The drives are now like bowling-greens, and the various trackways as neatly trimmed as laurel hedges in pleasure-grounds. There is little risk now of a man having his eyes torn out to get to hounds, even in the largest woods ; so that difficulty, and straining one’s voice for three or four consecutive hours before finding our fox, being removed, an amateur huntsman has little more work to encounter than any other man in the field who can ride to hounds, only he must have a good head upon his shoulders. I should like to see every young master hunt his own pack. Old gentlemen may be excused for keeping huntsmen, and those who have not sufficient strength of constitution to withstand rough weather ; but a young man, possessing the requisites, with

an aptitude for business, and a genuine love of the sport, may as well take his hounds in hand as let them be handled by a professional. Never mind about your vocal organ ; those with fine, melodious voices seldom make good huntsmen. The squeakers do the mischief to a fox.

The *sine quâ non* in hunting hounds is self-possession. Don't fancy you are going to do great things, and that all the field are looking on to see how you perform your part. Begin to think that others are thinking about you, and, as a huntsman, you are a lost man. Lookers-on will, of course, think, and say what they think ; but that is no business of yours. There are always men in every field who know a deal more about making casts and killing a fox than the best huntsman in the world. That is nothing new, so don't trouble yourself about idle gossip of that kind ; and above all things, don't attempt to make a brilliant display of your knowledge by dashing, unscientific casts. Where would be the heads of orators and preachers were their attention given to their auditors instead of their subject ? Just where a huntsman's is when he sets about making a brilliant cast to attract admiration, instead of sticking to his line. Hunting a pack of fox-hounds is not a very difficult matter if you will attend to a few plain rules. The two first, and most necessary of all are, never to be in a hurry, and never to get out of temper. Throw your pack quietly into covert. There is no necessity for using all that hunting lingo, so unceasingly issuing from the mouths of professionals, without which we would suppose no fox-hound would try to draw for a fox. This is just *vox et præterea nihil*—an idle waste of breath. You may

halloa yourself hoarse, if you like, with "Yoi, wind him! Have at him! Rouse him up!" &c., &c.; but as hounds know their business rather better than you can teach them in looking after their game, you will act far more wisely by letting them alone to follow their own natural instinct, instead of distracting their attention by all this unseemly chatter. How are her companions to hear the first whimper of Bounty, perhaps some five hundred yards distant, whilst the wood is ringing with the vociferations of a noisy musical huntsman? When drawing up to their fox, not a word should be spoken. Hounds are always then on the *qui vive*. Let them alone; they will get together much more quickly than you can put them together by your incessant "Hoie! hoie! hoie!"

There is another abomination to my ears, practised by huntsmen and whippers-in of the present day—the constant cracking of whips whilst the pack are drawing gorse coverts. It may be adopted by them to help in rousing the fox, but it is decidedly an objectionable practice, and unsportsmanlike. The whip should never be used, save as a corrective medium, to stop or check hounds from riot. The horn, also, is used too frequently by most huntsmen. Whilst hounds are rattling their fox round covert, you cannot be too quiet. Keep as near to them as possible. You must prepare to start in their company, or as near to them as may be. Never attend to halloas outside whilst they are running merrily within. Let them stick to their own game; chopping and changing from one fox to another does an infinity of mischief. When your fox breaks covert, don't put yourself into an insane flurry: take

things quietly. Let your hounds settle down on his line, and with a few short shrill blasts of your horn, to bring on any stragglers, sit down in your saddle, and with your eyes fixed on the leading couples, go along. This—keeping your eyes upon the hounds—is the most important business of a huntsman, when they are in chase; and he ought to possess the keenest sight, to enable him to detect in a moment when hounds are holding the scent, and when they go beyond it; for young hounds *will* go beyond it, and old ones too sometimes, if too nearly pressed by inconsiderate riders. A sudden check to a quick burst is one of the greatest difficulties in the path of a young huntsman—I might add, an old one too; and unless his whole attention has been given to his hounds whilst running, he cannot discover how far the scent has been carried. That they won't throw up at head as long as it is before them, he may feel quite sure, unless from the interposition of a flock of sheep, or a herd of cattle. Hounds have no business to throw up on fallows, if they are worth keeping: and of course he can see these in the field, as well as the hounds. But ten times out of a dozen these checks occur from the fox turning short, right or left, out of his line, and the hounds in their eagerness flying beyond it; and it is in such a crisis that a good eye often proves the best organ of the whole head-piece.

Good old hounds, although they may be forced on by the ruck, will not throw their tongues five yards without a scent. When they become mute, you may see at once what is going to happen; and from want of attention to the Solons of the pack, many a good fox laughs to scorn

these scientific displays of a conceited huntsman, in catching hold of his hounds directly they are at fault. Let them alone, I say, to make their own natural cast first. Hounds will generally lean to the right side, and nothing injures a pack more than continual lifting. It is here that a gentleman huntsman has a superiority over a professional. His field will attend to his "Hold hard!" when they would disregard that of a servant; and if they know his determination to be obeyed, where *he* has only the right to command, his authority is not likely to be disputed. Men will take liberties with a huntsman which they dare not attempt with a master hunting his own hounds. There is no necessity, however, for his getting out of temper, for, although a huntsman, he should never forget he is a gentleman. You will make yourself more respected and much more readily obeyed by firm and courteous demeanour, than by violence or abusive language; moreover, if you do loose your temper, you will be almost sure to loose your fox also. If your field are riotous and refractory, you can easily check them by threatening to take your hounds home if such conduct is repeated. Let them see your determination not to submit to any interference. There are some true sportsmen in every field, who will support the master, and aid him in emergencies.

The first check is generally the most critical. Hounds are fresh and impetuous, and so are the horsemen. Those who have good places are anxious to keep them, and the rear rank are pressing forward to regain lost ground, or make up for a bad start—all thinking, of course, more

about themselves and horses than the hounds, and utterly indifferent whether they are on the line or over it—that is the huntsman's business, not theirs. They come out to ride, not to hunt. It makes all the difference, not only in a day's but a season's sport, whether you have a large or small, an orderly or disorderly field, although if the burst lasts twenty minutes you will not be incommoded by numbers. But in slower things, you must get out of the crowd, holding your hounds a little forward, to escape the steam and pressure of the horses, although you may be satisfied that your fox is behind you. It is little use trying to hit off the scent amidst two or three hundred horsemen. You must hold your hounds to the right or left; and in this dilemma knowledge of country and the usual run of foxes will be the best guide, by suggesting to you in what direction to make your first venture to recover the line; although foxes don't invariably make for the same point or covert to which they may have led you before. If you are fortunate in your first essay, all goes well in a trice; if not, you have to retrace your steps, and the cream of the thing is lost.

This is the nuisance of a large field, which it is almost impossible to keep in order, so as to allow hounds to wheel to the right or the left when the scent fails at head. But notwithstanding this disadvantage, recover your line, and make the pack hunt it out. Don't regard being called "a slow coach," and let the fast men see that they have spoilt their own sport—the lesson may be of service to them and yourself another day. Why should not hunting men adopt the practice of cabmen and coachmen in the

streets of London, by holding up their whips or sticks over their heads when there is any obstacle in front? It is a suggestion worth attending to, and would prevent pressure upon the hounds when they throw up; the comers on would, upon recognising the signal, pull up in time.

The next great trial to a young huntsman is when running into a fresh covert the pack changes scents; and here a fine ear will be of as much service to him as a good eye in the open. If hounds begin running too hard for the pace they had been previously going, unless your hunted fox is nearly beaten, the chances are that they have a fresh one before them; for as long as your own game has power to hold on, he will keep ahead of the hounds, and not suffer himself to be fresh found. Beckford truly said, that if fox-hounds could be made to distinguish the scent of a hunted fox from that of a fresh one, as stag-hounds can that of a blown deer, fox-hunting would then be perfect. I am quite of his opinion, for changing scents is the greatest drawback to sport, and when our game is plentiful, almost sure to happen; and here it is that a clever whipper-in will be of the greatest service. Fox-hounds would stick closer to their hunted fox, but for the lifting halloaing system now adopted, which teaches them to trust more to their eyes and ears than their noses. We generally hear of the most brilliant runs when hounds beat the horsemen, and shake themselves free from interference. But this fact, although so suggestive of the treatment they should receive from their huntsman, is scarcely ever attended to. They are too impatient by half

to have their fingers in the pie—they must be for ever meddling with and bothering hounds, instead of giving them time and scope for the display of their instinct. It is chiefly to quick bursts I am alluding, when with a burning scent, hounds run away from horsemen ; but, from experience, I know that a really good pack of hounds will do their work far better, with a good or bad scent, if taught to depend upon themselves, and get out of difficulties much more quickly if unassisted. One part of the country I hunted was so hilly, and thickly studded with woods, that it was impossible to ride to hounds. Here they did their work entirely by themselves, in the most satisfactory manner ; and one of the best runs we ever had over our vale country was accomplished by the hounds alone, without a single horseman being able to catch them, running their fox for one hour and twenty minutes, over every variety of ground, and through large woodlands of three miles in extent, abounding in foxes ; but they never swerved from the line of their hunted fox, and pulled him down in the open, after having traversed full fourteen miles of country.

No dog possesses a finer nose than a fox-hound. I have seen them, when taken from their own game and taught to hunt hare, work upon her trail as well—better even than an old Southern harrier, for they work more rapidly. I was once particularly struck by some bitches, standing full twenty-four inches in height, which were purchased by an eccentric friend of mine at the sale of a nobleman's pack, in York, 1840, and degraded to the pursuit of the timid hare. Nothing could exceed the industry and per-

severance of these fox-hounds, after they had been put to their work for a few months. They beat the harriers hollow at every point, and, of course, in speed far outstripped them. No dog goes so fast, with a middling scent, as a well-bred fox-hound. This is his peculiar characteristic; and with this knowledge, I am surprised huntsmen afford them so few opportunities of working through the most common difficulties. These observations are intended for the benefit of young masters who may feel a distrust in their own capabilities of hunting hounds. Let them trust more to their instinct than to their own talents. The two greatest obstructions in a fox-chase are, the first check, and changing scents. All others may be overcome by patience and perseverance; but the first sudden pull-up in a quick thing tries a man's head and temper more than any other.

I felt exceedingly pleased with the letter of "A Yeoman," which appeared in the 'Field,' some time ago, headed "Fox-hunting on a cheap scale," quite agreeing with his preliminary remark, "that it is possible to have a good gallop across country after a fox, without going to any great expense." I like that sort of thing, and the enterprising spirit of Harry Skinner, in trying to kill his fox with four couples and a half of hounds. Let him show—which no doubt he will—what can be done by a select few, and not to exceed ten or twelve couples in the field, sticking to his line and text, "Fox-hunting on a cheap scale." This is what we want to see carried out, and Harry Skinner appears to be the right sort of man to set us the example. There is plenty of elbow room for short

establishments of this kind, on the outskirts of many large countries, where coverts lie undisturbed, save once or twice in the whole season; and a short pack might be admitted on sufferance—not to militate against the customs of fox-hunting—with the most beneficial results both to foxes and sport. Every good covert should be drawn once a month at least, from the 1st of September to the 1st of March. Those where foxes are plentiful should be visited by hounds every fortnight, and large woods require routing weekly, to afford real good sport. Nothing is gained by letting them lie fallow; but on the contrary, foxes become idle and indolent from inactivity, committing depredations upon neighbouring farm-yards, by which *they* are brought into bad habits, and the *farmers* into bad humour. The consequence is obvious: if the hounds don't kill them somebody else will. I heard of a three-legged one being chopped only a short time since by a crack pack, in as pretty a piece of gorse as a man could wish to see, which had been drawn by hounds this once only during the season. I wonder how many have been *stuffed* out of this said place!

This is the age for cheap literature; why not for cheap hunting? A young ardent master, with ten or twelve couples of good hounds, a couple of hunters and a hack, and an amateur friend as whipper-in, might show a vast deal of sport, and sleep soundly at night without being troubled with bugbears or visions about the state of his exchequer, and have more complete enjoyment of the pastime than the possessor of the largest establishment. There is a very true saying, "that blood will tell," which is applicable to

all animals, rational and irrational; and a gentleman huntsman, who embarks heart and mind in the chase, ought—if he does not—to excel the mere professional, who fills the situation rather from necessity than choice. A liberal education is a great advantage in any walk of life, teaching a man not to be bigoted to any particular notions; and what he does undertake will be done with energy and alacrity, and without leaning to prejudices so commonly found amongst the illiterate. We have, it is true, many professional men of genius and talent hunting hounds in the present age, who can give a better reason for what they do than that “Mr. Slowman, my lord’s former huntsman, did the same thing before them.” There is, however, one observation of Beckford’s which every man will do well to remember: “*It should be taken for granted that the instinct of a steady hound is a more sure dependence than the judgment of the most experienced huntsman.*”

The great fault in our present system of hunting hounds is the want of attention to this rule, which ought to be made absolute. All failures are attributed to want of scent—as if scent had become worse these last ten years than it was a quarter of a century ago: when such great improvements have been made in the drainage of land, scent ought to have improved in like ratio, since it always lies best over well-drained pastures.

I was once pressed by a blood-thirsty fox preserver—an apparent contradiction which needs the explanation—that if I could not kill all save a brace in his woods before the end of the season, his keeper would, and always did—to kill a heavy vixen, because his man declared there were

two, and he came out on purpose to see *that* done ; which of course I never intended to do. The poor brute was barred out safe enough, and found by the hounds ; but they did not appear more inclined to hunt her than their master, and I did not interfere. She kept crawling about before and behind them, creeping under and through the flakes of newly-cut underwood, right in our sight, when my friend said, "It is very extraordinary your hounds won't kill that fox."

"Nothing uncommon," was my reply ; "they don't fancy her more than you would a hen-pheasant full of eggs."

"Then you must go down and assist them."

"No, no," I replied, "I don't interfere in such cases ; the hounds may kill her if they can, without my co-operation ; I will have no hand in the murder."

"Very well," he rejoined, "then my keeper must, for I cannot afford you more than one litter of cubs ; that was my agreement, and to that I shall adhere."

"Let old Grappler open the large rabbit pipe in the wood hedge then, which she has been trying to get into, and I will have her out, and take her home alive."

Thus the controversy ended ; and Jack had to carry home the heavy vixen in a bag at his back, some fourteen miles, to the kennel, where, in a straw house, the following night, she produced us a fine litter of cubs. This gentleman, like some other game preservers, preferred pheasants to foxes ; but he stuck to his agreement with fairness and candour. He kept foxes to be killed by the hounds, for he rather enjoyed a gallop with us ; but if I failed to clear

them off by the end of March, save the old vixen and one dog, old Grap did our work for us. The one litter, however, was always forthcoming as long as I drew his coverts.

There are within the United Kingdom about one hundred and thirty fox-hunting establishments, and some thirty gentlemen huntsmen, showing a fair proportion of amateurs to professionals, although not an increase in numbers compared with former years, when those sporting squires of renown, Osbaldeston and Assheton Smith, were performing such exploits in the great shires, which have never been equalled by professionals. These two may be justly called the most brilliant stars which have ever arisen in our hunting hemisphere, in whom every requisite was combined—genius and talents of the highest order; energy and activity; quickness of decision; coolness in action. They possessed self-confidence in their own capabilities, yet placed the greatest in their hounds. They knew thoroughly well when to let well alone; never interfering with the natural sagacity of the animals under their command. And, I think, of all the gentlemen huntsmen I have known and seen at work, I should have selected the late Assheton Smith as my model; for notwithstanding his acknowledged talents and long experience, he took the fewest liberties with his hounds; and that which more particularly engaged my attention and excited my admiration, was his abhorrence of whipcord. I should like to have seen a whipper-in attempting “to cut a hound out of the middle of his pack,” related as a gallant exploit of one in the present enlightened era of fox-hunting! By Jove, sir, he would have knocked such an ass out of his saddle

with his double thong, and discharged him on the spot; and served him very properly too. Verily, this is a new light thrown in upon the system of the "noble science." We old fogies hold that a whipper-in has no business to strike the greatest offender in the middle of the pack. It is a cowardly, cruel, and lazy act; cowing and frightening all the others for the sake of one: and in the presence of their huntsman, to whom they fly for refuge, and where they ought invariably to find it, it is perfectly indefensible. If he has not activity or head enough to catch and punish a hound whilst in the commission of a fault, a good whipper-in knows he must be content with a rate, and wait his next opportunity, instead of scaring the whole pack.

Here the gentleman huntsman has another advantage over the servant. Whippers-in cannot take liberties of this or any other kind with their master, for fear of dismissal. Rarely do huntsmen and whippers-in set their horses well together, except where the former has unlimited power over his subordinates. Jealousies and bickerings too commonly exist between them, productive of much mischief in the field. Jack thinks himself as good as his commander, and takes every opportunity of giving him the slip, to have a bit of a burst by himself; or he may be in a sulky fit, and won't support the huntsman at critical moments; and we know that an envious, ill-conditioned whipper-in can mar sport to a great extent, when he feels so disposed, without being detected at his tricks. The first whipper-in has often, from his forward position, the start of the huntsman, when hounds break covert. He is generally the first to view the fox away;

and in windy weather, or from large woodlands, he can silently slip down wind, and have the fun to himself. He may halloo hounds on to a fresh fox, to prevent the huntsman finishing a good run well, by killing the hunted one, and annoy him in many other ways, for which excuses may be made without betraying the animus by which such vexatious proceedings are dictated. The huntsman may remonstrate and make complaints to the master, which will widen the breach between them, and still Jack will watch his opportunity of serving him out at some future critical juncture.

There is a class of huntsmen, however, who may be, and are often, intrusted with almost unlimited control over their subordinates—trustworthy, intelligent men, whose heart and mind are devoted to their business; and it is the interest of the master to support such in their proper position, and invest them with full authority in the field, as well as in the kennel, when they are not present. I had for many years an excellent head servant as first whipper-in and kennel huntsman, who once upon a time, having received some impertinent answer from Jack, took the law into his own hands by double thonging him. Jack, exceedingly disgusted with this treatment, immediately applied to me for redress, saying, “Jem was not master, and he would not obey his orders.”

“Jem is master when I am not present,” was my reply. “He has full authority from me to keep every one under him in proper order, and you must have acted most improperly to call down the thong upon your shoulders; but I will of course hear both sides.”

Jem quickly made his appearance, stating that Jack had not only disobeyed his orders about the hounds, but had been most insolent to him also. "For which latter impertinence, sir," Jem continued, "I just wisped him over a bit, and shall do it again whenever Mr. Jack gives me any more of his sauce. He has got very bumptious of late, sir, since some of the gentlemen have patronized him a little, and is getting above his place."

"Very well," I said, "then he can find another. What say you, Jack?—you are free to go, or behave yourself decently."

"I don't want to leave, sir," Jack replied, now very submissively. And thus terminated the dispute.

We cannot reasonably expect perfection in any human being, although one would suppose, from the requirements of gentlemen as to servants' characters, that this class of men must be, as to temper, disposition, honesty, and sobriety, far superior to their masters. The two indispensables, however, in a huntsman are, strict integrity and temperance, lacking which he is not fit to hold such a responsible situation, or have the management of a pack of fox-hounds. Intemperance is a vice which cannot be tolerated, however tempers may; and many of the best huntsmen I have known were subject to this infirmity; in fact the very nature of their office in the field would try the temper of a saint. They must be more than human not to break out sometimes; and it is far better that they should break out than be sulky—the worst of all tempers to deal with. I am an advocate for giving every huntsman power for the exercise of his talents in

the field. Interference by a master has a prejudicial effect, by damping his ardour, and mistrusting his genius. As he has all the labour, let him have all the credit he is capable of earning. This is only fair. Don't engage him to play a rubber, and take the cards out of his hand before the game is half finished, because you fancy he may lose it. A master may exercise his discretion by drawing any covert he may deem advisable, although in this case two heads may prove better than one, and he may assist his huntsman occasionally in small matters, which cannot be construed into interference ; but in the general business of the day he should be allowed to mark out his own line, and keep it if he can. He will then have no cause for saying, " Ah ! if master had not begged me to make this last cast, I should have handled my fox."

CHAPTER VII.

Poultry exhibitions—Increased value of the Farm-yard Stock—Farmers of the Old and Modern School—The Grey Mare often the Better Horse—Farmers' Wives and Foxes don't agree—How to scare the latter from Poultry-pens—Reynard deterred from breakfasting on Ducklings—Fox-hunting friendly to Farmers—Melton and the Provinces—The renowned "Star of the West," Jack Russell—Rabbits more injurious than Foxes—Game-preserving on a large scale—The Old Squire and the Cotton Lord.

WHEN living in the centre of what may be called the second fox-hunting country in England, abounding in fine old pastures, and where, from the small quantity of land under tillage, it is manifest that little damage can be sustained by farmers, in comparison with other districts, from fox-hunters riding across their turnips, seeds, or wheat, complaints reached my ears about the foxes, and their aggressions upon the poultry-yards, with threats of destruction, which I am informed have been carried into execution. Now we are free to admit that since the establishment of poultry exhibitions a strong stimulus has been given to the improvement and more extensive breeding of this kind of farm-yard stock, which may be made to pay quite as well as the cattle, sheep, or pigs upon the farm; and we see our nobility even advertising the sale of eggs

from prize birds of various kinds, at what would have been considered a monstrous price in former years, realizing almost the fable of the goose which laid the golden eggs: silver ones they may be truly called, being sold for a shilling each. Well, we must not complain of the new impetus given to the poultry trade, which wanted a fillip of the kind to prevent fowls and ducks degenerating to the size of a good pouter pigeon; for even in this country there are still many old fowls to be met with which would pass for spring chickens as to weight, not averaging more than two pounds each, when stripped of feathers.

Some few years ago there was a regular traffic in this commodity—old hens—in Devonshire, where the breed was small, and dealers purchased them freely for the London market, where after having been well fatted, they were sold in the months of April and May as veritable spring chickens. Plump and nice-looking they certainly were, when brought to table; and, from being fed on some particular kind of food, by no means tough or hard in flesh, although their age might easily be detected by an experienced carver, in the process of severing the joints. The general price of these little old-fashioned ladies of the poultry-yard was a shilling each, paid to the farmers' wives by the higgler, who had his profit to make for fattening and carriage to London or intermediate towns. But now, one egg of a prize bird is sold for as much money. With these facts before us, due allowance must be made to the better halves of farmers, when inroads are made upon their feathered pets by ill-mannered foxes; nor can we wonder at their resentment when suffering such losses by these

midnight marauders. Even the good man of the house, to obtain peace, may be sometimes obliged to promise, if not actually perpetrate, the murder of the delinquent. He may bear without complaining, damage done to his crops and fences in the pursuit of the animal; but the objur-gations of a *non placens uxor* at his fireside are not so lightly to be treated. The *misses* is generally the master over the *penates*; and we know the effect produced by dropping water, even upon a stone.

There are, however, or were—for of one, I fear, we must now speak almost in the preterite tense—three varieties of farmers, as of foxes: the genuine old John Bull, whom we were accustomed to meet in bygone days at fair or market; his jolly, rubicund face beaming with honest good-humour; and dressed in his shorts and mahogany top-boots; whilst his gloveless right hand grasped the pliant ground-ash stick cut from his own hedge. There was a character about this stamp of man which none could mistake; his looks giving evidence of honesty, integrity, and civility. He knew his proper position, and did not presume upon anything higher. But what have we now in his place? One half-trader, half-farmer, who—being pushed forward, by his friends supplying him with capital sufficient for the undertaking—embarks in the agricultural, as he would in any other business, with a superficial stock of knowledge acquired by two or three years' sojourn in some farm-house, and a little smattering of chemistry, by which he thinks to eclipse all the old clod-hoppers whose apprenticeship commenced at the plough tail. We don't mean to denounce chemical experiments as chimerical or productive

of no benefit when applied to agricultural matters, although we do know that a vast deal of nonsense has been written about nitrogen, oxygen, &c., which is more likely to lead any, save experimental philosophers, into error and difficulties. Great improvements have no doubt been effected of late years in agricultural implements, the demand for which has stimulated the energies of engineers to the utmost of their capabilities. We have threshing, mowing, reaping, and ploughing machines worked by steam, the benefits of which, although great to the farmer, are of somewhat doubtful advantage to the rural population, by superseding manual labour. But in this utilitarian age we seem to lose sight of the fact that the poor will always be with us. Notwithstanding we have often been told that machinery does not diminish handwork; yet the thousands of artisans thrown out of employment through this agency during the last few years give a flat contradiction to the assertion.

We well remember the time when the introduction of threshing machines roused the suspicions of agricultural labourers through the length and breadth of the land; and great was the devastation committed by them in their midnight attacks upon farm-yards, where sometimes the whole of the cereal crops were consigned to the flames, and the obnoxious machinery broken to fragments. The men of that generation have passed away, or become aged and infirm, and another has arisen, to whom the shrill scream of the steam-engine is as familiar as the click of the old water-mill was to their fathers. I am not exactly of the same opinion as an old maiden lady, who, when

asked if she did not think great improvements had been made by novel inventions, answered indignantly, "I think nothing improved, sir! Young gentlemen are not improved in their manners, or young ladies either; and as to railways, sir, I never travel by them, except when absolutely compelled to do so from the want of post-horses on the road." As to the manners and dress of the rising generation I confess to sharing the old lady's ideas; but railways are undoubtedly a great convenience to one sometimes, although scrupulously avoiding those murderous excursion trains. Farming has also undergone considerable changes for the better within the last twenty years, since landlords have discovered that draining is a profitable undertaking both to themselves and their tenants. Yet the new style of farmer is not to my liking, who assumes too many airs for his position. The fact is, although people are not generally aware of the movement, that this old world of ours is undergoing the gradual process of being turned topsy-turvy, shaking the old squires and farmers out of their places, into which a new class of men are scrambling, having regard to no other than the money power, by which they themselves have risen. Many of these are now occupying the old manor-houses in the country, which have been snatched by those agents of his Satanic majesty—the lawyers—from the hands of their rightful owners, and purchased by the millionaire who is too great a man to reside in such old-fashioned places. The new light tenant assumes the ill-fitting consequence of his superiors, and chooses to be dignified by the title of an Esquire! Yes, although it may make even pussy

laugh to see it, her master—half grazier and cattle dealer, and one-third farmer—usurps the place of the old country squire ; and his lady, with her rotundity of person, increased to frightful proportions by additional yards of crinoline, stalks up the aisle of the church on Sunday with a pomposity too ludicrous for even the commonest labourer to witness without a silent sneer of contempt.

The third-class species, or variety of farmer, is the man who has sprung from the ranks, that is, one who from small beginnings as a retailer of ducks, chickens, and potatoes, or other country commodities, has got on by little and little, screwing and half starving himself and his family the while, until his industry and perseverance have been rewarded by the purchase of a cow, the taking of a few acres of land—four or five only at first—and has now become the occupier of some forty or fifty, for which he pays a higher rent than any other farmer in the parish, simply because he happens to be the poorest ! This is the way of the world. The poorer the individual, the more he must pay for everything. And truly these men do deny themselves almost every comfort in life, to squeeze out the hardly-earned money ; and it is surprising how they can make up their rent at all, and support their families. The wives work like slaves, and the veriest trifles by which a half-penny can be realised are not overlooked ; flowers, fruit, vegetables, the produce of the garden as well as that of the poultry-yard, contribute their quota to the stock, or rather old stocking. Farmers of this class, however—if farmers they may be called—although thinly scattered over the grazing districts and midland counties, abound

chiefly in Devon and Wales, where I have often seen their wives and children sitting in the open streets on market days, winter and summer alike, without any protection from the weather save an old umbrella; with their stock-in-trade exposed for sale, and little sucking-pigs wrapped up in old blankets, more carefully defended from cold and rain than themselves. To such people as these, to whom every head of poultry is of consequence, it would be useless to speak of fox-hunting as a national sport, or the benefits it confers on the country generally. They are restricted from selling hay, were the price ever so high. Fox-hunting, therefore, can do them little good, by way of enhancing the value of their produce; and they consequently expect remuneration from the master of the hounds for any depredations committed on their poultry, and if that is not readily tendered, foxes are destroyed forthwith.

I heard of a case in point last summer, in the very best part of an old-established fox-hunting country. A litter of cubs was laid up in a bank belonging to a small farmer; and the vixen having carried away several of his chickens, he went over to a fox-hunter living near to state his grievances. The gentleman promised to write immediately to the master of the hounds, and obtain compensation for his loss; but more than a week having elapsed before the answer arrived—the master being from home—the farmer waxed impatient, took the case in hand by destroying the whole lot, cubs and mother together. Remonstrances of course were unavailing. “Fox-hunters,” he said, “did him no good, but just the contrary, by riding over his

land and breaking down his fences; and he could not afford to lose his poultry into the bargain."

In such cases as these (for which there is generally a separate fund in every hunt) the money value of the poultry must be paid down, or we know the consequences; although by very simple precautions the denizens of the poultry-yard may be protected from the aggressions of Reynard, by placing nets or red rags round the coops in summer, and taking care that the poultry-house door is well secured in winter. Foxes have a great dread of netting—why or wherefore, unless they have been bolted into rabbits' nets by terriers and ferrets—no unusual occurrence, or enveloped in one set purposely to entangle their own precious carcasses, it would be difficult to explain—whereas rabbits and hares, we know, go slap into a net without hesitation, even though they have been bundled in its meshes before; but a fox will always keep at a respectful distance from anything of the sort, when there is no pressure from within or without; a curious instance of which fell under my own observation.

Having two broods of young ducks, each containing thirteen, in two coops with the old birds—a cross between the wild and Rouen—upon which I set considerable value; they were placed, when young, upon the lawn, in front of my bedroom window. Having heard of a fox's visit to some neighbours, the ducklings were enclosed at night between two long boards, reaching from coop to coop, leaving a pretty good space between for their pans of food and water, and on one side only a thin net was suspended, the other being quite open. For three weeks or a month

nothing occurred—no case of meeting my friend Reynard “by moonlight alone,” and I began to think he entertained too high a respect for “Scrutator,” to pay his poultry a visit; when, one fine morning, about three o’clock (the hour at which I used generally to be called to go out cub-hunting), I was roused up from my slumbers by the cry, not of hounds, but of the ducks in full choir; the old birds quacking most vociferously. Thinks I to myself, my lord has called at last, and means to have ducks for breakfast. So creeping out of bed, and donning my toggery with unusual haste, I just peeped out from behind the curtain—my window being generally open in the summer time—and there, lo and behold, stood my little friend Wily—he was but of the Lilliputian or Gallic breed, although an old and knowing one—very coolly surveying my pet ducks, and licking his chaps in anticipation of a savoury meal. How long he had remained in his position or been prowling about the pen, I of course could not tell; but when my eye fell upon the red varmint he was within a yard of the board on the open side, over which, being only a foot and a half high, he might very easily have stepped into the enclosure, but it was evident from his hesitation that the net on the opposite side scared him from his prey. His tactics were bothered how to proceed further; and my impression is, that he would have retired as he came, if undisturbed, without ducks for breakfast. However, after closely scrutinizing Mr. Wily’s proportions, and the keen morning air reminding me that bed was a more comfortable situation to be placed in than at an open window, I saluted my morn-

ing visitor with a screech, which lifted him off the ground as if he had been shot through the heart; and without casting even a glance behind, he bolted through the hedge anyhow, and across the field. Faster he could not have fled had Charles Payne, with his bitch pack and Pytchley Field of three hundred horsemen, been rattling at his heels. To give him a thorough good fright, my screams were repeated some five minutes, and from that day no fox ever revisited the purlieus of my poultry-yard; at least not a chick was lost or carried away, out of some sixty couples, dotted about in their pens throughout the summer months, in a large orchard, without any protection save a bit of netting or red streamer suspended on a stick to wave over the coop. By adopting similar precautions, farmers may therefore easily prevent foxes from destroying their poultry, without having recourse to more severe measures.

In these times, however, the majority of large tenant farmers participate in the amusement as well as in the benefit of fox-hunting. Many holding grazing lands have a four-year-old to exhibit at the covert side, and two or three more coming on in succession from a well-bred mare by a thorough-bred horse. There are always gentlemen in every hunting-field, besides horse-dealers, on the look-out for such animals, to keep up their stud of hunters; and the chances are greatly in favour of the young one, if of good form and height, with freedom of action and speed, realizing from 120 to 150 guineas: even a dealer will give nearly that sum on speculation. Well, what would be the value of the young one out of the

hunting-field? Perhaps seventy or eighty guineas; so that by fox-hunting the breeder obtains some forty or fifty more, which leaves a pretty strong balance against damage done to his land, fences, or poultry-yard, in this one instance. But there are in every good hunting country other sets-off in favour of fox-hounds. The hoofs of two or three hundred hunters will leave, in wet weather, unseemly marks behind them, over old heavy clay pastures, or across seeds and turnips and new-sown wheat; but two pounds extra per ton for the farmer's hay, and ten shillings for oats and beans, more than fill up all the dents in the lands and gaps in the hedges. These are truths which cannot be gainsaid; the prices of fine meadow hay and a good sample of oats and beans, obtaining far higher rates in fox-hunting districts than in cities or large towns. In short, save for the great number of fox-hunting establishments, and studs of hunters maintained throughout the country, now that posting has ceased, hay and oats would be a drug in the market.

I warn the occupiers of land, great and small, whether residing in the grazing districts or the most remote counties of England or Wales, where a pack of fox-hounds is established upon ever so moderate a scale, that the cause of fox-hunting is their cause also, and deserving their most strenuous support, notwithstanding the abduction of a few ducks or chickens from their poultry-yard, and a little damage done to their fields and fences. I warn them of a state of things which I see fast approaching, when game-preserving will usurp the place of fox-hunting. How will they fare then, when half their cereal

crops are eaten by hares and rabbits? The battue system is increasing. The old squires are superseded by the cotton lords and lucky speculators, who are, almost to a man, game-preservers and fox-destroyers. Crafty landlords of this class, who have purchased properties in hilly or woodland districts, will insist that such are not, and never were, calculated for fox-hunting countries; it is an old stale tale, to which facts give the lie direct. What did the roughest part of North Devon exhibit, under the mastership of the celebrated Jack Russell, but a succession of fine runs, and excellent sport day after day, year after year, with those fine moor foxes? The fast scurries of twenty or thirty minutes over pastures green, from gorse or spinney, as in the great shires, might have been wanting, but in their place more genuine sport was afforded.

It is the fashion now to talk of pace only, and of those favoured localities abounding in large open pastures as the only appropriate districts for fox-hunting. This is a delusion and a snare, to entice young sportsmen away from their homes and their more legitimate sphere of action. *Non cuivis contingit adire Corintham.* Few of our remaining country squires can afford to spend their money and time, year after year at Melton. Let me warn these that it is their interest, if not their duty, to support fox-hunting in their own neighbourhood. Setting aside at present the *esprit de corps* of every true Briton in favour of the fox-chase, or other wild sports, we must endeavour to point out how the interests of the tiller of the soil would be benefited by the withdrawal of fox-hounds

from his land, and the substitution of game preserves in their place. And as one fact is worth more than a score of fancies, I cannot do better than state a case in point (out of several, I am sorry to say), which has fallen more particularly under my own observation, when shooting, not long since, over an adjoining property to a great cotton lord. The house and estate, which this *novus homo* recently purchased, had a few years previously been occupied by an old country squire, who had maintained a pack of fox-hounds at his own expense, although in very humble style, for many years. At last the lawyers got mixed up in his concerns, and the old squire, knowing more about the wiles of a fox than those of the legal fraternity, found himself denuded of his property, after being forced into Chancery, to the tune of some ten thousand pounds, to pay the costs of these harpies, although, strange as it may appear, he gained his cause. This is one of those anomalies in this miscalled Court of Equity, of no rare occurrence; in short, it may be said to happen daily, and will, until this Augean stable of impurities and abuses is cleaned out by some herculean hand—for a task greater than that of Hercules is here. But to return to the poor old squire, who soon found himself in the situation of the lion in the net set by the hunters, and with no kind-hearted little mouse to gnaw him out of the toils. He was led captive at their will, kicked out of his ancestral possessions, and told he might consider himself fortunate in being set at liberty at all. Under the new dynasty every fox was destroyed to make room for pheasants, hares, and rabbits; and such a scene of devasta-

tion ensued to the tenants' crops, within two seasons, as I have never witnessed. But the damage was not limited to the rich man's lately-acquired domain only. The tenants of the estate adjacent to his coverts suffered in like manner; and one wheat field, over which I was shooting at the end of September, had been left by the farmer, without a sheaf having been gathered by the sickle. Part of it, indeed, appeared as if it had never been sown, so thoroughly had the ground been eared or cleaned by hares and rabbits. The tenant was, of course, loud in his complaints, although he had permission from his own landlord to kill all the rabbits he could catch on his land. "But it's little use, sir," he remarked to me; "for as fast as I kill, others come, and in such shoals at night, that I must give up sowing that side of the farm altogether."

"Well," I said "you once complained of the old squire's foxes carrying off your poultry, and, I've a notion, did once shoot an old vixen that had laid up her cubs in the brake overhanging your farmyard."

"Yes, sir, I won't deny it; I was fool enough to listen to my missis, who made a botheration about an early brood of chickens, and killed the old bitch fox; but if ever I point a gun at another may the barrel burst in my hand. Folks never know when they're well off; and what's all the ducks and chickens we could raise in five years, to that ten-acre piece of wheat, cut down by those worse varminths, the rabbits, in one season? Why, there's handy a hundred pounds out of my pocket, let alone the barley and oats t'other side the hedge. Now, sir, I think of what you've

often told me before — that game is a worse enemy to farmers than foxes.”

The result of this state of things was, that every tenant upon the property of the millionaire sent in his resignation unless the rabbits were entirely destroyed, to which remonstrance the great man turned a deaf ear; and being consequently obliged to take all the land near his preserves into his own hands, he became a wholesale dealer in game, supplying the neighbouring manufacturing town with a large quantity of rabbits weekly, where he had previously carried on such a successful trade in cotton. Whether this new speculation in furs and feathers pays or not, I have no means of ascertaining: some say it does, others not. Whether or no, the thing is clear game-preserving is rapidly gaining that ground which once grew corn. The cry raised by the battue man is, “*A bas Fox-hunting!*” To the farmers, then, of Great Britain, one and all, of whatever degree, I sound the tocsin of alarm. Beware of game, and protect foxes; for you may rest assured that they are and ever will be of much more benefit to you than mischief. Two acres of wheat destroyed by rabbits is worth more money than one hundred couples of common ducks and chickens, that is, at the usual market price, deducting the cost of production.

CHAPTER VIII.

Cheap Articles generally the reverse, except Cheap Literature—The Adventures of Bill the Butcher-boy and the Spavined Mare—Pheasants and Foxes—The Great Battue Man and the Little Captain—A “Jack Careless” in every Fox-hunting Field—The use of such men to a Master—Ploughing with the Heifer—The Fair Sex favourable to the Sport—A Subscription Master resembling Pussy without claws in a certain dark region—The advantage of giving Balls to other animals besides Horses.

It would appear upon reading the advertisements in every daily paper, that professionals and tradesmen of every class had embarked in the laudable enterprise of conferring benefits and favours upon the public without regard to their own profits or interests. The suffering public are advised where to apply for medical aid without fees, where to obtain invalid chairs, sofas, and cushions, invented for their comfort, and wholly with the view of ameliorating their unfortunate condition. Health, strength, long life, and perfect immunity from all the maladies flesh is heir to, are offered to others upon swallowing two or three boxes of pills, at the low price of 1s. 1½*d.* each. Old ladies and teetotallers are warned not to purchase poisoned tea from any other shop than that of Humbug and Co. Goods of every description are advertised to be

almost given away, at ruinously low prices—some in large taking letters, for *nothing* ; but in smaller type below, you find these catching words have reference only to the catalogue. Others profess to suit their prices to all incomes, and so on. Well, taking cognizance only of things as they appear ostentatiously to the innocent and uninitiated, philanthropy would seem to be the most distinguishing characteristic of the present generation of mankind, and the Divine precept of “loving your neighbour as yourself,” in the course of actual fulfilment. The public are also informed of places of amusement being opened by the spirited proprietors for their especial benefit and gratification ; but the appeal made to their most tender part, the pocket, when suing for admission, generally dispels the delusion.

We must admit many things—we may say most—are sold at lower rates than they were twenty years ago ; yet they are flimsy, spurious commodities in comparison with those of former times. The fact is, we are all becoming very economical and penurious ; we want that for a penny which used to cost twopence or sixpence, and we get it in some shape or other—vendors of every kind of ware and merchandize accommodating their articles to the demands upon them for cheap goods. Cheap literature is, however, a boon to the public, and penny newspapers. Here we have our money’s full value ; but the unusual circulation at this low rate pays as well as the penny postage. The venture of these speculative enterprises has been found to answer the expectations of the projectors. We have also been told of penny theatres, where we should naturally

expect to find the audience more numerous than respectable; but the middling classes inhabiting this mighty Babylon, and other minor Babylons, are obliged to pay for such entertainments in proportion to their position. To them there is no participation in pleasures or amusements of this kind, except through the circulating medium. *Admissi spectatum teneates*, not *risum*—you may do that too, laugh at anything grotesque or ridiculous—but we will add, *Argentum*, with a trifling alteration in the poet's meaning, which, rendered into Anglo-Saxon, means, you must “pay for peeping” if you enter the opera house, or any respectable theatre. But what are middle-class men of moderate means to do, whose lot has been cast in the provinces? Doctors clerical and doctors medical, half-pay colonels, majors, and captains, men surgical and chemical, what are these men to do *pour passer le temps* in the winter months, located in a small country town or its vicinity? Why, attend to their business. Ay, very true, those who have any. But the misfortune is to them, although good fortune to their neighbours, that they have not business enough to occupy half their time. The clerical's parish may be very small, and he may be unpleasantly assisted in his duties by the thundering shepherd of Ebenezer or Bethesda chapel, who takes from him the care of half the souls ostensibly intrusted to his charge. Heaven help them! The practice of the medico and surgico, generally combined or comprehended in one individual, is often more extended in distance than extensive in operation; and in rural districts, where roads are rather distinguished by deep ruts than an even surface,

the medico-surgico apothecary is more commonly to be seen outside a horse than inside a pill-box. Horse, or horses, the latter *must* keep, or he loses caste, although half the time they may be eating their heads off. Then the heroes of the Crimea, or conquerors of Indian malcontents—what a deadly-lively kind of life these poor fellows must pass, after the excitement of war's alarms, in dull country quarters where there is no such thing as even a theatre, and perhaps only one concert or one ball during the whole year! The great majority of the military, however, have been sportsmen from their youth upwards, some fond of shooting, others of hunting. But what is the lover of the trigger to do, in a country like ours, without land of his own, or the opportunity of renting a manor encompassed on every side by the property of some large game-preserved? Why, he may as well be confined to barracks. He may obtain, it is true, an introduction to the battue man, through the intervention of some mutual friend, and be invited once or twice to a grand slaughter, and a grand dinner afterwards. But this is no sport to a genuine lover of it; he would rather be tiger-shooting or boar-hunting in India. The idea of shooting, therefore, must be abandoned as a source of recreation, and he falls back upon hunting. "Thank goodness," he exclaims, "I can join the hounds where and when I like, without let or hindrance, or black looks from the master—all are welcome to enter the hunting-field. This is *the* sport, the national sport, *pro bono publico*, and nothing to pay on admission." There he meets his neighbours, with joyous looks and light hearts, once or twice, perhaps three times, a

week, as at a social *réunion*, to talk of passing events at the covert side, and enjoy a gallop afterwards with the hounds, if they can find a fox. The clerical is there on his cob, to view, if not to hunt; the medical on his roadster, in the hope of the fox taking a line towards a certain village whither he is bent to visit a patient. The lawyer also recollects he has to make a call at a homestead near the fixture, to receive instructions from old Johnson about making his will. Of sporting yeomen, not a few; of horse dealers, one or two; a colt-breaker, who comes out to make the young 'un used to the cry of hounds; and a butcher's boy, with his blue apron in front, and an empty meat basket behind his back, on his master's thoroughbred spavined mare, who takes the lead of all the gents at starting—"right afore the hounds," as Tom the whipper-in says, until he is brought to grief at a thundering big fence, which the runaway mare, taking at a spring, lands herself in the off ditch, a yawner, with Bill's head in the basket. "Here's fun alive!" cries the lad, having extricated his neck from the inside of the basket handle, and his nag from the ditch; "and there goes the basket," throwing it away into the hedge, "until I comes back again. I'll have another go with the hounds; such fun, is'nt it?" chuckled Bill, "and nothing to pay."

"Ah! you young devil," cries out Farmer Portly, as Bill brushed past him at a gap in the next fence, nearly tearing his boot off his leg. "I'll tell your master, you young scamp, what you've been arter."

"Beg pardon, sir," says Bill, looking back, and touching his wide-awake, "don't ye do that, Mr. Portly; I loikes a

bit of fun as well as yourself, and the mare do pull' so, I can't hould her."

"Dom thee young butchering blood!" shouts the Yorkshire colt-breaker, who is charged by Bill and his mare, in trying to open a gate, and sent down young and old together, "I'll be the death o' thee!"

"Couldn't help it, Bob," says Bill; "hope ye beant hurt; but the mare do pull so."

The butcher's mare being speedy, rapidly gains lost ground, and begins again to show in front, tearing and rasping through everything, until Bill is landed a winner of the race, after five and forty minutes, minus his blue apron, torn to shreds, and his wide-awake.

"By Jove, that boy's a trump!" exclaims the master. "Who is he, Tom?"

"Bill, the butcher's boy, sir."

"Come here, Bill," says the master; "you're a spanking young dog: which will you have, the brush of the fox, or a half-crown piece?"

"The brush, if you please, sir; I mayn't be in at the death of another fox for a longsome while."

"Well, you're a spirited lad, and seem to take to the fun as well as I do, so here's the half-crown to buy you another apron, and Tom shall give you the brush too."

"Please, sir, I hopes no offence; but you won't tell master I've been riding his mare with the fox-hounds."

"Yes, I will, you young scamp, if he asks me; and this more, that if he discharges you, I'll take you into my service."

It may suffice to state the sequel to this occurrence,

which happened some years ago, that Bill the butcher-boy afterwards became huntsman to one of the most celebrated packs of fox-hounds in England, and I have some of his letters about hounds still in my possession.

For fox-hunting we may assume the motto adopted by some provincial papers professing neutral opinions — “Open to all parties, influenced by none;” or one still more appropriate, “Pro bono publico.” And is not the hunting-field opened for the benefit of the community? Every man and boy who can borrow horse or pony may have as many days’ sport as they can afford from other avocations, without putting themselves under particular obligations to anybody. The master asks no questions of strangers, who they are, or whence they come, unless brought by some particular act or deed under his notice. All are free to come, free to hunt with his hounds, provided they do not interfere or spoil sport, and free to go when it pleases them. Can this be said of any other sport save fox-hunting? A stranger could not join a party of coursers without an invitation; much less would a gentleman put on brass enough to walk up to another he might see shooting upon his own grounds, and propose to help fill his bag, although he might be able to produce a certificate, which, poor fellow, not having a rood of land, he had taken out on speculation, when invited two months previously to shoot with his friend Jones in North Wales; but Jones having made a good investment in the matrimonial line meanwhile, with a young heiress, who fell in love with the good-looking Welshman at first sight, the unfortunate

wight is thrown overboard—Jones writing coolly to inform him it would be quite uncertain when he might return from his continental tour, and as game was scarce, he should not shoot that season. How very insignificant does a man feel in his own opinion, if he would confess the truth, when looking at the little slip of paper for which he has paid 3*l.*, purporting to be a licence to kill game, without an acre of his own to shoot over, and not the prospect of an invite to a friend's house even for a week! What a disgusting speculation! He is ready to bite his nails to the quick in very vexation of spirit, or, waxing savage, to turn poacher, and have his money's worth in an illegitimate way.

I remember a captain of Dragoons who, having sold his commission on marrying a tolerably wealthy heiress, went to reside in a country town, near which lived some of his family connections; and being not wholly unknown to the lord of the adjoining manor, who was a large game-preserve, he did himself the honour of calling upon him to ask him for a day's shooting.

“Not an hour,” was the uncourteous reply; upon which the Captain, thoroughly disgusted with his reception, retired without another word.

It so happened, however, that, attending the market some few days after to buy corn for his horses, as he kept two hunters, he fell into conversation with an independent yeoman having oats to dispose of, who occupied land within two fields of the great man's head preserves, and loudly complained of the mischief done by the game.

“Well, farmer,” said the Captain, “I will buy your oats

and a rick of hay too, gladly, if you have any to sell ; and if you have too much game, I will bring over my double-barrel to-morrow, and kill some for your dinner.”

“ I’ll be glad to see you, sir, and mind you bring plenty of powder and shot : but I must ask you one question. Have ye got a certificate ? as the keepers be always on the look out, although I’ve warned ’em off my land.”

“ Yes, farmer, I did take one out this season, and I’ll bring it with me.”

The next day being the 1st of October, the battue man had a select party to shoot with him, and the pheasants towered up out of his preserves, skimming away into a large piece of late beans belonging to farmer Hayward, where, ensconced behind a high hedge, the Captain knocked them down right and left, cocks and hens alike, as they passed over his head ; in this manner bagging no less than ten brace, and picking up two more on walking through the beans back to the farm-house. We may suppose the pleasure with which Mr. Hayward surveyed the game, as much as the Captain and his groom could conveniently carry, the greater part of which was left in his larder, to send to his friends. And after partaking together of a hearty good dinner, a pipe, and pretty good allowance of home-brewed, the Captain and the Yeoman parted on the most friendly terms, the former being invited to come and shoot as often as he liked, with the promise that no other should kill a head of game upon his land. Mr. M——’s keepers soon picked out all about the Captain’s first day’s shooting, his location, and the information that he had taken out a certificate—so that on the

latter point he was quite safe—and safe also, being a dead shot, to kill every pheasant, hare, partridge, or rabbit which fell in his way. It was easy enough for them to bar back the hares from trespassing upon Hayward's farm, by stopping the hedge meuses with blackthorn and gorse smeared with coal-tar, but they could not clip the pheasants' wings, which, notwithstanding they were fed at home regularly with corn and potatoes, would ramble off into the farmer's bean-field to sun themselves in the afternoon, where the Captain gave them a warm reception twice or thrice a week, as long as the beans were standing; and after they were cut, and the land sown to wheat, the birds still flocked out as usual; taking refuge in a little thick spinney of willows hard by when disturbed off their feeding-ground. Alarmed by the Captain's continued platooning, the head keeper made complaints to his master, saying it was little use preserving pheasants unless they could obtain permission to shoot over Mr. Hayward's farm, as before; and he was accordingly instructed to make terms, if possible, with the offended Yeoman. But the Captain had been beforehand with him, having taken the shooting on lease, for five pounds per annum, and an allowance of game to the proprietor of the soil. Thus foiled, the great man bethought himself of an expedient to catch the Captain. He indited a very polite note—sorely against the grain, since he was very much of a Turk in disposition—regretting that when Captain F—— did him the honour of a call to solicit a day's shooting, he was not aware of his connection with Mr. Prendergast, an old school-fellow of his; and he hoped, therefore, for the future, that instead of

confining himself to the narrow limits of Mr. Hayward's farm, he would sport over the whole of his manor, the head preserve only excepted.

"Ah!" exclaimed the Captain, on perusing this courteous epistle, "there's an end of my pheasant-shooting."

"How so?" asked a friend who was staying with him.

"Read that letter, Tom."

"Well, F.—, I should call that a good exchange—a manor for fifty acres of land."

"Ah! but here's the other side of the question. I'll be shot before I will lay myself under any obligation to that cantankerous old fox-killer. He knows it. But after this offer, he knows also, as a gentleman, I cannot kill any more of his pheasants. Well!" he exclaimed, after pondering a few minutes, "I have it, and him too, I think; so order the horses, Tom, and we will ride over and answer his note personally."

Having been admitted into the great man's den, Captain F.—, after expressing his thanks for the proffer of shooting over his manor, begged very politely to decline availing himself of it.

"Then am I to infer, Captain F.—, that you still purpose killing my pheasants?"

"Yes, sir," was the candid reply, "as long as you kill our foxes. I am a fox-hunter."

"I am not aware, Captain F.—, that my keepers have destroyed any fox with a collar round his neck bearing your name."

"Neither have the pheasants I have killed on Hayward's farm carried labels bearing yours."

“I have a right to kill everything that is bred on my property,” retorted the great man, waxing wroth.

“True. But you have no more right to trap our foxes which stray into your woods, than I have to shoot your pheasants which stray upon my land. Here we are even. You don’t breed foxes—I don’t breed pheasants. I don’t call them *my* foxes, but *our* foxes. We are a community of fox-hunters, or party, if you prefer the term. A master of hounds does not go out with his two or three friends and dependants only, like a game-preserve. He invites all to join the sport: all, sir—men of every class. He caters for the amusement of the *Oi polloi—pro bono publico*. I have the honour to form one of that community, sir. Ours is a liberal party, like that professing liberal opinions, to which I believe you belong. And now, Mr. M——, perhaps I should be premature in addressing you as Lord M——, I have only this more to add: you have served *your* party, and are about reaping the reward. I shall serve *mine*. And so long as you destroy our foxes I will kill every pheasant of yours which crosses my path, but not one moment longer. Give me your word of honour to cease killing our foxes, and I pledge mine to cease killing your game.”

“I think, Captain F——, we are not likely to agree upon these conditions.”

“As you please, sir,” was the quiet reply, with a low bow. “I have the honour of wishing you good morning.”

The battue man chafed and fumed at this proposal; resolving, like obstinate persons, not to concede the point; and so matters continued till the week before Christmas,

when another Whig of great influence in the county, although indifferent about politics, but a staunch fox-hunter, took the matter in hand, by telling Mr. M—— if he treated them to any more blank days, he would vote against every government measure brought forward the next session. Every man has his weak point, although he may have been dipped in very strong waters, like Achilles, or incased in a coat of mail ; he is assailable, or saleable, somewhere ; soft in his heel, head, or pocket. The great misfortune is, fox-hunters do not generally make the common cause their own particular cause also. They may join in the common outcry against fox-destroyers, but they consider it the business of the master to find foxes, as well as horses and hounds to follow them. Yet that is clearly *not his* business only. He devotes his time, money, and energies to the cause. He is the chief director, or head workman of the company, but others must aid and assist him in their various vocations to keep the concern together in working order.

I have endeavoured to show, in the last chapter, that it is manifestly the interest of farmers to support fox-hunting, in self-defence, against the aggression of game. The genuine fox-hunter needs no inducement to be faithful and staunch to his colours. It is his sport—the one he prefers to all others ; and there is often a Jack Careless, as described in “Tremaine,” to be found in most hunts, who has many opportunities of assisting the master, and does so, with his heart in the business ; a bachelor well known in the country, who has access to the tables of the great, as well as the small ; a man of independent means and

mind, although perhaps too proud to marry for money, and too poor to marry without it. Such are generally favourites with the fair sex—executing little commissions for them, without impeachment of their motives; promoters of balls, archery meetings, and pic-nics; ever willing to inculcate good fellowship and good feelings amongst their neighbours. Some such men as these I have met with in my hunting career, who would effect sometimes what a master of the hounds could not. And I have known them convert fox-destroyers into fox-preservers, by ploughing with the *heifer*, whilst the master was ineffectually trying to plough with the horse—mule I should rather say. Ladies generally are in favour of fox-hunters, not merely because they wear the supposed favourite scarlet cloth, but partly because they are usually lively, unaffected, sociable fellows; and more particularly on account of their being engaged in the manly and daring exploits of the chase. Women prefer the bold, courageous, high-spirited of our sex, as we do the lovely, gentle, and graceful of theirs. A man in his bit of pink, mounted upon a mettlesome hunter, throws the battue man in his sombre costume far into the shade, although it is generally the character more than the person that women admire.

To the master of fox-hounds, even though a man of good landed property in the county, of great influence (not political, for there are generally two parties in every county, and he is more safe not to be mixed up with either) and popularity, difficulties will occur which he may be unable to surmount. Game-preservers, although upon good terms with him, will destroy foxes *sub rosa*,

perhaps not to the extent of treating him to a blank every time he draws their coverts. They are also afraid of that bugbear, public opinion, which is in favour of fox-hunting. But a subscription master—poor fellow, I pity him!—is very much like pussy in a certain warm locality, denuded of the means to resent ill-usage. That man is expected to do twice the work of Hercules, without a quarter of his power; and if he does not, in addition to all his other duties and labours, enlist the ladies on his side, he may be pronounced, in Yankee language, “a gone coon.”

Subscribers, if they fulfil their part of the engagement by paying to the day—which, by the way, very few do—think they have done all that ought to be required of them. The master must do the rest. But what answer would a subscription-master receive to his remonstrances with any large landed proprietor whom he knew to be destroying the sport of his hunt? “Go to the diable!” Not exactly in such candid terms; his *language* might be exceedingly courteous, but the meaning unmistakable. Well, what is he to do in such a case? Draw blanks until he is savagely disgusted, and his hounds, losing all patience, begin to run riot too. The sporting press may, and perhaps will, take up the matter; but unless the delinquent fox-murderer has shut his ears doggedly and resolutely to all good counsels, the advice and entreaties of friends, and the just complaints of the whole hunt, it is better to try milder measures first. These failing, print him, and photograph him too; with this *subscription, vice autograph*—*Hic niger est*; Anglice, “Here’s a nigger.” But if he is a family man, with daughters come or com-

ing out, *ball* him. He may turn restive, kick and plunge like a vicious horse; but I will back the lady mamma to get the twitch on his ear at last, and his eldest daughter to slip the ball down his throat. There is nothing like a hunt-ball to bring disaffected Paterfamilias to reason.

It is not of any very great consequence whether the master of the hounds be single or double, married or unmarried; although, in my opinion, a preference should be given to the Benedict, who having been already provided with a helpmate, does not render himself liable to any petty jealousies among the young ladies of the county, or their mammas, to which a bachelor may be subjected when in search of a wife, if he is considered a desirable *parti*; for it won't do for him to say, "I've danced and I've flirted with fifty fair maids," &c., or he would have the fathers and brothers of half the county about his ears; and steady-going members of the hunt—married men with families—have generally a leaning to one in like case with themselves. It is a sort of guarantee that things will be conducted peaceably and with propriety under his rule. A great deal of good may be done also to the cause by the master's better-half, if she is lady-like, gentle, and discreet; not dabbling in scandal or tittle-tattle about her neighbours; not taking too much upon herself, and not *too good-looking*; for though a handsome woman supporting the throne may make a more decided impression upon the gentlemen of her court, strife and envy might fill the hearts of other fair ones not so highly favoured as herself. The wife of the master should be as popular as himself; and like him, if she does her duty, she will have

her hands and time pretty well occupied, proving herself his right hand in many little matters, where a woman's tact can effect more than a man's power. One thing is certain, that disruption and discontent in many hunting countries are occasioned by a want of cordiality and pulling together of the members. Things cannot be kept in nice order in the county, without society and sociability. Great dinner parties are generally great bores, and, in the present age, formality and ostentation stifle genuine hospitality. Grand displays engender rivalry rather than conviviality, for men don't like to be outdone in cookery or outshone in plate by others. The little social gatherings round the mahogany do the business; not few and far between, but frequent, if not fast; people dining at each others' houses in a brotherly, friendly manner; and by these little *réunions* harmony and good-fellowship are kept up. It is in the binding and holding of fox-hunters together, like the bundle of sticks, that the strength of the cause consists. Let not, however, the ladies be forgotten. They must be interested, also, in their fathers', husbands', or brothers' pursuits. Let the master, therefore, use his best endeavours to cater for their entertainment, by getting one hunt-ball, if not two, in the season; and they, in return, will assist him in catering "pro bono publico."

CHAPTER IX.

The first Hunting Countries— Winter quarters— Melton too fast a place for any save fast men— Leamington, Cheltenham, Bath, Northampton, and Warwickshire— Division of large Fox-hunting Countries productive of more Sport— North and South— Mr. Baker's cross between Fox-hound and Blood-hound— Rugby a Central Situation within easy distances of many good Fixtures— The Dunchurch Country— Knightlow Cross— Large fields with the Pytchley— A scene with the Royal Buck-hounds in the New Forest.

It is not my intention to treat at length of the great Meltonian head-quarters, which are accessible to the favoured few blessed with the means of maintaining large hunting-studs. Once in his life, perhaps, every ardent fox-hunter would desire to pay a visit to the great shires, and enjoy a few gallops over those large pastures which are not to be found in the provinces. But a man with two hunters and a hack, supposing the former to be one of the right sort, would cut a poor figure at Melton. None of us like to be laughed at; and what would be our feelings—having one hunter dead lame, and a hard day with the other out yesterday—upon hearing the remark of a twelve-horse man, cantering cheerily up the street, *en route* for a crack fixture, "Poor fellow! how I pity him. Can't show again for a week!" Could anything make a

man of spirit feel more disgustingly small in his own sight than such a remark, except being told by a young lady to whom he had confessed the most passionate love, after much evident encouragement on her part, that she was engaged to his rival, Captain Horseman? Melton is the place for hunting, and hunting only, every day in the week; there is nothing else to be done there; and if not furnished with a stud sufficient for that purpose, it is far wiser to stay at home, or go into country quarters, where two hunters and a hack are considered at least respectable. With these a prudent man may see a vast deal of hunting in the provinces—yes, and in countries approaching very nearly the *desirebilia* for sport to Leicestershire.

Family men with wives and daughters will select Leamington as a hunting quarter, which has thrown its rival city of waters, Cheltenham, into the back-ground, from being located in a more favoured district for fox-hunting, and containing in other respects equal, if not greater, attractions for those who cannot afford to hunt every day in the week. Warwickshire has always stood third at least on the list of hunting-grounds, allowing a preference to Northamptonshire, which more than one old master, who has handled his own pack of hounds, from the Quorn kennels, has pronounced second to none; and the Warwickshire, since its division into two hunts, has been increasing in importance. This was a not less necessary than politic arrangement, since, with such an extensive area of woodlands now belonging to the North Warwickshire Hunt, it could not be sufficiently routed by one pack of hounds, and, strange as it may appear, the once-

neglected is now become the favourite side of the country. Yet here something more than sport has been brought to bear in causing such a reaction. Leamington has shed her increasing influence over it; for with the introduction of railways, this place has been rising rapidly in public estimation as a winter residence, and houses have been erected there capacious enough to suit men of the highest rank. Within two hours and a half of London, and one of Birmingham, it is not surprising to find Leamington thronged with visitors, both in and out of season. Formerly summer was the season there, now winter; and this change must be attributed partly, if not principally, to the influx of fox-hunters and their families into these very agreeable hunting-quarters, where the fair sex can have their pleasure and amusement as well as their lords and masters. Not, however, to pleasure-seekers only does this town hold out allurements. People of all grades flock there for health as well as recreation, as they did in years past to Bath, on account of its mineral waters; and many have purchased houses there, as their permanent place of residence. Occupying a more central situation in the midland counties, and on the high railroad between London and Liverpool, Leamington bids fair to eclipse the city of the west, although inferior to it in architectural beauty, and the picturesque scenery by which Bath is surrounded on every side; yet there is little doubt—with this advantage, and the fact of its lying in a good fox-hunting country, affording easy access by rail to the great shires—Leamington has become what Bath was. Bath never would have been, from choice, the residence

of a genuine fox-hunter, surrounded as it is on all sides by an almost impracticable country, and hills nearly as steep as the roof of a house, although on one side, by rail, some of the best fixtures in the Duke of Beaufort's hunt may be reached in reasonable time. But the adjunct country, on the south-western side, is a closed book to fox-hunters, with difficulties against which the most energetic masters would feel powerless to contend—the 'greatest of these being the entire absence of all support in any shape.

Mr. Baker, the master of the North Warwickshire fox-hounds, did great things for Leamington; and Leamington, in return, did great things for Mr. Baker. He provided a good pack of hounds, with a clever huntsman at their head, for the people of Leamington; and they were not backward in appreciating his services, by assisting him with the sinews of war. The kennels are judiciously placed at Milverton, rather over a mile from the town, near the high road, with a good raised footpath on one side; so that an easy access is presented to them, both on horseback and on foot. I use the word *judiciously* on this account, not that it is the best site that could have been chosen for a kennel, but from its proximity to the town, the occupants of it have become to a certain degree identified with the townspeople, many of whom speak of the pack as "*their pack*," thereby manifesting an interest in its welfare alike gratifying to the master and conducive to sport. This is the right feeling—the absence of which is to be deplored in so many hunts—that holds things together. Let the men who hunt take an interest in the hounds, or in any particular individual they fancy. Let

Fairmaid be a favourite with one, Fairy with another, Fatima with a third, and so on, and thus additional power is given to the master through the influence of those who attach themselves to his hounds. Mr. Baker was both a popular and experienced master, having handled his own hounds for several seasons with great success, before coming into the North Warwickshire country; but the last four seasons, owing to ill-health, the horn had been handed over to Peter Collison, who commenced his novitiate in the hunting-field by riding second horse in the Duke of Buccleuch's establishment, and, after assisting a few years with the Shropshire and Wheatland hounds, became first whipper-in to Williamson, his Grace's well-known huntsman in Scotland, under whom he held office for, I believe, four seasons. Collison gained golden opinions by the quiet manner in which he handled his hounds, or I should rather say, treated them, when in difficulties; for he displays great good sense by not handling them too soon, and to this cause chiefly must be attributed the good sport he was enabled to show to his admiring friends. There is another cause, also, which goes far to the making of an industrious pack of hounds—the North Warwickshire woodlands. An old master used to say, "If hounds do their work well in covert, they are sure to do it well out," of which little doubt can be entertained; for there is nothing like a short-running fox in woodlands to expose the stiff-necked ones, and these are the sport-spoilers in every pack, helping to save the lives of more foxes than they kill. Drafting, from head to tail, is the only means of making a pack hold well together,

and do their work as it ought to be done, since hounds go first, in proportion to the head they carry.

Mr. Baker carried out to a successful issue that which has been often talked of by other masters, and attempted by one or two in vain, the amalgamation of fox-hound and blood-hound; and although some years have passed since the first cross, there remains in the descendants from this union unmistakable evidence of the blood-hound original, both in colour and appearance, and they are said to possess great superiority of nose, combined with quickness of action and speed.

We must not, however, forget the Old Warwickshire Pack, with which our acquaintance commenced when Jack Wood was huntsman, and we thought

“None could be blithe as we,
In the merry days when we were young.”

Eheu fugaces labuntur anni. It is a long, long time ago since Jack Wood presided over the kennels of Kington, and the pack have passed through many changes of masters and huntsmen since his time. However, some of the blood of Corbet still remains, whose name will ever be associated with the Warwickshire hunt as one of the most celebrated masters of the old school, and contemporary with the great Mr. Meynell of Quorn renown.

Their best fixtures are wide of Leamington, ranging from Chesterton Wood, over a fine grass country, to Banbury, which borders on Mr. Drake's and the Heythrop hunts. The Old Warwickshire has, like other fox-hunting countries, undergone considerable changes as to its general features since the days of Jack Wood, when the heavy

weights had the advantage of being able to get through the stiff bullfinches, the light ones being obliged or content to follow in their wake. By improvements in agriculture, the case is now reversed, and the light weights have the the best of it. The hedges are cut low, the ditches cleared out. The thick, coarse, bushy grass, at that time high enough for a fox to kennel in, has, by draining, been converted into close, sweet herbage, and the land is comparatively firm to ride upon, where bog and mire and slush formerly predominated. But there is no improvement in foxes, which, from the increase of game preserves even in these old hunting-grounds, are not half so stout as in earlier times, when they had long distances to travel in search of food. There are some fixtures of this hunt within fair distance of Leamington. We never used to think much of ten or twelve miles to covert; and it was the opinion of the late Sir Francis Burdett, that a hunter was none the worse for walking that distance before he entered the field. We have become more luxurious and idle since the introduction of railways, preferring a first-class carriage for ourselves, and a loose box for our hunter, by which both time and toil are economized. Well, there is no reason why we should make a toil of a pleasure when it can be avoided; and now that the general hour of meeting is eleven o'clock, hunting men can by railway take a peep at no less than three other packs of hounds besides their county ones, from the gay town of Leamington. The Atherstone, Pytchley, and Mr. Tailby's often come within easy distance of Rugby, from which there are trains constantly running to and fro, accomplishing the journey under half

an hour. To a single man, desirous of hunting five or six days a week, Rugby is a more central station than Leamington, although deficient in other attractions. It is, however, a good country town, unsurpassed as a hunting station in the provinces, and it affords excellent accommodation in every respect to man and horse. There are two good comfortable hotels—the ‘George,’ kept by Mr. Blick, who is landlord also of that well-known old sporting-house, the ‘Dun Cow,’ at Dunchurch. Good lodgings may also be obtained for single or married men upon reasonable terms, and the best of eatables and drinkables from the various purveyors and tradesmen of the town. In short, a man must be fastidious indeed, to express dissatisfaction with the entertainment provided for him in the good old town of Rugby; and if he wishes to brush up his Latin and Greek, I dare say he might be easily accommodated in that respect also.

To those desirous of paying a visit to these superior hunting quarters, a list of the fixtures (within fourteen miles) of the adjoining hunts will not be unacceptable, and to the hunting public generally.

THE PYTCHLEY.

Fixtures.	Miles distant.	Fixtures.	Miles distant.
Althorp Park	14	Cold Ashby	11
Ashby St. Ledgers	6	Creaton	14
Badby Wood	12	Crick	6
Bragborough	8	Crick Station	8
Braunston	8	Dodford Village	13
Brington, Little	14	Everdon	14
Brockall	14	Highgate House	14
Buckley Folly.	9	Holdenby	14
Cattesbrook	13	Lilbourne	4

Fixtures.	Miles distant.	Fixtures.	Miles distant.
Long Buckby	12	Tawsley Park	14
Misterton	8	Thornby	12
Naseby	13	Twelve-mile Stone, Welford } 12	
North Kilworth	10	Road	
Sibbertoft	14	Welton Place	9
Stanford Hall	7	West Haddon	9
Sulby Hall	12	Winwick Village	9
Swinford	6	Yelvertoft	7

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE.

Anstey Wood	9	Hill Morton	2
Bitton Grange	2	Hunningham Village	9
Blue Boar	4	Kenilworth Castle	14
Bourton	6	Offchurch Bury	12
Buttenhall	9	Princethorpe	8
Bull Inn, Weston	10	Rugby	0
Cubbington Gate	12	Ryton Village	8
Dunchurch	3	Stoneleigh Abbey	14
Frankton Wood	6	Woolscot Green	9

SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE.

Long Itchington	10	Lower Shuckborough	9
Upton Wood			12

ATHERSTONE HOUNDS.

Bitteswell	8	Harrows Inn	14
Brincklow	6	Newnham Paddock	6
Brownsover	2	Shilton Village	10
Caton House	4	Stretton Village	6
Churchover	4½	Stretton Wharf	6
Coombe	8	Three Pots	12
Gill's Corner	6	Ullesthorpe Station	9

The Dunchurch is considered the crack part of the North Warwickshire country, as that about Misterton and Crick the cream of the Pytchley; although there may be a difference of opinion whether it is the best for sport, which, on bad scenting days, is marred by the overcrowded state

of the fields—men flocking from all quarters to these favoured fixtures. For my part, I would rather meet Charles Payne by moonlight in Rockingham Forest, or at Badby Wood in a snowstorm, than encounter that *quadripidantem cohortem* of all nations and languages at his pet places, where, on starting, every one seems as much bent upon killing his man as killing his fox. Once in a way, it is all very well to witness such an assemblage of *chasseurs*; but the most comfortable and safe place to reconnoitre the proceedings is from the fork of a tree, instead of your own fork in the saddle, unless mounted upon a steady, quiet old hunter, who does not care for being hustled in a crowd. The idea of enjoying a hunting run under such circumstances is a mere delusion, and without the luck of a good scent and a good start, you may as well be at home. Two things have often struck me as marvellous with such musters: the absence of accidents, and the absence of three parts of the field after the first twenty minutes, if there is anything like a scent. What becomes of them, nobody knows. Disperse and squander seems the order of the day, and although *pace* professors, a quick thing scatters one hundred and fifty out of two hundred all over the country.

The greatest crowd I ever witnessed with hounds was some years ago in the New Forest, when the Royal Pack went down to hunt the wild red deer; and at their first meet, the number of equestrians was estimated at between one and two thousand, of whom there were some score of masters of fox-hounds. There were no fences to be encountered, although boughs of trees to be avoided, and

queerish verdant-green spots to be traversed in the dells ; but at the end of thirty-five minutes I found myself in company with less than a dozen good men and true, and about ten couples of hounds—the pack having divided—one whipper-in, and a blown deer. Davis had, perhaps, as many with him when his deer was brought to bay. But where were the other thousand and odd who started with the hounds ? A pretty lot I can answer for being bogged, and others stumped out of their saddles by the stumps and boughs of trees. Many casualties did occur, as we naturally expected to hear, from such a motley group being brought into collision with each other, and the timber. There were plenty of empty saddles and loose horses running about the Forest, some of which were not reclaimed for a day or two after. But, *mirabile dictu!* no man was reported killed or drowned, although many were missing from the family roll-call at sunset.

There is nothing impracticable to a good fox-hunter in the fencing department throughout the Dunchurch country, which, for the most part, consists of old pasture-fields, bounded by hedge and ditch, and an occasional brook, more deep than wide, with plenty of dark mud at the bottom. Some of the hedges are formidable to look at, from the unusual height to which they are permitted to grow, as a shelter for cattle and sheep ; but there are always weak places, where any man with an eye to business may get through or over. Double ditches are few and far between, posts and rails scarce, stiles stiff, gates plentiful and breakable, and no stone walls ; in short, it is a really good hunting country, highly favourable to

hounds from holding a good scent, and without any drawback as to stones or flints upon the arable lands. The only impediment to sport is the large number of Leicester sheep with which almost every field is dotted over in the winter season, instead of their being occupied, as in other countries, by eating turnips and hay behind hurdles. The occupiers of land, however, in this district are chiefly graziers, not flock-masters or herdsmen, a great deal of the land being good enough to finish off their stock before Christmas without housing and feeding them with corn or oil-cake. This, no doubt, is the easiest method of farming—if farming it can be called—which imposes little trouble and less foresight; but it is not in keeping with the practice of scientific agriculturists, who consider that all cattle, young and old, fat or lean, should be under cover during the winter months, and helping to form a good manure heap in the yards and folds, instead of its being left in the fields just where it is not wanted, under the hedges, to which, of course, cattle will resort for protection from cold and storms. To those who prefer the comparative quiet of a way-side inn to the noise and bustle of the town, I would suggest an experimental visit to Mr. Blick, the highly respectable landlord of the ‘Dun Cow,’ at Dunchurch, a clean, healthy little village on the high-road between Coventry and Daventry, and about three miles distant from Rugby, through which, in the good old times, some forty coaches were wont to pass daily. Here they will find good stabling for their horses—about whose comfort a genuine fox-hunter is as solicitous as his own—and excellent accommodation for himself: and, to dispel

the tedium of an after dinner solitary, he will find mine host an entertaining companion, full of anecdotes of by-gone days, when the renowned 'Squire Osbaldeston and Lord Anson honoured his house with their presence ; and there are vestiges still remaining of the 'Squire's temporary kennels, when he hunted this part of the country, making the 'Dun Cow' his winter quarters.

The turnpike-roads in this neighbourhood are excellent—of good width, with turf on either side, and, being formed of gravel, dry quickly. There is also a magnificent avenue of trees overhanging that leading from Dunchurch to Coventry, extending more than five miles, and forming a delightful cool drive during the heat of summer. These fine trees were, I was informed, the property of the late Lord John Scott, and it is to be hoped they may never be cut down, save by the hand of time. A few miles from this place is a large stone, called the "Knightlow Cross," upon the same estate, now the property of the "Bold Buccleuch;" and several of the tenants hold under him, as Lord of the hundred of Knightslow, on condition of paying their rent at this stone every year on Martinmas-day (Nov. 11th) before day-break. If they fail to do so, they forfeit to him as many pounds as they owe pence, or as many white bulls with red tips to their ears and tails as they owe shillings, whichever the landlord may choose. The forfeit thus paid is called "wroth" or "wrath" money. This custom is scrupulously kept up, and there is always hard riding on the part of the tenantry to reach the stone at Knightlow Cross before the sun rises on Martinmas-day.

CHAPTER X.

The Old Warwickshire Fox-hounds—A few more words about Distemper, and the management of young Hounds—Former Masters—Lord Middleton and Mr. Corbet—The late Sir Tatton Sykes' Pack—Visit to his Kennel—The old Northern Hound—A Scion of that Stock engrafted into the South—My Performances—A long Day's hunting at the beginning of the Season, with an old Fox—*Finis coronat opus*—Drawbacks on Subscription Packs from the too frequent change of Masters and Huntsmen.

THE kennels now occupied by the old Warwickshire hounds are situated within half a mile of the village of Kington, about six miles from the Marborough Station. The site is well chosen, on high ground, with a south aspect, and the edifice does credit to the architect by whom it was erected, having a light elegant appearance, and containing besides ample accommodation for the hounds, a comfortable house for the huntsman, and other offices. These kennels have been built about seventeen years, in place of the old ones, which, if my recollection serves me, stood nearer to the village, when I remember Jack Wood as huntsman, and Will Boxall first whipper-in. The arrangements are tolerably complete, except that the bitch house is far too near the hunting kennels, being placed at the end of the drawing yard, to which, as a matter of course, the dog

hounds when let out into this court, have their attention immediately directed to the door of the seraglio, from which they are not easily removed without the exhibition of temper. Such was the case when I visited them.

The domicile appropriated to the ladies might be converted to a much better purpose, as a receptacle for lame hounds, and the harem removed to a more distant spot at the back of the building. This observation is not made in the spirit of dictation to those whom it may concern, but simply as a suggestion, to prevent unnecessary brawls among the dog hounds. I must also state my opinion that the kennel in which the young hounds, just come home from their walks, and already suffering from distemper, is in too near proximity to the other hounds; from which cause I have myself seen many evils arise, by the first season's entry being again affected. Now a month or six weeks lost to young hounds—when they are just settling well to their work, independently of the risk of losing some of the best, which somehow or other generally suffer most—is a great drawback to the entry of that season, every hound of which ought to be perfectly steady to his own game by the 1st of January, if not earlier; if in addition, as so often happens, a frost sets in about this time, the best part of the hunting season will have passed over without the huntsman being enabled to judge of the merits of his young hounds at all.

Whilst on the subject of distemper, I cannot forbear (as it cannot be too often repeated) again alluding to the accommodation and attention bestowed on the rising generation of fox-hounds, so shockingly defective in many kennels.

Instead of every possible precaution being taken, and every means adopted, if not for the prevention, yet for the amelioration of that fatal disease, it appears to be the practice in many kennels to do everything likely to accelerate and foster it. The puppies as they come in from walk, are all huddled together in a damp dismal den, and there left to take their chance of life or death—all faring alike, from whatever cause suffering, either from common distemper, inflammatory attacks, or jaundice, some nostrum or quack medicine being administered indiscriminately, without regard to the different symptoms exhibited by each. In this confined place, redolent of infection, and contaminated by the foul effluvia arising from so many diseased bodies, these unhappy animals are left to waste and pine away by slow degrees; ten to one being against the recovery of a single hound, unless possessed of adamantine or asbestine constitutions.

There is a very trite yet sensible saying, “that what is worth doing at all, is worth doing well;” and if it is worth the while and trouble of breeding whelps, and paying rewards and premiums for those taken the greatest care of at their walks, it does strike one as absurdly inconsistent that the same care should not be taken of them at home. The kennel for young hounds, as I have mentioned elsewhere, ought to be situated close to, if not in a grass yard, to which there should be access during the day, the door being left open, so that they may at least have the opportunity of exercising themselves within this space, if they cannot be taken out by the feeder or assistant for exercise, which might be easily done once a day in couples, if not

with the whole lot, yet with those intended for entry. Notwithstanding the immense annual loss of young hounds through the kennels of Great Britain by this disease, I maintain that none is more easily cured, if taken in time, with proper rational treatment, air and moderate exercise in fine weather; and it is solely from improper treatment and neglect that this malady assumes a malignant character, in overcrowded, damp kennels, where these unhappy "hopes of the family" are huddled together like the Black Hole of Calcutta. I had a young retriever cured in a few days, by emetic tartar alone, and the kitchen fire.

However, if masters and huntsmen will not take advice they must take the consequences of neglecting it, as usual, by the loss of many of their finest young hounds. One would think the absurdity of cramming puppies just taken off a whey or buttermilk diet at a farm-house, with a quantity of greasy broth and horseflesh, curtailing them at the same time of all air and exercise, would be sufficiently obvious to any man of common reflection; but I have written on this subject so often, that I am tired of it, and therefore shall dismiss it, for one more agreeable—the old Warwickshire fox-hounds.

With the Warwickshire Hunt, the name of Corbet will ever be associated as one of the most renowned masters of the old school of foxhunters, who began keeping hounds there about the year 1798, when his celebrated brother-master, Mr. Meynel, was still maintaining his establishment at Quorn. I believe I am correct in stating (speaking from information of old date) that the late Lord Middleton succeeded Mr. Corbet in the Warwickshire country, which

he hunted until somewhere about the year 1822, the year in which I first took the horn in hand, being then in my minority, and I well remember a grey pied hound, named Vaulter, in the Budminton kennel, a powerful, wiry-coated dog, got by Lord Middleton's Vanguard. Part of this pack was I think then purchased by the late Sir Tatton Sykes, to go into Yorkshire, and Sir Tatton again transferred the descendants from this stock to the present Lord Middleton, who keeps them at Birdsall, near Malton. It is now more than twenty years since I saw Sir Tatton's pack, which was then very powerful; and I remember in that season, there being only seven couples and a half of young hounds put forward, remarking to the feeder (the huntsman being absent) on the shortness of the number. His reply was, "They're plenty enough for one year, sir, for the old hounds don't easily wear out;" and I must confess, as far as appearances went, I never saw a more wiry, lasting-looking lot of hounds. Being always in pursuit of something better than I had at home, I obtained a young hound from this pack, which fully confirmed my previous impression, for he was *untirable*. This dog stood about twenty-five inches in height, with fine arched neck, good shoulders, and great muscular power, and would go from morning till night, and from night till morning again. Hounds won't do that sort of thing now a days.

Alluding to this hound reminds me of a day's cub-hunting at that time, when we knowing ones were completely taken in. I had heard of a litter of cubs being bred in a single earth, near some small coverts on the outskirts of my country; and it having been intimated to

me that some poachers were looking after them, I resolved to be beforehand with them ; so, rising early one fine August morning, I took with me all the young hounds, with only a sufficient number of old to keep them straight, thinking of course to make short work with one or two of these cubs, and return home in time for breakfast. We reached the covert side about six o'clock A.M., and on the hounds being thrown in, they found immediately, and were out at the bottom, and over the brook into another small brake on the opposite side of the hill, like lightning. This rapid movement of the fox being the reverse of *cublike*, I dashed down through the covert, without a moment's hesitation, and on gaining the opposite side not a hound was visible ; but seeing a man mowing barley in the field above the brake, I rode directly to him, inquiring if he had seen the hounds.

"Ees, maister," was his reply ; "they went away like winking round the corner of the field there, by thick barn, wi' a fine old brusher not a hundred yards afore 'em, and I think as how they be gone to Doynton Wood."

"Confound the old brusher!" thought I, as I galloped off, with about three miles of stone wall country before me, and no prospect with such a scent of catching the hounds before they reached the above-named wood in my neighbour's country ; and on arriving there, I found Jem trotting along under the wood-hedge in no very complacent humour.

"Stop them, Jem, as soon as possible," was my first exclamation ; "they are after the old dog-fox."

"I guessed as much, sir," he replied, "as I just caught

sight of his white tag when going over the hill ; but about stopping them 't aint so easy done, and I'm thinking, at the rate they're physicking the old gentleman, he won't stand much covert work this close morning, but be off again pretty soon over the open, and I rather think, sir,"—with a knowing look—"that white tag of his will find room in my coat-pocket before breakfast time."

"I fear not, Jem. Yet, hark ! he is away again to the left." And on jumping the fence, the hounds were streaming out of covert into the vale below us, which led by a circuitous course to the place in which our fox was first found. Skirting these small brakes, he still held on two miles beyond them to another covert, where Jem made sure of his brush ; but here a brace of fresh foxes—old ones too—interposed to save his white tag, and we were at them for a good hour, when one slipped away, and the hounds close at him, over a fresh line of country for about five miles, through barley and beans, until we at last succeeded in stopping them, and drawing up under the shade of some trees near a pool of water ; we held a council of war what to do.

"Well, Jem," I observed, "here's a pretty sharp morning's work for the second day's hunting with the young hounds, and not a cub left in Harwood Brakes."

"I'm not so sure of that, sir ; the hounds never went into the best lying on the upper side ; and perhaps they are all laid up together there. They are fresh enough, sir, and that young Sir Tatton wants another hour or two to sober him down a little. Besides, sir, it's all in our road home, and it will be cooler in the afternoon than now."

Well, after resting a while, we resumed our homeward track, and began drawing again for cubs, when away went the same old dog-fox we had been running in the morning, apparently as fresh as ever, and my impression is, that Jem would not stop the hounds out of revenge for the work he had given us, making sure to have him at last. He took the same line into Doynton Wood, where we were chopping and changing about from one fox to another for more than two hours; then Jem espied his old enemy slinking away once more down the vale. He let him go full two fields before moving an inch from his post, then scream succeeded scream, until every hound had left the covert—the pack had once more settled on the line.

“Now, sir,” cried Jem exultingly, as I rode up; “he’s booked to a dead certainty. Just cheer ’em up a bit, sir, and they’ll run into him before he reaches Harwood Brakes.”

I did enliven them with a screech or two, the meaning of which the old hounds knew full well, and with hackles up, they set to race him in right good earnest, and killed him on the very spot in which he was first found at four o’clock in the afternoon. † This being only the second time of hunting the young couples, considering the heat of the weather, it was a most trying day for them, and Jem pronounced young Sir Tatton, as he called him, to be as hard as iron. With little interruption, we were at work nearly ten hours.

Having killed my fox a long way from Warwickshire, I must go back into that country, which to my mind is one of the finest in England, both for fox-hunting and woodland

scenery: its timber being of superior growth. North Warwickshire has some very heavy woodlands to fight through on the western side of the country, but these are favourable for making hounds industrious and steady on the line, and a pack that can kill foxes there will never disgrace themselves anywhere.

The old Warwickshire Pack is the property of the hunt, and supported by a very handsome subscription; but has undergone the usual vicissitudes consequent upon subscription packs generally, in passing through several different masters and huntsmen, and a greater misfortune cannot befall any hounds than such frequent changes; since this country above all others requires a powerful, well-bred pack of fox-hounds, with capital noses—turning quickly with their game—and rapid, dashing hunters pressing forward with a bad scent; for although over some parts of Warwickshire hounds can run hard with little stooping, there are others with a cold clay subsoil and heavy ploughed lands, where they must work hard too to kill a good Warwickshire fox. A light hound may suit the flinty hills of Berks and Hants, and where there are few fences which a donkey cannot jump over or push through; but a different stamp of hound is required for the sticky woodlands and stiffly-bound fences of the old Warwickshire country; and I think I may safely say there is not one with which I am acquainted that requires more particularly a huntsman of first-rate abilities, both in the kennel and the field. He must breed a pack for the country instead of the country breeding a pack for him, and this cannot be brought to perfection within a certain number of years.

No reflection is intended on the present pack, many of which are useful and workmanlike in appearance, but it evidently shows the effect of various hands in its composition. The *facies non omnibus una, nec diversa tamen*, is wanting, as well as any particular form or family characteristic.

CHAPTER XI.

The Pytchley Country second only to Leicestershire—Frequent change of Masters—The Earl of Chesterfield's Premiership difficult to be surpassed—An Interregnum—Hambleton Tom Smith succeeds to Office—George Payne—Lords Alford and Hopetoun—The Hon. F. Villiers and Lord Spencer—The Huntsman Charles Payne—Remarks on the Pack—Trojan, and a Tale about his Welsh Namesake.

THE Pytchley, always ranked as the second best hunting country after Leicestershire, has owned, within comparatively speaking a few years, many masters, a fatality attending these first-rate countries, where the expenses of the hunting establishments in these times are too onerous to be borne long by any except men of large fortune; in fact, independent of the trouble which every master of foxhounds must experience where affairs are conducted in first-rate style throughout the whole department, animadversions are too frequently his reward instead of gratitude for his services.

In passing an opinion upon various packs of hounds, we ought always to bear in mind that some are more highly favoured with those indispensable adjuncts to their support—good walks—which are of much greater importance than non-practical men are aware of. In the old esta-

blishments of noblemen, or large landed proprietors, generally from fifty to a hundred couples of whelps are sent out annually, to be walked or bred up at farm-houses, and there is a security that their tenants will not only take care, but *good* care of them. It is no easy matter for a master in a strange country to obtain good walks at any price, and here there is another and heavy drain upon his pocket. An old-established pack has also another advantage over a recently formed one, in its number of handsome and good bitches; one has a large well-bred stock in hand to work safely upon, the other is dependent for some years on draft hounds; and every experienced master knows what draft hounds are, and the difficulty of forming a good pack from such loose materials. The only dependence is on unentered hounds; and how few really clever bitches of good size and height—even twenty-one inches—are included in this lot? and if one does find a few such, they are generally of doubtful parentage either on the father's or mother's side. In short, the only chance remaining to form a clever pack of hounds is to be content with a lower standard than the fashionable one of twenty-three inches.

One sees in the 'Field' and 'Bell's Life' continually accounts of "splendid packs of hounds," which, to an experienced eye, prove anything but splendid on a close examination. It is true, when hounds are trotting along from covert to covert, with fine glossy skins, and heads and sterns well up, their imperfections are not apparent to casual observers, and even men who have hunted all their lives are deceived by appearances. This is not the case

with those who may be termed professional men, or old masters ; to us, "all is not gold that glitters ;" and I am obliged to confess that instances of "splendid packs" of fox-hounds are very rare indeed. There are, of course, in establishments of only a few years' standing some clever animals to be met with ; but in the majority of kennels the word "splendid" cannot be applied, save to the minor part of their inmates.

On the retirement of Lord Chesterfield from the management of the Pytchley country — I think somewhere about the year 1842, as far as my recollection serves—his pack of fox-hounds was broken up, and in company with the late Lord Ducie, I went down from town to select twenty couples as an addition to his own, which were then hunting the Vale of White Horse ; but by whom the remainder were purchased, I know not. After the resignation of the Earl of Chesterfield, the Pytchley country remained in abeyance for some time, literally begging for a master, all fighting shy of following in the wake of one who had conducted the establishment in such superior style, until the following November, when Mr. Smith, who had obtained such celebrity as a gentleman huntsman in the Hambledon and Craven countries, was prevailed upon to accept office.

Great expectations were entertained of the sport to be afforded by this gentleman, which would no doubt have been realised from his high talents ; but as the best performer cannot play well upon a bad instrument, Mr. Smith could not do impossibilities with a scratch pack of hounds, collected so late in the season from all quarters. Without

the benefit of cub-hunting, and without knowledge of the country, it is surprising he showed any sport at all.

Mr. George Payne succeeded Mr. Smith after his second season, and hunted the country, I believe, four years. Then Lord Alford, Lord Hopetoun, the Honourable F. Villiers, and Lord Spencer.

As huntsmen are considered to a certain extent *public men* in the fox-hunting world, it may not be out of place to make mention of Charles Payne and his antecedents, who, in the year 1830, commenced his career in the hunting-field by riding second horse for Mr. Errington in the Quorn country, with whom he continued six years. He then whipped in to the Oakly hounds for ten seasons, after which he was engaged by Mr. George Payne as first whipper-in and kennel huntsman, and he has continued ever since huntsman to the Pytchley pack.

Of Payne's talents and fitness to hold this prominent situation, there is, I believe, but one opinion, although it has been objected that he is somewhat inclined to take hold of his hounds too soon when at fault, and hurry them forward. Now it is more than probable that Payne is obliged to adopt this course, not from choice, but from necessity; for what can he do otherwise with two or three hundred horsemen riding in upon them on a bad scenting day? They could not press them on a good one; and in this case he is obliged to hold them forward as quickly as possible out of the crowd, although by so doing he is almost certain to lose his fox; he has no alternative: to save his hounds, he must be content to lose his fox, and the *would-be* sportsmen to lose their run. But I am in-

clined to think were Charles Payne let alone, he would show as much forbearance and patience with his hounds as any painstaking huntsman in a bad-scenting country; and certainly from what I have heard and seen of him, he is the reverse of Beckford's "Harey starey fellow, who would ride at a church if it came in his way."

A few years ago, I read in the 'Sporting Review,' of the "*magnificent beauty* of the Pytchley kennel, which would have led one to expect very great things there; but knowing that there are many very excellent sportsmen who are good judges of riding to hounds and hunting, without being good judges of hounds themselves, and making allowance for a little over-colouring, very natural to those who patronise one particular pack, I viewed this description as verging rather on the hyperbolical. Now during my drive from Northampton to Brixworth, I was considering how long this pack had been formed, and a few other matters relating to them, and the result of my cogitations was, that I did not expect to find hounds of the superlative order in these kennels, and therefore was agreeably surprised on seeing them so far superior to my anticipations; in short, Charles Payne has some as powerful and clever dog-hounds as I have yet seen in any kennel, and a particularly good lot of bitches, the average height of the latter being about twenty-two and a half inches. These were not of that perfectly finished mould I had seen in the Belvoir kennels, and the exterior not so highly polished, yet there was a work-like form belonging to them, which engaged my attention, and that sort of frame and character which seemed calculated to withstand any amount of wear

and tear; and having seen them subsequently at work in the field, their performances more than realised my expectations. The dog-hounds possessed great power, averaging about twenty-four inches in height; and there were two brothers, one season, hunters of Herculean proportions, Trojan and Trueman, the most muscular and clever hounds I had seen for many years. Trojan stood twenty-five inches high, with clean neck and shoulders, capital plates and ribs, with great length of body; and Payne told me "he could go like a race-horse." No doubt there are now many descendants of these two brothers in the Pytchley kennel; and had it been my purpose at that time to have commenced forming a pack of fox-hounds, Trojan would have been my choice as sire to the rising generation. I have, like the late John Ward, a preference for big hounds, and consider a pack of this sort would prove a great acquisition to the country, since small hounds have become so much in fashion of late years, that we are verging too much into the pygmean line.

Trojan reminds me of a little incident which occurred many years ago on the borders of Wales. There was an old specimen of the ancient Britons who had a very killing pack of Welsh extraction, which would worm a fox out of the mountain fastnesses, or eat him there and then. Amongst these was a dog named Trojan, the leader of the van. The fame of Trojan had reached the ears of a well-known master of English fox-hounds, who resolved to have a look at him, and judge for himself whether the report was true of this dog's extraordinary prowess. Accordingly, having obtained the necessary information as to the next

fixture of the mountaineers, our master of the fox-hounds sent a hunter over night to the nearest village; and Trojan and his master being both "peep-o'-day boys," he had to get up in the middle of the night to be in readiness—eight o'clock being the hour of meeting even in the winter months; in short, no advantage was considered unfair by our Welshman to take over his enemy, and the only chance with a Welsh mountain fox is to have at him before he has well digested his supper, or the prospect of getting his brush is exceedingly remote indeed, so much so, that a two-o'clock draw is considered in the principalities quite a hopeless affair.

Well, it so happened that Trojan and his comrades blew up a brace of foxes by about the usual hour of meeting in civilized countries now-a-days; and the English master being perfectly satisfied with his performances as well as figure, not only coveted his neighbour's goods, but resolved to avail himself of Trojan's services. But the Saxon, thinking it *infra dig.* to enter any young hounds on his list as got by Mr. W——'s Trojan, effected his purpose in another way; and instead of "Taffy going to his house to steal a marrow-bone," Jack went to Taffy's house and kidnapped old Troojane, as the Welsh call Trojan. It happened in this wise: Jack, the whipper-in, having ascertained the ins and outs of Mr. W——'s kennel, dressed as a Welsh drover, taking advantage of the master being *mystified* as well as his man, one misty evening, whispered through the keyhole of the kennel door to Trojan that a young lady outside wished to see him on very particular business. The gallant old dog stepped out at once,

without waiting for a second invitation ; and as the language of love is easily understood, whether in Welsh or English, Trojan was inveigled by the Saxon Beauty to leave his kith and kin among the mountaineers, and accompany her back to her English home.

On Trojan being reported missing the next morning, inquiries were set on foot, and search made for the old gentleman in every direction for many days, and even weeks, without avail ; and as Trojan was considered prime minister by his master, advertisements were at last put in the local papers, with a full description of his personalities, offering a reward for his apprehension. By this time, Trojan having served the purpose for which he had been abducted, Jack was instructed by his master to inform Mr. W—— that a stray hound answering Trojan's description had found his way to their kennels some weeks previously, and might be had if proved to be the missing animal. A trusty messenger was despatched immediately for the truant, and Trojan returned to his rightful owner, not, however, before he had become the father of a large family, which, to mystify their descent, was represented under a different parentage.

CHAPTER XII.

The Fox-hunter's Opening Day—Ancient and modern Nimrods—Mr. Meynell and his Establishment—The Golden Age of Fox-hunting—Talented Masters of that Period—Contrast between the past and present Generation—Pace everything—Second Horses in the Field—Letters from Will Long—What Whippers-in had to do in his early Days—A fast Huntsman—Fox and Firefly—Increase of Railroads detrimental to Sport—Aëronautic Age—Fox-chase in the Air—“Hunting Follyes,” in Verse, by a Dissenter.

“OH! don't you remember the 1st of November,” 18—(we will leave you to fill up the blank space), when you donned your maiden pink, with continuations of corduroy, leather, or moleskin, and stood surveying yourself some half hour in the mirror before descending to the breakfast-room of your host, where ample provision had been made for the expected fox-hunting neighbours, on the opening day of the season? Can you ever forget, though years may have rolled over your head since that day, the joyous, ecstatic feelings of delight with which your heart bounded when, on entering that room, the approving smile of the beautiful Julia, your host's youngest daughter, met your inquiring look? Oh! no; whatever ills or woes betide us in after-life, the remembrance of our first love, and first day's hunting, holds still the uppermost place in

the store-room of our memory, however crowded with other unwelcome guests. Whilst our young hearts beat lightly and spirits run high, that is the season of our greatest enjoyment of the sports and amusements of this world, before the day arrives when, with Solomon, we are obliged to confess "we have no longer any pleasure in them." Careless, confiding, unsuspecting youth! How soon are those bright dreams of happiness dispelled when the stern realities of life succeed, showing the hollow professions of men we once esteemed our dearest friends,—and, perchance, the fickleness of woman. Yet, with old Horace, we may exclaim, *Carpe diem quam minimam credulus postero*. Enjoy life whilst we can, not too anxious or sanguine about what may follow to-morrow. It may be you have now passed the age of man, the three-score years and ten generally allotted to our mortal existence in this sublunary world, and that your fox-hunting career commenced under the auspices of the father of the chase, during the last season of his tenure of office in the Quorndon country, when the hunting of the fox was the fashion of that time. Many changes and different opinions with regard to the *modus operandi* have taken place since then: our modern Nimrods asserting that our fathers were only groping in the dark as to the object of their pursuit. And this is true enough, for their fox was often found before daylight, and run to ground after sunset, whence he was to be dislodged by aid of pickaxe and shovel, under the struggling moon-beam's misty light, the master with his companions in buckram standing by the while, and exclaiming, "Em-bowelled will I see thee by-and-by."

We are constrained to acknowledge the last century to have been in one sense the dark age of fox-hunting ; but the first glimmering of that spark which has since been fanned into a blazing flame by their descendants, was kindled by our forefathers — the system of kennel management and breeding of hounds. The first rudiments of the noble science originated with Meynell and other mighty Nimrods of his time, with whom commenced the hunting of the fox. I say *hunting*, in opposition to the present system of *racing* him to death : the motto of old fox-hunters being—To be fairly found, fairly hunted, and fairly killed. To the latter term exception may be taken by some who think a fox never ought to be dislodged from the place in which he has taken refuge. Our grandpapas thought otherwise, and acted very differently. They gave their fox fair play at starting, which we do not—fair play in hunting him regularly and patiently through all difficulties, which we do not—and fair play in winding him up at last, which we never do. But if, after all this show of fair play to the wily animal, he displayed himself the artful dodger by going to ground, they, in retaliation for this ungrateful trick, and so much forbearance shown on the part of his pursuers, “ had him out.”

Our forefathers also considered the chase incomplete without a full choir of melodious notes from the throats of some fifty or a hundred couples of hounds ; and it has been related of the great Mr. Meynell, that on his first entrance upon the Quorn country, his hunting-pack consisted of the latter number. Well may we imagine this concert of two hundred tongues to have thrilled through their ears with

rapturous delight, awaking reviving nature with their musical strains on the first dawn of day, their cry re-echoing through the wooded dells, and borne far and wide upon the rising breeze. This grand chorus must have been very fine; but Mr. Meynell lived to discover and amend the errors of his early days in this respect, and to agree with Somerville, that this immense number of hounds in the field was a

“Pompous incumbrance.”

Meynell's career as a master of hounds terminated, I believe, in the first year of the present century; and I should mark the first quarter or thirty years of that century as the golden age of fox-hunting—as productive of more scientific, first-class gentlemen huntsmen, than any succeeding years can boast. None have surpassed or equalled them in their knowledge of the noble science—the exact time to bear and forbear—the time to press, and the time to relax their hold upon the hounds. The 'Squires of that time—Assheton Smith, Osbaldeston, and Musters, they were shining lights of that period, whose feats through flood and field will never be eclipsed. And what a phalanx of other minor stars, of less brilliancy in execution, though not less talented in other respects, does not the recollection of the past bring to our mind, as then handling their own hounds? Lords Elcho, Kintore, Ducie, and Gifford; the Hon. Grantley Berkeley, Nicholl, Foljambe, Codrington, Wyndham, Thompson, a second Tom Smith, J. Russell, and many other masters of less notoriety, whose names may not be so well known to the

public. With these men fox-hunting was conducted on scientific principles, and a fox-chase never considered complete without a display of the natural instinct of the hound in finding, working, hunting, and running his game, his huntsman ready with talent to assist him at the proper time, and discrimination to see when that assistance was really needed. Riding and mobbing a fox to death formed no part of their system.

In making these remarks, no reflection is intended upon huntsmen of the present time, many of whom have as much zeal for the sport, and know what *ought* to be done if allowed the opportunity of doing it. Neither do we mean to detract from the merits of the horse and hound of the present age, which are perhaps as well bred as their progenitors; but there is a laxity in their education, both horses and hounds are not prepared in a general sense for the hunting-field as those were in former days; the steeple-chasing mania is too much in vogue to admit of training horses for hunting, and hounds are not permitted to make use of their noses. Then we come to the field—a large heterogeneous body of horsemen congregated at some fashionable meet, rather with the object of killing time than seeing a fox killed—sporting men, not sportsmen—who know no more of the noble science than they do of the Japanese language, and don't care a straw about the working of the hounds; all they care about or want is a gallop. The fact is, that the great majority of the present generation lack the earnestness of their sires in all the business of life, save making money and spending it. They go out fox-hunting because it is the fashion, but are

neither earnest in their love of the chase or the love of woman, reminding one of the lines :—

“What say our modern gentlemen :
Do Cupid’s darts with poison fill us ?
Oh ! no. They tickle now and then,
But hang me ! if they ever kill us.”

“Well, Tom,” asked an old sportsman of his son the other day, “what did you do from Tinker’s Hill ?”

“Quick thing, sir, for twenty minutes, pace quite awful ; lots of fellows come to grief. Fences, sir, like green-baize doors ; couldn’t see through them. I shan’t show again till the leaves are down.”

“Yes, Tom, the hedges are very green for the time of year, and so I suppose were more than half your field, as to their notions of riding to hounds. But what of the pack ; did they look well ?”

“Charming, sir. Sleek as moles.”

“How did they work their fox ?”

“Never saw a hound, sir, after they left the gorse, except one confounded old brute, which got in my way at a bullfinch, and I believe my horse broke his back.”

“Poor old Chaunter, perhaps ?”

“Not unlikely, sir, for he opened his pipes pretty loud when I went over him.”

“Ah ! that’s a bad day’s work for you, my boy. The ’Squire will never forgive you if he knows who killed old Chaunter.”

“He got in the way just in my line, and I could not pull up. Highflyer would have it.”

“Turn aside, Tom ; never ride in upon the hounds ;

keep always wide of the pack, as I used to do. But there, it can't be helped now; I must walk another couple of puppies for him. I suppose you made your bow to the master?"

"Yes, sir, confound him! and he made his to me in a way I did not quite like."

"How so?"

"Why, I was halloaing a fox, thinking to do him a service thereby, when he rode up to me, and lifting his hat, said, 'Thank you, sir, for your kind intentions, but I pay three men for doing that which you are attempting.'"

"A polite reproof, Tom, for meddling in his servants' business. I dare say you were halloaing the wrong fox, and doing mischief, for which some masters would have thanked you in different language. Well, did you see Alice Ashton?"

"Yes, at a distance, surrounded by half a dozen Crimean heroes."

"Ah! she's a charming girl, reminding me of your poor mother when she was about her age; it makes my heart glow to look at her. Why, are you not half in love with her already?"

"No, governor. Fellows don't fall over head and ears in love with a handsome woman now-a-days as they did in your time. It don't pay, that sort of thing, marrying a pretty girl for her beauty only. Money, sir, money is all we think of; and if Alice had lots of the needful, I might perhaps take the trouble of making advances in that direction. But as for love in a cottage, it's exploded, sir, like that puff of my weed. *Tenuis evanescit in auras*, as we

were taught at Eton ; clean gone, sir, out of sight, and out of date."

"Ah!" muttered the governor, "things have come to a pretty pass in the old country. No wonder they are shipping cargoes of young women to the colonies!"

The chief object of the present generation is to kill time and annihilate space. Every man is in a violent hurry about his own business, be it what it may. Half London is under-tunnelled to save a few moments—perhaps half an hour at the outside—to meet this universal mania. The speed of the railroad is not sufficient. Telegrams barely suffice to pander to this morbid appetite; and in the name of common sense to what purpose is all this inordinate haste, as if time did not flit sufficiently fast already? The man of trade tells us "Time is money;" that is, he considers every minute lost in travelling, or receiving the earliest information on his particular matters, as so much money lost to him. Reuter's office is besieged to learn the earliest information of what they are doing in foreign parts, to serve the purpose of money-making speculations in the rise and fall of the funds; and this restless spirit, impatient of check or delay, pervades the hunting-field also. "Pace, pace, pace," is the one universal cry amongst modern fox-hunters. They say—

"Our fathers talk of *hunting*. Let them.
We only want quick bursts, and get them."

The noble science is considered as an obsolete doctrine, incompatible with the more enlightened ideas of the present age. All the men of talent, literature, and science—heroes,

heroines, of the past—authors, historians, poets, are all *muffs*; and one mad fellow of a bishop denounced the whole Pentateuch, or five books of Moses, as mere fiction. And why? Because he couldn't comprehend how all the beasts, birds, and reptiles, from north, south, east, and west, were brought to Noah's ark and kept there. Has this very conceited, self-opinionated sceptic ever visited the Zoological Gardens in the Regent's Park, and asked how all these beasts, birds, and reptiles got there? He also doubts how Noah and his three sons made hay for so much cattle, and where they stowed it! Perhaps he questions the authenticity of the New Testament as well as the old. If not, he will find his answer in the five thousand and four thousand people who were fed from five and seven loaves and a few fishes.

We scarcely remember the first half of any fox-hunting season passing away with so little *éclat*, or, to adopt the fashionable term of the day, with so little "*sensation*" in the sporting world, as that of '62 and '63, notwithstanding the prophetic auguries of many ardent lovers of the chase, that this was to be *the* season of all seasons, who drew upon their fertile imaginations rather too extensively, arguing that a multiplicity of foxes must necessarily insure a corresponding abundance of sport. The generality of mankind prefer sitting down to a table covered with a variety of dishes; but we think the best dinner is made off one good joint, more especially when the natural sauce is added. And so it is with fox-hunting; where so many little dainties, with sleek coats, pretty prick ears, and bell-rope-looking brushes, are dancing before hounds, they can

scarcely make up their minds which to taste first. That most packs have tasted a sufficient quantity of these delicate morsels up to the present day, admits of little doubt, since, when young and tender, they fall an easy prey to their pursuers; and so long as a list of the killed is paraded in public print at the close of the season, huntsmen will strenuously assist their darlings in catching these little beauties whilst they can.

It was ruled in former days that no juveniles of the vulpine race were to be counted or accounted foxes until the first day of November, before which time they were not considered by ancient sportsmen to have attained their majority or full growth and strength of foxhood; and we suppose, as goslings are not geese, or chickens fowls, before reaching maturity, the same rule may hold good with regard to foxes which is predicated of poultry and other animals; and thus, by deducting so many cubs, the list of the foxes slain will undergo a considerable reduction. Seventy foxes killed within sixty days is a charming little paragraph in print, to a huntsman's eye, as presumptive evidence of his great skill and talents; whereas it proves nothing of the kind, reminding one of the answer returned by an old huntsman, to a younger brother of the craft who had been deeply engaged, very early that season, in the murder of the innocents—"I never kills 'em whilst they suck."

We are constrained to notice the follies and fashions of the age we live in, not withholding our censure of what we deem unsportsmanlike actions, amongst which we must class killing foxes for the sake of counting noses. An old

master, when asked how many foxes he had killed, replied very pertinently, "We have had excellent sport;" not considering *sport* and *slaughter* as synonymous terms in fox-hunting. Such is also our opinion; for some of the finest runs on record have been bloodless; and we believe that every genuine sportsman would select such in preference to seeing a brace of foxes hustled and mobbed to death without any sport at all. There is also such a vast distinction between various hunting countries, that to judge of all packs by this one supposed test of merit would be unfair. Some present great facilities, others great difficulties, to hounds in catching their game. The celebrated Osbaldeston, who, with his splendid pack of hounds had shown such sport in the grazing districts, rolling over their foxes like nine-pins, was soon taught the difference between pastures green, studded with gorse, brakes, and spinneys, and the hard Hampshire hills, with their large woodlands, when he removed his establishment into that country, bent on almost annihilating the vulpine race of that region. With such hounds, although the change from soft turf to flints and fallow must have been severely felt, there could not fail to be a certain amount of sport; but they did not succeed in killing their foxes. Yet the other great Nimrod of his time, Assheton Smith, declared he had better sport in that same county, differing slightly in some features, than he had experienced in Leicestershire. The difference of success with these two first-rate huntsmen must be attributed to the pack of one being strange, and the other used to the country; and it is remarked how tenderly and cautiously hounds travel over

these ancient fire-strikers, whose feet have been bruised and cut by them.

Some countries, again, are so extensive that the coverts are not sufficiently hunted, and thus from idleness and inactivity foxes fall an easy prey to a quick pack of hounds flushed with conquest, and backed by their active assistants, who have got the idea into their heads that their business is to kill a fox anyhow. Some countries abound in earths and refuges for the distressed varmint, in which, when hardly pressed, he can hide his carcase; others are almost destitute of such lodging places; so, putting this and that together, and taking these weighty matters into consideration, it may be clearly shown that it is not always the best pack of hounds and the best huntsman to whose kennel door are pinned the greatest number of noses. Moreover, *Est inter Tanuim quiddam Socerumque Viselli*. There is a wide distinction between the rough, lanky, half-starved mountain fox, and the little, sleepy, well-fed frequenter of game preserves and hen roosts, as great as that between a shepherd's dog and a lady's pampered pet spaniel. The first will hold his way for many miles before hounds, and is hard to conquer; but the latter, fat and pury, has little chance of escape under the present system, which we must denounce as forming no part of the "noble science;" and we cannot but censure the too general conduct of huntsmen, in the wanton and unfair destruction of foxes, by which legitimate sport is cast into the shade.

Huntsmen and whippers-in of the present school are unfortunately led astray by the steeple-chasing mania so

prevalent in our hunting-fields ; and, like the rest of mankind, too ambitious of fame as quick, sharp fellows, to attend steadily to their business. Field money also, or we should call it by its present slang term, "tipping," proves an additional incentive to this evil practice.

"Give us a rattler, Tom, this morning," whispers Harry Headlong, slipping a sovereign into the huntsman's hand. "I want to try the speed of Prescott's bay, which is in for the Liverpool."

In many fashionable districts huntsmen reckon on these "tips" as much as they do upon their salaries, which they very often exceed ; in fact, although they do not, like waiters at large hotels, pay for their situations, we have known their wages to be proportioned by some masters to these emoluments. We do not censure them on this account, for we think a thorough good huntsman cannot be too well paid ; his is a most arduous and dangerous service, and those who participate in the sport he affords ought also to assist him with a *douceur* at Christmas, or at the end of the season. The old practice of "capping" for the huntsman on killing his fox, was abolished by masters of hounds because they found it work prejudiciously to their sport ; but in its place has arisen this less objectionable mode, now very generally adopted by gentlemen in every hunt, of requiting them for their exertions. However discountenanced by some masters these largesses may be, they have no more power to prevent their being given to their servants than the directors of railway companies the half-crowns and shillings slipped into the hands of their officials for little civilities and attentions. Gentlemen and

ladies will testify their sense of such obligation, notwithstanding all the rules laid down to the contrary.

With all our sympathies engaged on the side of the huntsmen and whippers-in, we must, however, remind them that the too common practice of clapping their hounds on to the back of a fox the moment he breaks covert, halloaing, screaming, and telegraphing, is not fox-hunting. It is destructive to sport, destructive to hounds—and last, though not least, destructive to horses. We admit that, as a general rule, a huntsman should be with his hounds, particularly when they are crossing the open country; but we have seen half a good run taken out of some men's horses in hustling and bustling about covert, when the pack would do better if left to themselves. A second horse is an agreeable relief from a tired one, but there is no reason in beating one first by unnecessary work merely to enjoy such a luxury, for whilst running their fox in covert, hounds require little assistance. With heavy weights there may be some excuse for changing saddles in a severe chase; but a good hunter ought to carry any weight under thirteen stone, with a clever hand upon his back, wherever hounds may go, from find to finish. Second horses were, I believe, first introduced by Lord Sefton, when master of the Quorn, who was a heavy man; but in former times one horse was considered always sufficient to see the hunting of the day. Huntsmen and whippers-in were not then so indulged, even in the first fox-hunting establishments; and I have heard Will Long, the late energetic huntsman to the Badminton pack, say that such were not usually allowed in his time under the grandfather of the

present Duke. He also told me that he rode one horse, called Milkman, for seventeen seasons, on an average twenty times in each, reckoning that he carried him during that time over thirteen thousand six hundred miles.

Amongst other hunting MS., a letter of his fell into my hands the other day, demonstrative of his enterprising genius the first season of his entry with hounds as whipper-in.

“From Tarwood in Oxfordshire we had very nearly reached Whichwood Forest, when, the hour being late, and the fox nearly beaten, with the earths all open before him, I set off wide of the hounds, and managed to head him at a small spinney a little way before he reached the forest; but the fox being determined to make his point, got away from it, going one field to the left, which gave me a chance of *scoring* on him again, and I met him on Ramsden Heath, and there bothered him so that he lay down until the hounds got nearly up to him, and he jumped up in view. I still kept on between him and the forest, turning him from his point, and at last forcing him into the green kennel yard at Heythorp, where the young hounds had just been let in (it being then the spring of the year), and in that yard we killed, the Duke remarking to Phillip Payne, ‘If the young pack enter as well as the young whipper-in, there won’t be much the matter next season.’”

Although we have been condemning the practice of mobbing and hustling foxes at first starting, by which a good run is too often spoilt, yet there are occasions, such as that related by Will Long, when it is considered the

business of a whipper-in to put forward if he can, and prevent them going to ground; and for this we have Beckford as an authority, who tells us a similar anecdote of Will Crane, that when his hounds were running hard over Northamptonshire, he turned sharply upon the whipper-in, asking what business he had there. The man looked all astonishment at such a question, believing his business to be always in attendance upon his huntsman and with the hounds. "Don't you know, and be d——d!" Crane said in a passion, "that the main earths at Daventry are open?" The whipper-in dashed forward directly, but reached them just in time to see the fox enter. Such, however, are exceptional cases, allowable only when hounds have had a severe day or are out of blood.

Tarwood was at that time remarkable for stout-running foxes, preserving its reputation in this respect to the present day: and Will Long relates another spicy event from that covert, although perhaps a little too highly seasoned for ears polite. "The following season we had another fine run from it, beat our fox, and he then ran through the small village of Harley, when the hounds came to a check in front of a mansion, into which the lady of the house had been seen to enter just when the first horseman got up. The son of the lady, being out hunting with us, obtained the information from his mother, that whilst occupying one seat in a certain small house, the fox most unceremoniously entered, and dashed into the other, or we should not so soon have discovered his place of refuge. Joe Bridges, who was then first whip, had, with the assistance of a ladder, the job to get him out, the Duke

remarking, 'it was very satisfactory to the hounds having their fox, and so highly flavoured.'

"Whippers-in," he adds, "in those days, worked much harder than in the present, when few do anything to their horses after hunting. During the whole time I was whipper-in, I did, first of all, two horses every morning, then went hunting, and assisted for an hour and a half in cleaning my horse, be the hour what it might, when we got home: on our hunting days, did the earth-stopping, dressing my horse when I returned, with the addition of having all my hunting clothes, boots, &c., to clean; but being fond of hunting, it so stimulated me, or I could not have got through the work."

From the above it may be gathered that the place of whipper-in, even in a duke's establishment, some thirty years ago, was no sinecure, and that the allowance of horse-flesh to huntsmen and whippers-in was on a very moderate scale compared with that in the present day, which may perhaps be commented upon as conclusive evidence of the slowness of the hounds and horses at that period, although the Duke's pack had obtained then the reputation of being the fastest in England—an invidious distinction, eliciting the ire of the Mostinites, who declared their hounds more justly entitled to that honour. We hold the opinion that equally well-bred fox-hounds are equal in speed also; and although there are almost in every pack one or two individuals which may outstrip the rest, we quite agree with Beckford's remark, "that hounds go fast in proportion to the head they carry;" and I do not believe that, even in this steeple-chasing era, any huntsman

with a head upon his shoulders would commit the folly of breeding from a hound merely because he was speedy. Some years ago I sent a bitch, which would run out from the pack with a good scent, to an enthusiastic huntsman of the touch-and-go order, and the account transmitted by a friend of their proceedings a short time after rather amused me. "First of all comes the fox in a terrible hurry, with your hound Firefly close at his brush; then our wild huntsman, cheering and screaming, and after him, *longo intervallo*, the pack, hustled along by the whipper-in."

There were wild, mad huntsmen in our time as well as Beckford's, and will be in all times, so long as fox-hunting continues; but they have hitherto been regarded as the *raræ aves*, or black swans of the flight. Beckford tells us of a "harey-starey fellow who would ride at a church if it fell in his way;" but from what we hear now, huntsmen beating two or three horses in a day are considered energetic, praiseworthy men, although this destruction of horse-flesh is of easy accomplishment when undertaken in a proper spirit, and with the determination of being here, there, and everywhere at the same moment. When the country goes heavy, it is no difficult matter to knock the wind out of even a good hunter in condition within two or three fields; but we confess to not seeing any merit due for such a performance, although there are days when a huntsman may justly exclaim with King Richard, "A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!" Yet such occurrences are rare. Taking the season from the 1st of November to the 1st of April, we think forty brace a fair

allowance of foxes to a pack hunting four days per week. This is giving one fox a day throughout, without deducting any for snow, frost, or other *contretemps*; and with this number of noses we think every master ought to be content. A brace or leash of short-running bad foxes may sometimes come unexpectedly to hand, against which generally appears a deficit on the other side of the account, for poor scenting days, running to ground, and such like casualties.

Look at Bradshaw—of course I don't mean the book, whose dark, mysterious pages have long since proved incomprehensible to most men's vision—but the map, and the intersection of this once tight little island by railways is almost marvellous to behold; and when all the other already projected lines are formed, and those still in embryo, hatching in the brains of lawyers and engineers, are brought out, to cut more slices from the cake, it is not very difficult to foretell the *future* of fox-hunting. Not many months since, we were walking over some pastures green, in a fashionable fox-hunting country, contemplating at the end a deep sluggish brook, which has often proved a stopper to many an ardent sportman, when a light figure in jack-boots, by aid of a pole he carried, suddenly appeared before us from behind the trunk of a large willow-tree. "Sketching or fishing," were our first thoughts; but on a moment's reflection, the former seemed out of the question in such a locality, with fields as flat as a pancake, and it was not exactly the time of year for the latter; but a little red flag projecting from the pocket of my new acquaintance suggested his vocation.

Hæc ego mecum compressis agito labris. The steam was getting up, and we exclaimed, "What! another railway here?"

"Oh, yes, sir," replied the official, with a grin perfectly horrifying to an old fox-hunter, "we shall get our bill next session, with lawyer Cutler, backed by Serjeants Wrestler and Fairweather to support us." Ah! we thought, these confounded lawyers are always at the bottom of all mischief, cutting the country into smithereens, just to fill their own pockets; and here, in addition to the brook—a very awkward customer—a railway embankment is to be thrown up not fifty yards from it, so that if a man escapes Scylla, he has the prospect of being wrecked, or rather *necked*, on Charybdis! Just fancy a pack of hounds, after splashing through the water, feathering out on the railway as a train is passing. *Horresco referens*, at the probability even of such a fearful catastrophe. Yet, that such casualties will be of no rare occurrence a few years hence, when a thousand other little pet railway schemes are perfected, admits of no doubt.

Then will follow the æronautic age, which is to supersede the hydraulic or puffing Billy invention, when people will be hustled through the air in place of being whirled over the land. Hunting on horseback will be then out of date, and regular packs of fox-hounds unknown. A few tufters only with bob-tails, relics of those cut off by rail, will be employed to rouse up the fox, whilst around the covert are stationed the field of impatient sportsmen, each mounted on his flying Pegasus. "He's off!" Down go cigars, and up rise the pursuers with a whirr, like that of

a hundred coveys of partridges. Off they go! screeching and screaming in concert, in hot pursuit, hanging on the rear of the affrighted animal like a lot of crows or magpies ducking down, scaring the poor brute out of his senses, and forcing him to the top of his speed, until exhausted nature can do no more.

Some years ago, an old gentleman who had resided long in Holland told us of an exhibition he once witnessed when a boy in one of its principal towns, where a clever Dutchman (although his nation is generally more addicted to aquatics) displayed to the astonished inhabitants a fox-chase in the air, with balloons in the shape of men, horses, and hounds. But that which most tickled my old friend's fancy was one of the horsemen careering along with his head where his heels ought to be! The present is considered a very enlightened age, although confining themselves to experiments on land. That which is to follow will doubtless laugh at their fathers (like the fast men do now at those who have gone before them as *muffs* and know-nothings), by far eclipsing the feats of the *Flying Dutchman*.

We add a few quaint old verses on the subject of hunting, which, although not in keeping with our own opinions, may prove rather amusing to the general reader.

HUNTERS' FOLLYES.

Some dames there be that will disdayne
 Poor child to feede or handle,
 Yet fête themselves with frisking curs,
 Yea, pamper them and dandle.

How many may we see that spende
 Fivefold as much, or moare,
 Upon their dogges, or on their hawkes,
 Than they doe on the poore.

But worst it is that all this charge
 Is to so ill amende,
 Namely, to only have a meanes
 Thereby the dayes to spende,

In vanytye, or sport, wherein
 Is no true gayne or pleasure,
 And yet therewith consume theyr tyme,
 Their chiefest worldly treasure.

True pleasures ought, for true respect,
 Some good thereby to growe,
 But from these common hunting sportes
 Great harmes insue and flowe;

As, first the charge, then waste of tyme;
 The toil of man and horse;
 The damages to neighbor done
 In hedges, corn, and grasse.

What gayne and glory can it be
 For twenty dogges at once
 The silly, harmless, hartless hare
 To kill, and eat but bones?

"Tush!" will they say, "it is not gayne
 That we respect, but crye
 That to our eares we find to be
 Most pleasant mellodye."

This answer is a mere conceyte,
 Without all salt and season,
 And framèd of a fantasye
 Without all sense or reason.

For why may not another man
 From croakinge of the frogges,
 Conceive as much delighte as you
 From barkinge of your dogges?

Yea, greater reason may he yielde
 His judgment to mayntayne,
 For that his pleasure is obteynde
 Without all charge or payne ;

Or without harme to other men,
 When yours it is annoye,
 As well to neighbour as yourself,
 Though things they doe distroye ;

Which weyèd with the stinking staires
 And brauls in house they make,
 The wisest shunn them after prooffe,
 And elerely them forsake.

Yet hunting I must needs commende
 In some degree and sorte,
 To be an honest, gainfull, and
 A necessary sporte.

As for to kill and quyte destroye
 The otter gray, and fox,
 That spoyle our fishe, our lambs and sheepe,
 Ducks, turkeys, hens, and cockes.

As well for that they do therebye
 Our sustenance mayntayne,
 As that theyr cares us do requyte
 Our labor with a gayne.

Provided yett, that dogges, therefore,
 In number nor expense,
 Exceede not so, as that the salve
 Than sore give more offence.

And that you do not covett more
 That vermyn should increase,
 Then through theyr quite destruction
 Your huntinge sport should cease.

CHAPTER XIII.

Hare-hunting a good Preparation for the more noble Science—Harriers of the present Fashion too fast for their Game—Beckford and the Traveller—‘Æsop’s’ Opinion on Hare-hunting—Severe Chase after a wild Fallow-deer — Encounter with a Red Stag — Jolly Green, his blue Mottles and the Bagman—A Sawbones rightly served for attempted Vivisection—Jolly Green takes to Calf-hunting—His Finale —The Author does not indorse all Beckford’s Dicta.

HARE-HUNTING is not altogether a bad preparatory school for young gentlemen of erratic dispositions or high-flown expectations, intended for the more aristocratic profession. I mean hunting with true harriers, not thorough-bred fox-hounds entered to hare. There is a vast distinction between these two kinds of hound, or rather *was*, for the genuine blue mottled or tanned harrier may be reckoned almost amongst the by-gones, so few are there now of this character. Yet, be it remembered, racing hares with dwarf fox-hounds, whereby they are driven from their natural sphere of action, and the exhibition of devices and tactics which have been attributed to a cunning old hare, as little short of witchcraft, is not the sort of hare-hunting of which Beckford writes. With a pack of eighteen or twenty inch rattlers from the Belvoir, Badminton, or Fitzwilliam kennels close at her scut, the timid has neither leisure nor scope

for the display of her instinctive or distinctive habits in this respect. She must die or fly; and it is from this cause that hare-hunting so nearly approximates to fox-hunting in the present era. The hare is forced out of her latitude, and, knowing not whither she is going, goes straight, until she can go no longer.

Put up the same hare before a pack of blue mottles, and she will trim her course accordingly; finding the high pressure reduced, return upon her foil, make those extraordinary bounds to the right hand and to the left which the strength of her hind quarters enables her to do, and exhibit those other little instinctive acts peculiar to her nature, so well described by Somerville:—

“The covert’s utmost bound
Slyly she skirts; behind them cautious creeps,
And in that very track, so lately stain’d
By all the streaming crowd, seems to pursue
The foe she flies. Let cavillers deny
That brutes have reason; sure ’tis something more—
’Tis Heaven directs, and stratagem inspires,
Beyond the short extent of human thought.
But hold;—I see her from the covert break:
Sad on yon little eminence she sits;
Intent she listens with one ear erect,
Pond’ring, and doubtful what new course to take;
And now to ’scape the fierce bloodthirsty crew,
That still urge on, and still in volleys loud
Insult her woes, and mock her sore distress.”

We served our apprenticeship to *thistle-whipping*, under the old *régime*, with a pack of veritable harriers of the old blue mottled sort. Views, or view-halloas, were considered destructive to sport and hounds in those times. We went out literally to hunt the *timid*, and did so patiently

and perseveringly, through all her tortuous windings and labyrinths, foot after foot, until she was fairly hunted down ; and if saved from the jaws of old Bellman, whose note resembled that of a church bell some distance off, her carcase became as stiff as buckram within ten minutes after the vital spark had fled. We thought this very good fun at that time, when in our teens, and felt rather proud of a green hunting-jacket, emblematical, perhaps, of our greenness ; but an accidental day with fox-hounds—and it happened to be a good one—set us all agog after a more daring and exciting sport ; in short, we could not stand, or rather sit out thistle-whipping any longer.

Writing solely from memory, we do not pretend to accurate quotations from Beckford, but we remember something of his story about a traveller who rode up when his hounds were at check, and asked if he were after a fox. The reply being in the affirmative, and the line recovered, the traveller put spurs to his horse, and rode like a certain person (whose name is well known in all sporting circles, and generally cited as undeniable authority for all great feats by flood or field) until the fox was killed. “ Now,” I think he adds, “ had I told this gentleman we were after a hare, he would most probably have resumed his journey without giving us the pleasure of his company.” The views of this traveller accord with our own. Most probably, from the question put to Beckford, he had seen a good deal of thistle-whipping—too much, perhaps, to think it worth his while to diverge from his course on the road to follow the track of a hare, although contenting himself with what he had hitherto found at hand, like

the churchyard poet, who, in lack of better materials to work upon, commenced his epitaph thus :—

“In want of marble stone,
I monuments in brass.”

Our quondam companions in green will, no doubt, think us not wanting in brass by attempting to disparage their sport, but such is not really our intention or aim. Hare-hunting is a sport of great antiquity, followed even so far back as the time of Xenophon, and, as affording healthy exercise and recreation, deserves to be patronized; moreover, according to the old song,

“After hunting all day, our toils to requite,
A delicate feast we prepare;
And Bacchus and Venus we freely invite,
To be in at the death of the hare.”

A hunted hare with currant jelly is a dish worthy to set before a prince; and as a means to an end, notwithstanding the alleged cruelty of the pastime, hare-hunting may be justified and defended quite as much as fox-hunting; in fact, there is no British sport without some cruelty attached to it, from racing down to the miscalled “gentle” art of fly-fishing.

‘Æsop’ (a clever writer in ‘Bell’s Life’) remarks: “If a man wishes to become a thorough sportsman, and really to understand the theory of hunting, he should by all means commence with harriers; for in a country like Hampshire, in which there is so much woodland, I maintain that he would learn more of real hunting in a month with harriers in the open, than he would with fox-hounds in a whole season.” This may be very true; but the mis-

fortune is that men of the present generation are not disposed to study the theory of hunting, or they might see more of it with fox-hounds. I do not mean exactly in the Hampshire woods, or Great Ridge and Grordy in Wiltshire, where a fox *may* run sometimes five miles, from one end of the covert to the other, without a hound being seen at work, except by accident in the cut wood ; but in good hunting runs over the open, or across large enclosures, where fox-hounds are not too hastily handled ; for I quite agree with the author of 'The Noble Science,' "that no animal in the creation has a finer nose than a well-bred fox-hound ;" and as a proof of this, we have seen the highest bred hounds, which had been entered to fox, and remained steady to that scent for three seasons, after being stooped to hare, work on the trail as steadily and pertinaciously as the veriest blue mottles.

A good run is considered a good run, whether with fox, hare, or deer ; and some men would just as readily ride ten miles after a drag as to either of the former. To us it makes all the difference whether a fox or hare is before us ; and as to uncarting a deer, we never could be persuaded to witness such an exhibition, even in our greenest years, although we have followed the stag when roused from his lair in his native haunts. But the most severe chase we ever made was after a wild-bred fallow buck of four years old, which we at last captured, the time in bringing him to bay being more than four hours. This deer, when brought home in a cart, was kept in a loose box until he became quiet and tame, and then turned into the park with others, and, strange to say, never attempted to regain his

liberty, although surrounded by the woods in which he was bred ; stranger still, he became so daring and savage, that whenever he saw me crossing the park, he returned the compliment by chasing me, as I once chased him ; and upon one occasion he would probably have given me some serious token of his spite, save for the interference of a large Newfoundland dog, who sprang upon his back just in the nick of time, when he was rushing in upon me. At last he became so dangerous, that I was obliged to send a bullet through his head ; and the weight of his haunches when killed exceeded forty-five pounds.

There are as great difficulties to be encountered, and more danger, in the chase and capture of a wild stag than in a fox-hunt, and we have always thought the sport proportioned to the nature of the animal pursued ; that is, we feel more ardour and excitement in hunting a beast of prey, or one that will show fight to the last : and for my part, I would rather handle a score of live foxes than tackle a wild stag with his full honours on his brow, which, from the experience of kicks, knocks over, and raking of his antlers, we have found to be a very hazardous business to man and hound. In my last encounter with a red stag, when brought to bay in a small stream of water, he killed the best deer-hound I ever possessed, by sending that spike-nail in front of his forehead right through her body, and would have served me the same trick, but for a roll over on my back, and another dog seizing him by the haunch at this critical moment. We were young then—strong and venturesome in those days, and the greater the risk the greater the fun.

We remember a young gentleman in green who commenced his venatorial career like ourselves, by keeping a pack of harriers. They were really harriers, not dwarf fox-hounds; and having a good open down country, with stout-running hares, he had capital sport for two or three seasons. But this did not satisfy his temperament. He longed after more exciting sport, and took to hunting bag-foxes, kidnapped from a neighbouring fox-hunting country. We happened to witness the result of his first trial, or opening day, at this new game. The fox being fresh caught, and one of the greyhound sort, led his mottled pack a tremendous dance, "over the hills and far away," for many miles, into a *terra incognita* which they had never before visited; and, truth to speak, the currant-jelly dogs stuck to their new scent like leeches, straining their little bandy legs right vigorously up hill and down dale: it was all work and no play on that day—all running and no hunting; for my friend in green had, to make assurance doubly sure, poured half a bottle of aniseed over the fox's brush before starting. The first overture of the pack was, as might be expected, uproarious in the extreme—such a chorus of sweet melodious voices as had seldom been heard; the note from old Warrior's throat, like that of Lablache (who was then in his prime), rising far above the din of other tongues. But ten miles over the open, without let or hindrance, had now nearly choked the old hound, who could not speak above a short, hoarse, husky whisper, and that at a long distance in the rear; in short, Warrior had been in difficulties all the way, with the young hounds pressing like mad to the front, so that he

never had a chance for the display of his great talents at double and squat. At last, like many a better animal, the puff was taken entirely out of him, and he was seen by one of the straggling horsemen—pretty much in the old hound's predicament—sitting upon his haunches half way up the last hill, making a faint effort at a howl. But to our chase: Right merrily went the ringleaders of the now trailing, struggling pack—on, on, on, for three miles beyond old Warrior's last known locality—*i.e.*, about twelve miles from point to point—until they came up with their fox, who was obliged to cry "*Hic jam satis*—I shall go no further." To say that the leading hounds run into and rolled him over, would be to make a misstatement of facts, since nothing of this sort occurred. The fox stood at bay, under a dry hedge, just off the downs, and the display of his ivories kept Tuneful, Tiffany, Madcap, and Meddler at a respectful distance. They did not half like the look of their new customer, and would not go in, shifting and feinting about their opponent like a cautious pugilist in the ring, until the master arrived with a few couples more of his scattered pack. His "whoop-whoop!" when he could get out a halloo—for he was rather husky after such great exertions, and the extra bottle of port the previous night made him feel very squeamish—sounded not very grand upon so glorious a termination. But when he called out "Hey! worry—worry!" encouraging his pack to go in and finish him off, the uproar that ensued baffles our description. Tuneful set up her pipes and fore-leg at the same time, having got a gripe through the knee-joint. Chorister followed suit with a doleful chant, from a bite in his foot.

Meddler exhibited a bloody nose, by reason of a sharp puncture through his olfactory organ; and Rhapsody, an old bloodsucker at a hare, sang out in anything but rhapsodies on having her upper lip divided by an incisorial cut. In fine, the most venturesome of the pack were sent limping and yelling away from the gallant old fox, who dealt his favours around, to all comers in, right manfully.

“Halloa, Green!” exclaimed a wild, dashing surgeon, who was first up, “what’s to be done? I want the brush—I claim it.”

“Take it then, if you can,” said Green, with a laugh. “I shan’t handle him till he’s killed.”

“That he’ll never be by those cowardly curs of yours,” quoth Sawbones; “so here goes for the trophy,” springing from his saddle. “Dead or alive, I must have it.”

Saying and doing are, however, rather different things; and Mr. Sawyer found out his mistake when taking hold of the old fox’s brush, who turned sharp round and sent his probe right through the doctor’s other hand, in which his pocket-knife was held open ripe for this unsurgical operation. We need scarcely relate the issue. Down went the fox, and up went the maimed hand with the bone of the middle finger broken.

“Hah! hah!” cried Green in great glee at Mr. Sawyer’s discomfiture. “It don’t answer to try anatomical experiments upon living ‘subjects.’”

“D—n him!” was the reply. “I’ll get that clod coming up to knock his brains out with a hedge-stake.”

To this proposal, however, Mr. Green demurred, saying

he should be reserved for another day's sport; and upon more help arriving, the fox was again bagged and sent home with the maimed hounds in a carrier's cart. The upshot of this run was, that Green became unsettled for thistle-whipping ever after; but his sport with bagmen, getting into print, roused the spleen of the neighbouring master of the fox-hounds, a rather more peppery man than Jolly Green, from whose coverts they were traced to the hill men; and a polite note from this gentleman suggestive of a lawn meet on a small scale with a couple of select friends only, at any time most agreeable to Mr. Green, unless these mal-practices were discontinued, put a stopper to more bagmen finding their way to the downs. Green's head, however, having got up into the clouds about hunting, could not be brought down again to the double-squat system; therefore, like a great donkey, he took to calf-hunting, which finished his sporting career—not by breaking his neck, but by the awful pace he went over the mahogany, and ere reaching half the age of man, he was laid under the turf.

To judge by the reports we see continually in 'The Field' and 'Bell's Life,' thistle-whipping is becoming fashionable. Well, we are not jealous of our sporting brethren in green, but glad to see them enjoy themselves with their straight-necked jack-hares in the open; and we know that during March down-hares will run pretty straight, and afford good runs, somewhat out of the circular; but Hampshire fox-hunters don't quite relish the accusation of being shut up the whole season owl-batting in their big woods, without a glimpse of sunshine or the taste of fresh

air in the open. More's the pity for those who hunt the fox in Hants, that their country does exhibit, as one of its most disagreeable features (as regards fox-hunting), an overgrowth of wood, like that of hair on the face of a Crimean hero. Yet, withal, some of these big woods afford occasionally the best runs—over the open, too, which are not to be sneezed at.

We know from experience that the counties of Hants and Berks are those in which, above almost every other county in England, Scotland, Ireland, or even Wales, hounds must *hunt* as well as run to kill their foxes; and there we have seen a greater display of *nosing* the ground than in any other district we have ever visited. Over flints and fallows, fox-hounds must stoop and work like harriers, although in rather better style; and, without any intention of giving offence to our friends in green, we advise those who wish to take a few lessons in the art of hunting to go out with the Hampshire or Berkshire fox-hounds. In the great shires or grazing districts, where a crowd of horsemen is ever treading on the pack when the scent is bad, little opportunity is given for the display of noses; in fact, hounds are not often permitted to hunt, being driven beyond the scent; and the huntsman, under pressure from behind, is forced to hold them forward, hit off the line, or lose his fox at once, with fellows around him chaffing and puffing their noisome weeds, seemingly intent on seeing who can do the greatest mischief. For our own part, we would not be at the head of the Quorn or Pytchley hunts were all our expenses paid and two thousand per annum in addition. We would rather, ten

times, hunt the late Squire of Tedworth's country, notwithstanding its big woods, such as Collingbourne, Southgrove, Doyles, and Thackham, and there we have also the chance of a little variety over the downs. Yes; we plead guilty to loving a smart thing across turf sometimes, just to see how the pack can hold together, and the head they carry. But although Beckford gives his opinion that a fox-chase should be short, sharp, and decisive, we do not entertain the same views with this great authority. We maintain that a really good chase with fox-hounds must contain the necessary ingredients of hunting, running, and racing. Any lot of odds and ends, the rejected of other kennels, may run a fox over grass, with a burning scent, and do the short, sharp, and decisive; but the real efficiency of a good pack of fox-hounds is proved by working through difficulties on a bad scenting day—hunting sometimes, running sometimes, and racing into their fox at last.

CHAPTER XIV.

A Visit to the Hon. G. Fitzwilliam's Kennels—Style of Hound—Old Tom Sebright—Courtesy of the Hon. C. Fitzwilliam—Milton Abbey—A short Notice of it—Picture of Mary Queen of Scots, presented by herself to Sir William Fitzwilliam, on the Morning of her Execution—Stained Glass from Fotheringay Castle—Parks and Pleasure-grounds surrounding the Abbey—The Milton Country—Fine Woodlands and stout Foxes—A severe one for Hounds and Horses.

ABOUT two miles and a half from Peterborough, on the south side of the deer park at Milton Abbey, and a short distance from the house, are situated the kennels of the Hon. C. Fitzwilliam, although hidden from view by the intervention of some very fine forest trees and a plantation. Having reached Peterborough late on a Saturday evening, previous to the opening day, the 1st of November, I took up my quarters at the Railway Hotel, which is close to the station of the Great Northern Railway, and contains excellent accommodation.

The next day being Sunday, I attended the morning service at the cathedral, which is a magnificent structure; and being an enthusiastic admirer of sacred music, so particularly productive of devotional feelings, I felt exceedingly gratified as well as benefited by the solemn chanting of those portions of the service generally selected for that

purpose in our cathedral churches, and greatly pleased to find one of my fellow-sojourners at the hotel kneeling by my side when the prayers were offered up. It may be thought out of place by some to mix *sacra profanis*; but although a fox-hunter, I am one of those old-fashioned persons, of old-fashioned ideas, who, throughout all my writings, have never been fool or coward enough to despise or treat lightly religious ordinances. The pleasures and recreations of life may be indulged harmlessly to a certain extent; but when fox-hunting, or any other amusement or avocation, becomes the sole absorbing passion, to the exclusion of all higher and holier duties, it would then deserve the ban pronounced against it in a leading article of 'The Times' some time since.

The afternoon being beautifully fine, I strolled out for a walk in the direction of Milton Abbey, and met my old acquaintance Sebright, the huntsman, trudging on foot also to his parish church, with whom I exchanged a few words only, promising to be at the kennels the ensuing morning at an early hour. A finer dawn never opened on this gala day, the 1st of November, than that which penetrated through the light window-blinds of my bed-room, to warn me to be up and dressing; and no doubt on that auspicious morning, the words of the old gipsy chorus occurred to many as to me—

“Up! rouse ye then, my merry merry men,
It is our op'ning day!”

The fixture being at the Milton kennels, I hurried over my breakfast as quickly as possible, to have an hour with Sebright on the flags, before the hour of meeting. There

was now a different style of hound before me to those I had lately seen at Belvoir, unquestionably of a different and distinct race—a larger framed, more powerful animal—although even here, the standard has been reduced to twenty-four inches as the average height of the dog hounds. Albeit, possessing a quick eye in scanning the proportions of either horse or hound, I was obliged to make the best use of the time allotted to me, for looking over the pack, drawn for that day's hunting. Of the dog-hounds, I must observe, that there is a combination of power, size, and symmetry about them rarely to be met with in these times. They have generally clean long necks, good legs and feet, fine shoulders, and extraordinarily big bodies for their length, which are not found often in large hounds. Their appearance is, notwithstanding, light and airy, and they have the reputation of being in the field one of the most dashing packs of fox-hounds in England; and of this I was soon satisfied, when seeing them at work with their first fox.

The horses having arrived at the kennels, before I had half completed my survey of the pack, I was perforce obliged to dispense with Sebright's attentions, as master of the ceremonies; and having it in contemplation to return to the charge, with the day before me, I resolved to see a fox-hunt, if possible, as the covert to be drawn was not more than a mile distant. The hunting costume of the men—pink coat, with dark-green collar, and broad leather belt over the shoulder, looks remarkably neat and business-like. The gathering on this occasion was rather a short one, the field numbering about fifty only, which must be

accounted for by Milton Park lying at the extreme end of the hunt, and Peterborough, I am told, does not boast many fox-hunters; but more in the heart of the country, and on the Pytehley and Cottesmore sides, from one to two hundred horsemen often congregate at the fixtures of the Milton foxhounds.

Having one sole object in view, the inspection of the pack, and being obliged to leave Peterborough that same evening by the six o'clock train, I had to confine myself to the business on hand; and although offered a mount by the Honourable Charles Fitzwilliam, in the most courteous and pressing manner, on his own hunter, I was compelled, most reluctantly, to decline this favour, well knowing the almost impossibility of tearing myself away from the hounds, if I once joined them, until the day was over: and by those who can understand the feelings of an old master of hounds on such an occasion, my self-denial will be appreciated. To me, there is no amusement or recreation which I enjoy with such enthusiasm as a day's fox-hunting. The excitement of the chase makes me oblivious of all earthly cares or sorrows; and although only now a looker-on, with other men's hounds, I cannot help identifying myself with the pack, and taking the deepest interest in their proceedings. With me, there are no half measures. I could not ride to the place of meeting, and ride home again, if able to sit on horseback.

Knowing, therefore, my weak point, and that all the arrangements I had made would fall to the ground if I once put my foot in the stirrup, I adhered to my resolution of just seeing the hounds find their fox, on foot, and then

return to inspect those left in kennel. With George Sebright, therefore, as my guide, I posted myself on rising ground, and on the line which foxes generally take from Thorpe Wood, upon entering which the row began instant, with a leash of foxes, which, for about fifteen minutes, the hounds knocked about with such determination, that all three broke nearly at the same time; and, as good luck was on my side, the hunted fox ran to ground in a drain, within fifty yards of my position, so that the whole posse-comitatus, horsemen and hounds, came rattling along up to the very spot on which I was standing. Whilst speaking to Mr. Charles Fitzwilliam about the hounds, another fox was halloed, at the extreme end of the deer park, and the whole cavalcade again in motion; Sebright galloping away with his pets, which were at their second fox (evidently one of those from Thorpe Wood), in a few minutes running him through some coverts towards Peterborough, and back to within a field of the park, where, in a small wood on its outskirts, George Carter's "whoo-whoop" was soon heard, proclaiming his having fallen into the jaws of his pursuers.

On returning through the north park, which, with some fine Scotch cattle, contains a herd of five hundred splendid fallow deer, the largest I have ever seen, I had an opportunity of examining the north side of the mansion, appropriately called Milton Abbey, from its having, in early times, belonged to the Abbots of Peterborough; but it has now been the residence of the Fitzwilliam family for some centuries. The present building was erected in the time of Henry VIII., and although alterations and additions

have been made since that period, the front remains entire, with its handsome deeply-worked mullion windows, which impart to it a grand and solid appearance. When the Castle of Fotheringay was demolished, several pieces of stained glass were removed from the windows there, and inserted here, and the house still retains all the characteristics of the magnificent period in which it was built. Amongst many valuable pictures is one of Mary Queen of Scots, with this inscription: "This picture was given to Sir William Fitzwilliam, by Mary Queen of Scots, on the morning of her execution, for the humane treatment she had met with during her imprisonment at Fotheringay, whereof he was Governor;" also another of James the First, when a boy.

On the south side are the lawn and pleasure grounds, opening to the south or lower park, which is used for cattle and sheep only.

In the noble and ancient family of Fitzwilliam—whose ancestor acted as marshal to William the Conqueror—occurs another instance of the transmission of a pack of fox-hounds from father to son for more than a century, beyond which I have no correct information. The name of George Kingston is mentioned as having been huntsman in the family, previous to the year 1765, when the pack of Mr. Child, who hunted part of Warwickshire, was purchased and transferred to the kennels at Milton Park, in which their descendants have continued down to the present time.

These hounds (Mr. Child's) must have been of considerable celebrity in their day, as I find in an old list of Mr.

Ward's pack hounds got by Mr. Child's Brusher; and Mr. Child's, again, were bred from the stocks of the Dukes of Richmond, Marlborough, and Portland, Lords Abingdon, Ludlow, Thanet, Townshend, Vernon, Granby and Gainsborough, and Mr. Barry, all of whom were well-known masters of fox-hounds about that time. This is another proof, if more were wanting, to confirm my oft-expressed opinion that *blood will tell*. If in my researches into the origin of only *one* pack of hounds, the names of no less than ten noblemen appear, at the head of hunting establishments in the last century, it is a very convincing proof that fox-hunting was patronised very extensively amongst those of the highest order of society at that time, although not then dignified by the name of the "noble science." I could also name ten other noblemen who were masters of fox-hounds about the same period, which, together, would far exceed the number of noble names now standing at the head of similar establishments.

Upon purchasing Mr. Child's fox-hounds in 1765, Earl Fitzwilliam engaged the services of their huntsman also, William Dean, who is reported to have been a man of great celebrity in his day (and whose son now lives as an independent man at Milton), very little, if at all, inferior to Will Crane, and I should conclude of more temperate habits than his renowned namesake, from the fact of his having continued to hunt the hounds for thirty-eight years after entering Lord Fitzwilliam's service. To him succeeded John Clark, having previously acted as whipper-in, who hunted the hounds fourteen years, and then gave place to the far-famed Tom Sebright, who had been at the

head of affairs in the Milton kennels, when I saw him on this visit, thirty-seven years, with what results his world-wide reputation as a huntsman and first-rate breeder of fox-hounds will best explain.

Sebright had the good fortune to serve his apprenticeship under one of the most talented gentlemen huntsmen of any age, Mr. Osbaldeston, who, whether as a horseman or breeder of fox-hounds, has never been surpassed in the annals of sporting, and probably never will. This gentleman's extraordinary feats in the saddle are too well known to need recapitulation ; and even without a saddle, upon one occasion, he rode with his hounds across Leicestershire upon his horse's bare back. His pack of fox-hounds were considered quite perfection at that time, and even some years later, when exhibited in Mr. Tattersall's yard, the bitch pack struck me as the neatest I had ever seen.

The Milton country is, generally speaking, a very severe one for hounds, lying so far wide from Milton that they are obliged to have recourse to two extra kennels, one at the upper side of the country, at Oundle, the other at Connington-lane. When foxes run away from the home country, the hounds have long distances to travel after hunting, often from twenty to twenty-five miles. This, with the journey over-night, is very severe work ; and unless of the old *Shiner* sort, the shine would be taken out of them by such constant wear and tear. Change of kennel is also prejudicial ; neither is a long walk after dinner very beneficial either to man, horse or hound. The van system, so much in fashion in the present time, is not adopted with the

Milton pack, neither is it very feasible in such a country as theirs; the hounds have therefore a good deal of road as well as field work to do.

The finest part of the Milton country lies about Silford, and on towards Dinford Ash, including Round's Meadow, Hunt's Closes, Catworth and Leighton Gorses; but the best coverts are Barnwell and Ashton Wold; the former being the property of the Duke of Buccleuch, the latter belonging to Mr. Smith, a staunch friend to fox-hunting, and stout foxes are always to be found in Monk's Wood, Archers, and Aversley. There are also a great many fox coverts on Mr. Fitzwilliam's own property, which is very extensive in that district. On the Cattesmore Hunt side there is a good woodland country, called the Soak of Peterborough, although not holding a very good scent, which extends to the Marquis of Exeter's park, near Stamford. On the Pytchley side, there is also the forest beyond Althorpe, belonging to the Earl of Westmoreland, extending with little interval up to Rockingham Castle, a distance of fourteen miles, which was formerly one of the finest forests in England.

Although containing a considerable quantity of arable land in some parts, the Milton country is, as a whole, one of the finest and wildest that a genuine fox-hunter could desire; with large natural fox coverts and gorses, in which the animal is found in his natural state, without any mixture of the Gallic breed. The foxes are stout and hard runners, affording long chases, and are not so easily handled as in the neighbouring grass districts, where the country is more open, and hounds can go away from small

patches of gorse or spinnies close at his brush. From the extent of the woodlands, it is not considered a fashionable hunting country, and on that account, if for no other, I should prefer it to Leicestershire, or its neighbour, the Pytchley, where two or three hundred of "the finest fellows" in the world are generally found assembled at a favourite fixture, all bent on mischief, when little elbow-room falls to the share of the hounds.

The pack is, however, patronised by some of the best of the Pytchley and Oakley sportsmen, when there is any good appointment within their reach. From the number of large coverts, in which change of scent so often takes place, this is a difficult country to kill foxes in; and both huntsman and whipper-in must be continually with their hounds, which is no easy matter, from the blind nature of the fences: in fact, if a man and horse can go well there, they can go well anywhere. Hounds also must run hard, and work hard for their game, in such a country, where foxes have every advantage in getting a good start before them. For pace, power, and perseverance, this pack has been for many years conspicuous, and the difficulty formerly of obtaining Sebright's drafts—young or old—is one of the best criterions to judge of the public estimation in which it is held. From experience, I can state that some of the best hounds I ever possessed came from this kennel. They were full of courage, very quick, and capital handlers of a bad scent.

George Carter, who was first whipper-in under Sebright, is now the present huntsman of the Milton. He is son of Carter, who was formerly huntsman to the Duke of Graf-

ton's hounds, and afterwards lived with the late Assheton Smith, from the time he purchased that pack, and still hunts the Tedworth country. His son George is likely to follow in his footsteps, and there is no one of the present day I should select as huntsman in preference to him. The establishment is now kept by the Hon. G. Fitzwilliam, second son of the late earl, residing at Milton Abbey, whose generosity and kindness of disposition—the general characteristics of his family—may be well described by the verses addressed to his grandfather by his contemporary and schoolfellow at Eton, the Earl of Carlisle:—

“Say, will Fitzwilliam ever want a heart,
Cheerful his ready blessings to impart?
Will not another's woe his bosom share,—
The widow's sorrow, and the orphan's prayer?
Who aids the old, who soothes the mother's cry,
Who wipes the tear from off the virgin's eye?
Who feeds the hungry, who assists the lame?
All, all re-echo with Fitzwilliam's name.
Thou know'st I hate to flatter; yet in thee
No fault, my friend, no single speck I see.”

CHAPTER XV.

THE BADMINTON PACK.

Its Origin and Antiquity—Enduring quality of the Hounds—Huntsmen from the time of Will Crane—Whippers-in don't always succeed on promotion—Philip Payne and Couplings—A new Order of Things—The present Duke handling the Horn—Wide extent of the Badminton Country—Scrutator as M. F. H.

THE Duke of Beaufort's is one of the oldest-established packs now extant in England, having descended from father to son without interruption for more than a century, and is considered one of the most fashionable blood in the present day, combining the essential qualities of low hunting and hard running. The precise periods at which fox-hounds were first established in the Badminton kennels I have been unable to ascertain, but I have the best authority for stating that it was not later than the year 1753, in the time of the fifth Duke of Beaufort, who commenced keeping them before he attained his majority. Antecedent to this date, stag-hounds, fox-hounds, and harriers occupied the Badminton kennels in the lifetime of the third and fourth dukes, which were discontinued during the minority of the fifth descendant of that noble family; but having exhibited great eagerness for the chase, his guardians were prevailed

upon to purchase a pack of fox-hounds for him before attaining the age of twenty-one. From whence these hounds were obtained, I have no correct information, but there can be little doubt that, as intended for a nobleman of the highest rank and position in society, they would be selected from the best blood then available, and from that period have been handed down through succeeding generations to the present day. From my personal knowledge of them when hunted by Philip Payne, I should suppose this pack to have been descended from the large northern hound mentioned by Markham. Two hounds in particular struck me as being of this blood—Boxer and Brutus—large, powerful, badger-pied dogs, standing about 25 inches high, with a great deal of bone, and rather wiry in their coats. There were others of the same class, such as Wellington, Waterloo, and old Doriment, great favourites of Philip Payne's, and at that time badger and hare-pied hounds were rather conspicuous in the Badminton kennels. Boxer, however, was my great favourite, from his high courage and other good qualities; and whenever I paid a visit to Badminton, he was called out for my inspection, much, I believe, to old Philip Payne's annoyance, for as soon as his name was pronounced, he rushed at the door like a tiger, with bristles and stern erect, nearly upsetting his old huntsman, and came out at a bound, with a growl sufficient to terrify any one but a master of fox-hounds. From this dog I bred some first-rate hounds, and one in particular, named Possum, who, in colour and disposition, exactly resembled his father. This hound I afterwards lent to Mr. Assheton Smith, who entered six couples of hounds from him in one

season, which turned out both clever and good, and thus has the blood of old Boxer been perpetuated in other kennels besides his own, serving to prove a remark I once made, that in many establishments of the present day the hounds are nearly all of two or three great families. The following letter I received from the late Assheton Smith, in reference to three hounds he had from my kennel for the season :—

“Barrister has some wondrous points, and is altogether one of the very strongest dogs I ever saw. I shall weigh them all on Wednesday against some of my own: I go a great deal by weight; I consider it a great proof of power. Can't you come over for a day? or perhaps if the frost lasts you could come. I should like to show you my seventeen couples of last year's entry, particularly as five and a half of them (bitches) are got by your Bertram. Moreton, in offering you that price for one dog, proves you are not to be tempted by price, otherwise I could make you a good, a *very* good bid for Draco. In haste,

“Yours very truly,

“T. ASSHETON SMITH.”

Between the years 1760 and 1770 the Badminton establishment was periodically removed to Blandford House in Oxfordshire, and part of that country, called the Heythrop, hunted conjointly with the Badminton country from that time down to the year 1834. In the last century packs of fox-hounds were few and far between, and very large districts monopolised by one establishment. The Badminton hounds commenced their cub-hunting in their

home-country, removed then into Oxfordshire until Christmas, when they returned again for a month or six weeks, and finished the season in Oxfordshire. The country now hunted by them comprises a large portion of Gloucester and Wiltshire, extending from Tetbury to Devizes, and includes the large coverts of Road Ashton near Trowbridge: commencing again near Bristol, it reaches to Stanmore and Beckhampton on the Wiltshire Downs, measuring about thirty miles from west to east, and about the same distance from north to south. Taking the country throughout, it may be considered as one of the first in the provinces, generally holding a good scent, abounding in foxes, and containing some of the finest natural fox-coverts in England. Of these I may mention the lower woods in the vale of Sodbury, Hawkesbury Upton coverts, Silkwood near Tetbury, Stanton Park near Grittleton, Greatwood, Christian Malford, and Catcombe Woods, in the Christian Malford or Wiltshire country. There are, of course, numerous other coverts, small spinnies and gorse coverts, which are much more attractive to the pace-loving fraternity; but the places I have mentioned are those which would occupy the first attention of a genuine fox-hunter, as the strength of the country in a hunting point of view—the head-quarters from which the supplies of foxes are circulated through the whole hunt; and from these large woods some of the longest, if not the best runs, have been obtained. I remember one of these from the lower woods, when the fox was killed under the Rock's House, within five miles of Bath. Another run of a similar description took place from Stanton Park, the hounds killing their

fox on Weare Farm near Stanmore, just on the verge of the Wiltshire Downs. Greatwood, also, and Catcombe have afforded some splendid runs over as magnificent a vale country—nearly all grazing-land—as can be found out of Leicestershire.

This vale extends from Chippenham to Swindon, and from its excellent pastures the far-famed North Wiltshire cheese is made. The land generally is well drained, and firm to ride over. The fields are large, with strong fences, high banks and double ditches, which require a thorough-made hunter to clear cleverly in the *on and off* style, as the majority of them are too wide to take at one leap. There are also two brooks, which, though not very formidable in appearance, are very awkward customers to get over. From the banks being hollow, it is very treacherous ground for horses either to take off or land upon. Many a bold and gallant fox-hunter has been doomed to taste their muddy waters, and laughable scenes have I witnessed myself, as well as been a partaker of, in crossing them. I once saw three first-rate riders, vieing with each other for the lead, go down at a furious pace to charge one of these brooks, nearly all together. The horse of the first upon coming to the bank shied at the water, turning short to the left in the line of the other two, which were so close to each other, that all three were knocked over into the water at once and a considerable time elapsed before their horses could be landed again on *terra firma*. A cold bath or two have occasionally fallen to my share, but after one dip my horses took greater precautions, and a thoroughbred mare I once rode cleared twenty-three feet at one

bound. To those sportsmen whose avocations constrain them to live in or near the great metropolis, but who may have a desire to witness the performances of the far and justly-famed Beaufort hounds, and to follow them over the vale of North Wilts, the Great Western Railway presents itself as a most expeditious and easy-going covert track, and the Angel Hotel, Chippenham, an excellent hostelry for man and horse. This town is within an easy distance of several good fixtures of the Badminton Hunt, such as Stanton Park, Draycot, Hullavington, on one side; Bowood, Compton Basset, Kellaway's Mill, Dauntsey Gate, and Rushton, for the Christian Malford country, on the other.

To affirm that the Badminton are the best pack of hounds in England would be claiming for them an invidious, although I am inclined to think not an unfair, distinction; but when we consider by whom they have been kept, and by whom hunted, they have a right to stand second to none in the kingdom. Their noble masters have been invariably good sportsmen and excellent judges, both of hounds and hunting, and the present duke having handled the pack himself, now knows how others ought to do it. Of all knowledge, that derived from practical experience is the best; and his Grace, although accustomed from boyhood to hunting and field-sports, has had an opportunity of testing the business part of the profession, with which every master of fox-hounds ought, in my opinion, to make himself acquainted at some period of his life, which enables him to form a correct judgment of the work of the hounds, and the conduct of his servants in the field. The Badminton pack are conspicuous for two of

the most essential qualities in fox-hounds—quickness and stoutness. They have also good noses, and will persevere with a bad scent through difficulties, with an anxious desire to get forward. For speed they have always enjoyed a high reputation, and perhaps on this account principally are great favourites with the fast men. That they can and do go the pace, is beyond dispute, but for this reason only they would find little favour with me in the absence of other more enduring and sterling qualities. They are very quick and rapid movers when a fox is first found, and are at him directly, spreading and dashing through the covert as well-bred fox-hounds ought to do, and they stick to him afterwards, turning quickly with him in his shifts, and have the nack of getting away pretty close to his brush without saying much about it either; so that the coffee-house gentlemen have often the pleasure of finding that the hounds are away two or three fields before they suspected they had left the covert. So much at present for the hounds, and now we will have a look at their huntsmen.

First on my list, though, of course, personally unknown to me, as he flourished many years before my fox-hunting career commenced, stands the renowned Will Crane, a huntsman of the greatest celebrity, and of acknowledged talents. He is mentioned by Beckford, as the *famous Will Crane*, which is a sufficient guarantee that his abilities must have been of the first order. In fact, I have been told by those who remembered him, that he was considered, by all, the very best huntsman, in every respect, of his day. He was a man of large frame, standing six feet, and stout

in proportion. This, by many, might be considered as a sufficient bar to his other good qualities; but although so heavy in the saddle, he was a capital performer across any country, and generally with his hounds. There is, however, often some weak point to be found in men of the greatest genius, and Will Crane formed no exception. Being rather too fond of the bottle, he was obliged to leave the Badminton kennels, and lived afterwards, I believe, somewhere near Newmarket, where he trained Mr. Barry's hounds for their match against Mr. Meynell's. It is reported of the latter that they were fed upon legs of mutton, but Crane was contented to work his on oatmeal and milk, and won the match.

The next successor to Will Crane was a huntsman named Thomas Ketch, who has also been represented to me as a man of great ability, but of a rather queer temper. He was, however, an excellent servant, and complete master of his business, and continued to hunt the hounds until age obliged him to retire, when he was rewarded by his noble master with a pension for past services, and he lived in the house many years afterwards, having his old white mare kept for him also. Thomas Alderton, late whipper-in, was then entrusted with the management of the hounds; but, although of first-rate abilities in his former capacity, he failed as a huntsman, and after a year's trial, requesting himself to be reinstated in his former situation as whipper-in, he gave place to John Dilworth, who had a high reputation as a first huntsman, but was rather deficient in kennel management. He continued, however, to hunt the hounds for many years, until by age

and infirmity obliged to decline. This man also received a pension from the duke he served, and lived some years at Badminton, to enjoy his *otium cum dignitate*, going out to look at the hounds upon a famous old horse called Dutton (the last of the Americus produce); the two old friends, horse and rider, numbering one hundred and ten years.

Next on the list stands the name of Philip Payne, whom I well remember for several years at the head of affairs in the Badminton kennels, and the choice could not have fallen upon a better master of the ceremonies. Philip had passed his novitiate as whipper-in in Leicestershire, and was at that time a dashing and superior rider; he was also a man of keen observation as to the conduct of hounds in the field, storing his memory with the pedigrees of those conspicuous for hunting and lasting qualities, which, in after years, when promoted to be huntsman, he turned to such good account. Upon assuming the command at Badminton, Philip found the kennel regulations of too severe an order, and the discipline too strict, to agree with his enlightened view of things; and wisely concluded that undue restriction is the least likely method to obtain cheerful obedience. Tom Alderton, like many other huntsmen, was afraid to trust his hounds, and carried this so far that even the old hounds were not allowed to walk out in the park amongst the deer, without being coupled. Philip himself told me, that as soon as he entered on his duties as huntsman, he desired the whippers-in and feeder to accompany him with the hounds into the park; where-upon a huge bundle of couples was ushered into the

kennels, as many nearly as they could carry. "Pray," said Philip, in his quiet way, "what may you be going to do with all those couplings?"

"Put them on the hounds, sir, to be sure."

"Nothing of the kind," said Philip; "put them all away, we shall want them only for the young hounds."

"Oh, no, sir," replied the whipper-in; "we never take the old hounds into the park without them, for fear of their breaking away after the deer."

"Stuff and nonsense!" replied Philip; "open the doors and let them out; they won't run the deer when I am with them."

And so it proved. They took no more notice of the deer than they did of the hounds, and soon became attached to their new master, whose confidence begat mutual confidence in his mute companions. The name of Philip Payne will be long remembered as one of the most successful breeders of fox-hounds in his day, and under his management the Badminton pack was raised to the highest state of perfection, both in their appearance and performances. He lived in the time of the sixth Duke of Beaufort, and continued long in the service, duly esteemed by his noble master, and respected by all who knew him, until the heavy hand of time incapacitated him for further exertions in the field.

In the year 1826, William Long was promoted to the important post of huntsman. Long, I believe, was born at Badminton, his father filling the situation of head groom to the fifth duke. At a very early age he entered the hunting stables, and being of a quick and active dis-

position, and a good rider also, he soon attracted attention, and was employed to ride the young horses of the establishment; and in 1819, commenced his career in the hunting field, as second whipper-in. From his early display of first-rate abilities, he was soon promoted to the place of first whipper-in, in which capacity I first remember him; and one more fully alive to his business, with activity and energy combined, I never saw with fox-hounds. As proof of what he could do in the saddle, I may mention that the first season of his hunting the hounds, he rode ten miles to the place of meeting, in the Oxfordshire country, and had a severe day's work, killing a leash of foxes; then, mounting a fresh horse, rode down to Badminton, a distance of fifty miles, the same evening. Like his great predecessor, Philip Payne, he was a first-rate judge of breeding hounds and kennel management, and in the field, a quick, intelligent, and persevering huntsman. He hunted the Badminton hounds for about thirty years, and lived in the service of the Beaufort family, somewhere about fifty. Clark succeeded him in 1858, having hunted the old Berkshire hounds for ten years. He is a man of intellect, well conducted, good-tempered, with good manners, and thoroughly acquainted with the business of the kennel, quiet and quick in the field, and a superior horseman. He has also sense and forbearance enough to *let well alone*, by not seizing hold of the hounds until his assistance is absolutely required.

At the time I first commenced keeping fox-hounds, in the year 1822, there was one brace of foxes only in the

lower part of my country; and on taking, a few years subsequently, the Christian Malford district, one individual of the vulpine race alone remained in Catcombe Wood, which the hounds caught before he broke covert. By an importation of German and Welsh foxes, a good foundation was laid down in all the large heads of earths of a strong, healthy stock of cubs, which soon spread over the country; and in the clicking season, wild foxes from the neighbouring woodlands of the V. W. H. Hunt crossed the border into ours. The troubles and difficulties in forming a hunting country *de novo*, after lying fallow for many years, cannot be understood by those who have never tried the experiment. Landlords' prejudices, farmers' fears about coming damage to their crops, and, worst of all, keepers' tenacity to their perquisites—the rabbits—have to be overcome. The task is enough to quench the spirit of the most ardent fox-hunter. It was, however, at last accomplished; and, in the year 1827, in addition to my old hounds, I brought into the field the finest and one of the best packs of fox-hounds in that day, which I purchased from the renowned John Ward for two thousand guineas. For power and symmetry (particularly the bitches), for hunting and enduring qualities, these hounds have never been, and never can be, surpassed, of which the sport they afforded for more than twenty years gave sufficient evidence. During my tenure of office, the very *liberal* assistance rendered me did not equal the wages and emoluments of a first-class huntsman in the present time; and although obliged to practise economy, I retained in my service for many years one of the cleverest whippers-in

who ever rated a hound, and who is now huntsman to the Bramham Moor Pack: and if my horses did not cost two hundred guineas each, they were at least well-bred, clever hunters, and always there or thereabouts at the finish of the hardest run. In our palmy days we were often honoured by the presence of the late Duke of Beaufort in the field, until those unfortunate differences arose between us, of which my *very particular friends* were not slow to take advantage, as a just reward for past and meritorious services.

Thus, much of that country was formed and made by me which now forms a part of the Badminton Hunt.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Equine Race—Difference in the Treatment of the English and Arab Horses—Attachment to their Masters when kindly used—The general neglect of this most noble Animal a reflection upon Christian Countries—Colt-breaking—Rough Usage productive of rough Tempers—Training for the Hunting-field—The old System—Voice versus Whip—How to keep a Hunter—Lord Stamford's late Stud—Whitehall's management—Natural and Artificial State—Feeding to be regulated by Work—General ignorance of Grooms—Walking Exercise preparatory to Hunting—Ventilation of Stables—How a thirsty Horse was cured of his craving for Water—Stable Statistics.

AFTER Nimrod's letters, and so many other publications on stable management, it may be, and will, no doubt, be considered by many a work of supererogation, my presuming to offer my own crude ideas and home-spun opinions upon this subject; but as this is not a volunteer movement on my part, I will endeavour to afford the information asked for as derived from my own practice and experience, and not under the vain delusion of being able to bring any new light to bear upon a theme which has been so fully and ably handled by more talented writers.

As the most useful of all animals subjected to the dominion of man, it is natural that the horse should attract particular attention, and his proper treatment be considered of paramount importance. The question, however, may

be yet fairly asked—does the horse, notwithstanding all the treatises written upon his breeding, tuition, and management, receive that attention generally to which he is so pre-eminently entitled? or is not, rather, almost every other of our domestic animals more truly domesticated, cared for, and petted by their owners, than the horse? What pains are taken to instruct or attach him to his master? What is his education generally but a wrong system of rough usage, instead of gentle treatment and kind words? In short, it would appear to be the common impression that the horse, as to sagacity, ranks the lowest of our domestic animals, and is quite incapable of understanding anything unless conveyed to his dull comprehension through the medium of whip or spur. “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib,” but the poor neglected horse is supposed to know nothing. Yet, compare our treatment of the equine race with that of the Arabs, and what is the result? Amongst the wild descendants of Ishmael the horse is as quiet, gentle, and intelligent as a Newfoundland dog. See him or her, horse or mare, lying at the tent door, with his master’s children crawling and scrambling, like so many brown frogs, over his belly, back, or limbs, as careless and secure from injury, kick or bite, as if they were playing with a pet lamb! It is a fact, not less notorious than discreditable to us, as a civilized nation, that this most useful of all animals is more hardly used and less cared about by his owner in this country than any other upon the face of the globe. And what is the treatment of that class of horses with which we are now more immediately concerned—hunters? In the common accep-

tation of the term, they are cared for well enough ; that is, as to lodging, clothing, and feeding, under the supervision, perhaps, of a clever head groom in large establishments, and a stupid one in small ones. It is the man with one horse only, or a couple at most, who really cares about, and familiarizes himself with, the character and disposition of his dumb slaves, endeavouring, by kind words and gentle handling, to attach them to himself: and there is one animal only—the dog—capable of stronger attachment to his master than the horse. Is it not quite natural such should be the case? Look at the life of a hunter—it is one of almost solitary confinement in his loose box during the season. What communication has he with others of his own species, save when at exercise or in the field? And yet his nature is not like that of the bullock—dull, heavy, and sluggish—but lively, sociable, and animated; and he is characterized also by strong passions, when occasions arise for their exhibition.

The great drawback to the development of that sagacity and sensibility possessed by the horse in a high degree is the rough, brutal usage he experiences, from the very commencement of his education. What is the common practice of colt-breaking, and by whom performed? Are any pains taken to gain the confidence and attachment of the young animal, upon his first entrance upon this new state of life? Is he caressed, petted, patted, and taught, by slow and gentle means, the first lessons of his education? or, rather, are not these enforced too generally by brute force opposed to brute? The man presuming upon his profession of colt-breaking is too often the very reverse of

the character who ought to be employed in such a delicate undertaking, which requires firmness, coolness, patience, and good-temper ; in place of which, we find very few of these qualities in men of this class, to whom the name of *rough rider* most appropriately belongs. Rough usage will create rough tempers, as a general rule, whether applied to man, woman or child, horse, dog, or any other animal ; and many of the faults and vicious habits of horses owe their origin to ill-treatment, when first broken in.

We must now take a glance at the second stage of a hunter's education for the field, and here again we find the rough rider at his unseemly work, with whip and spur. Now is it not a notorious fact, that ninety horses out of a hundred ridden after hounds know little of their business—to use the common term—as *made* hunters? And this is another proof of the great defect in their education, which ought to have been perfected at home, before these horses are brought into the hunting field. It is all very fine to talk of breaking young four-year-old colts by putting a rough rider upon their backs, to ride them haphazard across country, bundling both neck and crop through hedges and into ditches, or crashing through gates, with the anticipation that, after a few good purls, the horse will know better next time. This is very properly distinguished as “breaking with a vengeance,” in opposition to our system of breaking without a vengeance. You are, in the first case, at the mercy of your horse ; he will go, as he has been taught to go, at his fences—rushing and rasping at high and low alike, with an impetus sufficient to clear thirty feet of water ; and if you don't give

him his head for his swing, he will bring you into trouble ; and when dislodged from the pigskin, should your head come into contact with his heels, he will knock your brains out if he can—and why ? because he recognizes you as a rough rider only, not as a kind, gentle master. Again, what will he do for you in cramp places—in a gravel pit, across a wooden bridge over a canal, with a high stile in and out, and no room for a run to take off?—through the bed of a stream, too wide to jump, and too low to drift him on to the opposite slimy, slippery, broken bank ? What plunging, splashing, and scrambling ensues ! Or if brought up suddenly against a five-barred gate, nailed or locked ? What in such emergencies (and there are hundreds of cases similar to these which occur in fox-hunting) are you to do, with a rushing, pulling, kicking animal, which has been educated by a rough rider only ?

What would you say of a pugilist, who should enter the roped arena to contend with a scientific opponent who had not been first instructed in the art of self-defence ? What, of a general who would lead a regiment of untrained soldiers into the battle-field to fight, before they knew how to use their arms ? It may be answered, “ There is no analogy between the cases ; it is natural for horses to jump.” So is it for men to fight ; but to know how to jump, and when to jump, is as necessary a piece of instruction to a horse as training and drilling to a man. The old and excellent system of breaking young horses for the hunting-field seems almost, if not entirely, superseded by the present rough-riding plan. One seldom hears of a leaping-bar now-a-days, formerly considered a necessary

appendage to a hunting establishment. Even the owner of a couple of horses had generally such a thing in his little bit of paddock, and the advantages attending this home education can never be compensated for by the harey-starey course now adopted, in which there are so many self-apparent damnatory defects as to defy all comparisons with the former. Under the old régime, young horses were taught their lessons by slow degrees and gentle treatment—in contradistinction, as now, to these lessons being crammed and rammed into them by force and violence, whip and spur. The horse was invited by his leader, patted and induced to walk over, first, a very low bar; it was gradually raised to make him spring higher, but never very high, for the first two days. He was instructed, also, how to take his standing leaps, by being led up to the bar, and, by word of mouth, told to follow his master; then over low fences, open ditches, and small watercourses. All his lessons, in short, whether standing or trotting, were conveyed to him by the voice—walk, trot, jump, halt. And one of the most important of all was, never to leave his rider when thrown, or attempt to injure him in any way. This was the system formerly adopted by fogies of the old school. Our young horses were taught by the voice and hand—by firmness, patience, and perseverance, without violence—and thus they became as attached to us as dogs, doing what we required of them at the word of command—willing, cheerful, obedient servants, instead of unwilling, ill-used slaves.

But it is not of young horses only I am writing. I have bought old ones—their dispositions soured, and

tempers spoiled by inhuman treatment; vicious kickers, biters, almost unmanageable—and these within a few months, by firm, kind treatment, instructed by the voice, never by whip or spur, have become entirely reformed characters, and obedient to my word in the hunting-field; for I seldom rode with spurs, being thoroughly satisfied that a good, generous horse will do his utmost for a good master without prick of steel or blow of stick.

“Well, now you have told us how to make hunters, perhaps you will next inform us how we are to keep them?” Well, I suppose every one who has kept a horse knows that, at least he thinks so; and if not, his groom does, which will do just as well. Thus argue the majority of horse owners, whether possessing large or small studs. Yes; it is the business of the groom to manage the stable, as it is that of the keeper to know how to breed, break and feed a kennel of pointers. And yet there is not one in a hundred of these officials who does really and truly understand the nature or proper treatment of the animals committed to his care. There are, it is true, some head grooms who profess to combine the veterinary art with their stable knowledge, and often prove the truth of the old adage, “a little knowledge is a dangerous thing,” by the failure of their experimental philosophy. The lancet, as well as medicine chest, are dangerous things to intrust to men wholly unacquainted with the internal structure of the animal, and the causes and symptoms of diseases to which horses are subject. I have, however, met with some clever, sensible men of this class in my travels, such as Whitehall, head groom to the Earl of Stamford,

when I visited his lordship's establishment a few years ago. The large stud of hunters under his management looked well and healthy, and in first-rate condition, with bright eyes, glossy coats, and clean legs, notwithstanding their severe work ; their treatment being rational and natural—no cordial balls, diaphoretic or diuretic medicines being used by him, except when absolutely required ; neither were the three doses of aloetic compound given as a general rule to every horse alike, whether requiring them or not—which rule-of-three appears to run in the heads of most grooms, as a cabalistic number, to get hunters into condition.

The stables at Quorn were cool, and a single rug considered by Whitehall as sufficient clothing. When returning from hunting a bucket of gruel was given to each horse, and a little moist hay, but no corn until an hour after. We have been frequently recommended by writers on stable management to bear in mind that hunters are kept in an artificial state, and therefore require artificial treatment. If by the term "artificial state" is meant their eating hay and oats during the winter months instead of grass, which, in this country as well as in some others, ceases to grow at that time of the year, horses have been used to this diet since the day when Noah first entered the ark. Therefore, as use by long usage becomes second nature, it is a long time ago that horses first commenced living upon hay for an entire year without any change of food. But man, since the Deluge, has been living in just as much an artificial state as the horse, and we know by experience that the more luxuries he indulges in the more physic he will require. By the same rule, if a horse is over-crammed

with a lot of oats or beans, enveloped in half a dozen rugs, and every breath of air excluded from his stable, his frame will be brought into a state bordering on fever. Just make the addition of what ignorant grooms delightfully call cordial and condition balls, generally containing highly-inflammatory ingredients, and you have the unfortunate animal ready for the lancet or the knacker's knife.

The first great rule to be observed in the feeding of horses is, to regulate their diet by their work. The process of training, or, as it is commonly called, getting them into condition, must be gradual. Every groom with an ounce of common sense ought to know this, and that the allowance of corn should be increased as his work increases, instead of the four or five feeds of oats per diem, with beans, being crammed into him at the commencement. Exercise also should be gradual; first walking only, then trotting, and last of all cantering. I think it was one of Nimrod's maxims that, as the pace of the hunter is now the pace of the race-horse, the preparation should be the same, or he has not justice done him, adding, "that it took twelve months to bring a racer to the starting-post." This would imply that a hunter should be kept in training all the year round; from which, and several other doctrines of his regarding horses and hounds, I have always dissented, since the first publication of his letters, as contrary to general practice and common sense. A hunter which does not come home as fat as a bullock from grass, may by proper treatment be got into fair condition, sufficient to commence hunting in three months. Walk him one month, as a preparatory step, and walk him *only*

on plain ground first ; then up and down hill, gradually extending the time and distances ; and by this moderate exercise his sinews will acquire their usual elasticity, his lungs resume their respiratory functions under pressure from without, and his heart, reins, and stomach be relieved of any obese pressure within by a couple of doses of physic. The next month may be devoted to trotting and walking, and the third to all three paces, by which time he will be fit to go with hounds.

The treatment of hunters in the stable, as to their diet, should be plain and rational. Their dwelling-place well-ventilated—only moderately warm, and their clothing a single rug in the winter or a linen sheet in summer. During the training or preparatory months our hunters were turned out early in the morning for an hour's exercise, during which the doors and windows of the stables were thrown open, the litter shaken well up, all the soiled straw removed, and the stalls or boxes thoroughly brushed out. The same process was repeated in the afternoon, when the horses again went out for their exercise. Without great attention to the cleanliness and ventilation of the stable, it is unreasonable to expect health in the horse ; and this, as well as his eyesight, becomes seriously affected by the ammonia arising from foul litter. Disinfectants have been recommended to obviate this evil, such as a thin layer of gypsum or peat charcoal under the straw, muriatic acid, and other things ; but prevention by cleanliness is far better than to substitute an excuse for idleness.

Except in cutaneous eruptions, generally produced by over-feeding, I am no advocate for alteratives, in place of

which carrots may be used with great advantage, as they act slightly upon the bowels and kidneys, and also upon the skin ; and during the hunting season even a few given twice a week will be found most beneficial to health and condition. Nitre is a simple and cooling remedy in urinal obstructions, to be succeeded by a bucketful of well-boiled oatmeal, which should also be given to every horse after his return from hunting. Hay and oats are the staple food of hunters and racers, which should, of course, be of best quality, old and bright ; but beans should be given very sparingly, except at particular times and seasons, when they are hard-worked, or shedding their coats : bruised corn is preferable to that in a whole state, being more easy of digestion and nutritious, of which any man may be convinced by observing that many whole oats are voided without mastication. You will never be able to persuade grooms of the fact that sweet, clean wheat straw is an excellent substitute for hay chaff, and may be mixed advantageously with bruised oats ; and to nice feeders a little may be given daily to pick over between their usual meals.

The general allowance of oats and hay to each horse per day and night is from four to six quarters of the former, according to his work, and from fourteen to eighteen pounds of the latter ; and, as I have before remarked, the day after hunting a few carrots should be given, about twelve o'clock, which will tend more materially than many may think possible to keep a horse in a healthy and cool state of body after severe work, and improve rather than deteriorate his condition. I do not

see why a horse, to be fit for hunting, should necessarily be kept in a state bordering on high fever; for, were such the case, he could not be called in proper condition to undergo severe work. My idea of condition is, that there should be a total absence of all febrile symptoms in the system; and this state is certainly not incompatible with, but a natural consequence of, judicious training. What is a thorn, a blow, or cut, to horses and hounds in really good case? is it not soon healed, and little regarded? But if an animal be in a state of fever, the simplest wound becomes a serious sore. By training I understand the intention to be to divest the corporeal frame-work of all superfluities of fat and improper juices, internally and externally, and to bring the flesh and muscles into a firm, healthy condition, so as to be enabled to undergo the greatest amount of labour with the least degree of fever; in short, a man to fight, as well as a horse to hunt, should be as cool as a cucumber. Man, horse, or hound, when in proper trim, ought—to use a vulgar saying—“to be ready to jump out of their skin.” That horses are continually brought into a state of fever by the quackery of ignorant grooms, hot clothing, suffocating stables, over-allowance of oats and beans, and an under-allowance of water, admits of no doubt, and *hinc illæ lacrymæ* about puffed legs, swelled joints, constipation of bowels, colic, and other maladies.

A friend once asked my advice about his hunter—at that time he kept one only—how to cure his insatiable thirst for water, saying that his man declared “he would drink the well dry, if allowed to do so.”

“Then, let him try,” was my reply; “it’s the only way to cure him.”

“Nonsense,” he said; “he would drink until he burst himself.”

“So much the better for me, I want flesh for the hounds. But, joking apart, place a tub large enough to contain eighteen or twenty gallons of water in your horses’ loose box, and make your man keep on filling it up to the brim all day long, as fast as he drinks, and if that don’t cure his craving for water, nothing will, except drowning. But mind,” I added, “that the tub must always be standing there, as full as possible, day and night, so that he never can reach the bottom.”

“What!” he asked, “the night before hunting?”

“Just so; fuller then, up to the brim.”

A week after this, my friend rode over to thank me for my advice, saying that his horse never cared since about water. Our plan was to have a large knee-bucket full of water always in every loose box, filling it up throughout the day, and putting all fresh at night, so that every horse could drink when he liked. A far better plan, where a spring or outlet of a stream can be made available, is to introduce running water into a small tank made of slate, placed at the back wall of each box or stall, against the wall. I say the back wall, because there are objections to this receptacle for water being placed in the same range with the manger and rack, and so under the head of the horse when eating his food. To this tank, a wooden coverlid is necessary, to prevent the horse drinking when heated, and the dust falling into it when the stall or box

is being cleaned out. Every stall may be converted into a loose box, by doors to fall back against the wall. Now, it will no doubt be objected by hot room and hot clothing advocates, and the whole class of self-willed grooms, that this introduction of running water through the stable will play old gooseberry with horses, giving them colds and coughs, and causing great dampness; but if properly constructed, so that not a drop of waste water shall be spilt on the floor, I venture to affirm that this little current, conveyed through a small *earthenware* pipe—not one of lead—will be the means of keeping the stable in a more healthy and purified state, carrying off, instead of engendering, all noxious vapours and impurities.

Unfortunately, and most unreasonably, grooms have an aversion to giving horses water in sufficient quantity, simply, I suppose, because they never drink it themselves; and I have little doubt, if so permitted by their masters, they would prescribe beer, as a much better beverage, oblivious, or wholly ignorant of the facts, that water is as necessary to a horse as hay and oats, and that thirst is less endurable than hunger. Now, I ask any man who has tried the experiment, whether a glass of cold water before breakfast is not an excellent stomachic, and whether he does not feel invigorated by it, rather than the reverse? With some, it may at first act as an aperient; but in any case, the rinsing out of the stomach is as necessary a process as washing cups, plates, or dishes, after tea and dinner, to keep them in a clean state. Another question I would ask these hydrophobists. How is the body of a hunter, when exhausted by perspiration and fatigue, to be replenished

with juices sufficient to meet a similar exhaustion two or three days after, except by a due reception of liquids as well as solids into the stomach—which may be compared to a boiler, the more steam thrown off, the more water will be required? Well, now—horror of horrors!—I now proceed to state that a hunter should really have water, and a fair allowance, the very morning he is to carry his master hunting, or we shall have him in that state of fever I deprecate before the day is half over. It was the fashion in my younger days for a head groom to be in his stable by four o'clock in the morning of hunting, and at five A.M. on other days, so that our hunters had a very early and rather substantial breakfast: and as to water, they could always help themselves whenever they required it, morning, noon, and night; and for this very reason, because it was always at hand, like the animal *rationale*, they did not care about taking more than was necessary. To the absurd and cruel practice of stinting horses in their water, and giving too short an allowance in a small shallow bucket, to the bottom of which they are permitted to drink, generally may be attributed this craving for more. If obliged to use a bucket, let it be a deep one, to the bottom of which a horse should not be allowed to put his nose. Horse and hound, when in proper condition, drink less than at any other time; in fact, one of the surest proofs of the animal being in a sound and healthy state of body is his disinclination for water, of which he will take only a sufficient quantity to assist digesting his food. When at grass, horses and cattle drink sparingly, except in hot, dry weather. And why? Because grass

contains sufficient moisture in itself to carry on quick digestion, without water. Sheep, particularly, when fed upon grass and roots, are rarely troubled with thirst. By neglecting, or not duly observing, the most common rules of nature in regard to animals, men are led into egregious errors in their proper management of them.

I remember once an old miller standing at his door dissecting a rat, just killed by his terrier; and to my question of what he was doing, this short answer was returned: "I be studooing natur." And if the owners and pretending race of horse-tamers would study a little more *their* natures, it would be far better for themselves and the animals under their dominion.

As necessary as a saddle-room, where a large or small stud of hunters is kept, so is a boiling-house, with two small iron boilers—abjure copper or brass—one for oatmeal, the other for hot water; for the latter is a panacea for nearly every kind of injury a horse may meet with in the hunting-field, warm fomentation being of paramount importance as a primary application for cuts, wounds, bruises, and strains; and the oatmeal porridge equally efficacious as a fomentation to the stomach after a hard day's work. In short, gruel—not that kind administered by whip and spur—is a *sine quâ non* to hunters, and should be given the first thing after hunting; then a little hay, and afterwards a feed of bruised oats, steeped together with a bran mash in a covered bucket for at least half-an-hour. Pursue this course of feeding on hunting evenings, and I will venture to say your horse will never be in a state bordering on high fever. Don't forget the carrots the following day.

Never mind what your groom says against cold or hot water or carrots. Exercise your prerogative as master in this matter, and tell him, point blank, if he cannot make cold water and carrots agree with your horses, you will soon find another servant who can. Bear in mind, however, that they are not to be given at the same time, or within three hours of each other. Carrots at twelve A.M.; two pounds of hay afterwards at one or two o'clock, and water at four P.M.

Some have an idle trick of placing buckets of water in *hot* stables, to take, as it is called, *the chill off*, not considering or knowing that water attracts the ammonia and other effluvia, whereby it is rendered unwholesome. In very cold weather, a little boiling water may be added to the cold. But to horses in cool and well-ventilated loose boxes, which can move about, I should give them access, as before stated, to the running water in the tank, to drink as they liked. Cold water strengthens, warm water weakens the stomach. The latter, therefore, should only be given at particular times.

Every man has a crotchet about racks and mangers, of what material they should be made, and how placed. For the former iron or wood are the best, and for the latter slate or enamel, which are so much more easily cleaned than wooden ones. The position of the rack for hay should be neither so high that the seeds and dust can fall into the horse's eyes, nor so low that he can blow his nose over it. There should be an aperture in the centre of the ceiling, above each stall or box, about a foot square, and a funnel above it, to carry off any foul air, and fresh air

admitted through another in the end wall, with a sliding board to regulate the temperature of the stable. When coming home from hunting, his legs should be thoroughly washed, particularly the heels, with soft soap and water, a linen bandage then applied, and a thick hot flannel over it. I say linen first, which will not irritate any scratches or wounds, and the flannel next, which will draw out inflammation. I need scarcely observe that the stalls should be paved with brick in preference to stone, and well under-drained, with a good fall to a tank some distance off; and the dung-pit never so near that the effluvia arising from it can gain access to the stable. Lofts over are objectionable for hay, which should, if possible, be cut daily from the rick, or placed in trusses in a small out-house appropriated to this purpose, and another for straw.

CHAPTER XVII.

What to do with Hunters in the Summer—Different Men have different Opinions—The too common practice of Firing and Blistering condemned as cruel and unnecessary—Rest and Cooling Diet after the Hunting Season—Lucerne—All Green Food given fresh from the Scythe—The effect of early Spring Grass—Ditto of Dew and Moisture upon the Feet—Big Ben of Oxford without a Hoof—Objections to turning Hunters out in the Summer Months discussed—The Author's System—Clipping and Singeing—The late Henry Hunt's method of treating his Horses.

THERE are various opinions, and as varied treatment, with regard to the summering of hunters. Some are confined to the same stable during the recess, with a change of green food only, in place of dry, and a restricted quantity of corn: others are turned into loose boxes, without being taken out to exercise at all, and condemned to stand so many hours a day upon moist clay, cold stones, or sponge boots, to renovate their hoofs and keep their legs cool; others, into barns or open sheds in a farm-yard; and, in some cases, where only sufficient cats are kept to kill mice, the unfortunate animal exchanges the saddle for the pad, being treated to a run in harness instead of a run at grass. To men of wealth, it may be a matter of perfect indifference whether their horses are treated in a manner con-

ducive to health or long service. When one horse is lamed or unfit for use, they can buy another; but to a sportsman of moderate means, it is of considerable importance whether his hunters are treated so as to last sound and healthy for six years instead of two, and this is the chief point to be considered—not whether Beckford's plan, or Nimrod's, has gained the greatest number of advocates, but what is the treatment which is most likely to conduce to the health, strength, and longevity of the hunter, and at the same time maintain his hoofs, legs and body, in the same efficient state. There can be no doubt whatever that, unless hunters are managed rationally and judiciously during the hunting season, they will require a great deal more attention and care during the recess.

Accidents, we all know, will occur in the best regulated families, and accidents in the field, without any fault in horse or rider. These accidents may necessitate special treatment in vacation time. The tendons and sinews of hunters suffer more than those of race-horses or draught-horses, from the violent strains they undergo, when carrying weight through heavy ground and jumping fences. The hocks and pastern joints have also laborious work to perform; and it is wonderful how these natural hinges are supplied, from a never-failing source of oil, to discharge their functions, when so severely tried in a long day's hunting. The pressure upon these will depend upon the weight carried; which should always be in proportion to the size and power of the animal which has to bear it. We often see what a bit of blood can do, when carrying a man of double his allowance; and it is well known that

the texture of bone in a thorough-bred is more solid than that of a cart-horse, and his sinews of a more tough nature; yet there is no reason why the strength and courage of a good little one should be overtaxed.

At the close of the hunting season, the first object is to repair the damages done in the working of the machine during the last six months; for, unfortunately, horses are too generally treated as mere galloping machines, and many of their riders may not inaptly be compared to engine-drivers. Rest alone, and bandages kept moist with vinegar and water, after all the inflammation has been subdued by warm fomentations, will be found sufficient to reduce common strains and windgalls; while for those of a more serious character, firing and blistering may be necessary. To the two latter, which entail so much punishment upon the horse, without corresponding benefit, I have always entertained the greatest objection, except when positively indispensable, having witnessed their injurious effects upon thin-skinned delicate horses, and those of an inflammatory, excitable constitution. By listening to my groom's suggestion, I had once a very valuable young mare entirely ruined by blistering her forelegs, which were rather puffy, at the end of the hunting season. She was naturally of a hot, irritable temperament of body, and her legs, from long standing, as well as the irritation of the blister, became so swelled, that they never again could be brought down to their natural dimensions. Firing was used by fox-hunters of the old school as a preventative rather than a remedy; and I shall never forget my feeling of disgust, when returning home after a short absence

during vacation term, to find two young hunters I had bought the previous season scored on all four legs in a most merciless manner, by my father's orders. This operation had been performed, as he maintained, to prevent their breaking down ; but whether it had the desired effect or not it would be difficult to affirm or deny, although they were, clearly enough, disfigured for life.

It would be a blessing indeed to dumb creatures, could men, masters and grooms, be brought to believe, and act upon that belief, that horses and dogs are formed of the same materials as themselves, flesh and blood, and that they really do and can feel pain. There is also another fact of which they require to be continually reminded—that they are responsible, and will assuredly be punished, for every unnecessary act of cruelty or injury inflicted upon any animal under their protection, or with which they may come in contact, from a horse to a house-fly. As to firing, we know that the chief object is to create a perpetual tight ligature over weak sinews or hocks, and in cases of curb, also, it is a very effectual remedy ; but the inflammation following the use of the iron, and the punishment inflicted on the horse, is quite sufficient, without the absurd and barbarous practice of immediately applying a blister, with the common notion of *drawing out the fire*. If firing must be resorted to, as the only cure in some cases, emollient instead of irritating ointment ought to be applied immediately after the irons, to mitigate, not increase the inflammation ; and for this purpose, a little fresh clean lard will assuage the pain as quickly as anything. In such operations, however, the cleverest veterinary surgeon

should be employed, since it makes all the difference whether they are performed by a scientific light hand or a heavy-fisted village blacksmith. With the two exceptions only above named, I never had recourse to the irons during my whole sporting career, and my conviction is that they may be entirely dispensed with; rest, with hot and cold water, being sufficient restoratives in all common cases of strained sinews or swelled joints. In recent injuries of this kind, as I have before remarked, hot water should be the first and only remedy employed, and persevered in, if necessary, for hours, until the swelling and inflammation subside. Those who have not tried warm-water fomentations, cannot be aware of their salutary effects, but they must be continued to be effectual; and here lies the difficulty, in persuading your groom to go on with them, which he will not, unless assisted by another man, to share the trouble. Mercurial charges, and other applications of various compounds, are very commonly used, where firing and blistering are not considered necessary, and a kind of pitch-plaster, to adhere to a horse's leg for a month or longer—but I am no advocate for such things. An elastic stocking is certainly a great benefit to human legs suffering from weak ankles and varicose veins; but, when once adopted, its use cannot be dispensed with; and a boot on a horse's leg is an unsightly appendage, although I have seen some which, from long usage, could not go without them.

The treatment of hunters during their holidays must depend, in a great measure, upon the state of their legs at the close of the season. Some will require more care and

rest than others, and to these the narrow confines of a loose box or barn may be indispensable, at least for the first month or two. I allude to those horses which have sustained serious injury from strains or other accidents; and in their case a dose of physic will, of course, be necessary, after due preparation with bran mashes. The general green food obtainable in the market at this time of year—the beginning of May—are vetches, lucerne being seldom grown for sale. In some districts, also, the *Trifolium incarnatem* is still cultivated, as a substitute for tares, which is fit to cut in the middle of May; a good crop of which may be grown upon the lightest soils with little trouble of culture, the seeds being merely harrowed in, during the previous month of September, upon wheat or barley stubbles, without any top-dressing. Clover and Italian rye-grass succeed these; to the former of which there are many objections, both in its green and dry state, for hunters. The most profitable of all green crops, and that best suited to the summering of hunters in loose boxes, barn or stable, is lucerne, which will bear cutting three or four times during the summer; oftener, if highly manured, and the space between the drills kept clean from weeds by the hoe. Whatever green food be used, it should be cut, if possible, when the weather is clear, and the sun bright over head, and not more gathered in one day than will suffice for the twenty-four hours' (at the outside) consumption.

The plan of soiling in the stable has been very generally adopted of late years, not only by the owners of hunters, but by farmers also, partly as the means of ob-

taining a larger and better supply of manure, when made from the stable. Yet, we must bear in mind that the most active season for agricultural horses is during the spring and summer months, when they require better feeding than in the winter, which is, comparatively speaking, a leisure time. With hunters the case is reversed.

Some years ago, when going over his model farm with the late Lord Ducie, the condition of his horses particularly attracted my attention. These were of a superior breed to those usually employed by farmers, having all the power, without the thick, heavy legs, large heads, and heavy shoulders of the common cart-horse, very closely resembling the Cleveland Bays, and no hunters could have looked cleaner in their coats. The daily food of these horses, as nearly as my recollection serves me, consisted of twenty pounds of white Belgian carrots and clean wheat straw only. They never tasted hay, winter or summer; but when the carrots were consumed, green clover, cut fresh from the field, was substituted. I have also heard of race-horses on the Continent being fed on oats and wheat straw only. In my last chapter I stated that the general allowance of oats per day was from four to six quarterns, which was misquoted in a sporting paper as six feeds positively, whereas I said nothing about *feeds*. Now the weight of four quarterns of oats will average somewhere from ten to twelve pounds; scarcely the latter, since it is rather rare to find this corn weighing forty-eight pounds per bushel; and I believe that where one hunter consumes a less quantity than these four quarterns, ten eat more; and it has been stated by a clever writer on the

management of hunters, that "a hunter and race-horse must have as many oats as they can eat in seasons of hard work." There is nothing, therefore, at all out of the way in my naming from four to six quarterns, as some horses require more than others, according to their size and age. As to these matters, I give the result of my own experience. The usual allowance of oats to my hunters was four quarterns a day, and more when they required it by reason of hard work. The division of this quantity into feeds is optional, for I did not mean to imply that a hunter or any horse in work should be eating all day long. Our rule was to give corn four times a day—at breakfast, at twelve, four, and seven o'clock in the evening.

To resume the subject of "summering hunters," I must speak well of the bridge over which I was safely carried. With the change of the season, our horses were prepared to undergo a great change also in their treatment. Their corn was reduced about the middle of April, when we left off hunting, or sometimes earlier, and their clothing gradually discontinued as the weather became more warm. The windows of the stable were thrown open during the day, and on the first fitting opportunity, that is, upon the first genial April or May¹ morning, they were indulged with the liberty of taking their walks by themselves in the park, without a groom or stable boy upon their backs—"kicking and knocking each other about," the sceptic, of course, will say, "and undoing all you had done for them the last six months." Well, not exactly. Our process of thus summering was a gradual and careful one. We did not rush wildly into extremes. The two quarterns of oats

per diem were still continued, and hay night and morning, as usual. We picked our days and hours also for turning out. We avoided all cold, boisterous winds and storms, and did not allow the horses to remain out for the first week more than a few hours at the time. The first effects produced by the early spring grass may be supposed. It stood in place of an aloetic ball, without its drastic properties, cooling the whole system; and this change of diet, even for a month, is of the greatest benefit, with which no other course of summering will bear comparison; for in our changeable climate we cannot calculate upon cutting green food of other kinds in dry weather, or depend upon its being in a fit state for soiling in the stable. One other great benefit is derived also from a run at grass—the frog and hoof of the horse become renovated and strengthened. Our plan was to pare the latter down as close as possible, without doing injury, which had the double effect of preventing the horses galloping about at first, from the tenderness of their feet, and producing a rapid growth of new horn; so that the old nail-holes quickly disappeared, and fresh material was formed for the blacksmith to work upon for the ensuing season. We have all heard, I dare say, of the old doggrel lines—

“Barney Bodkin broke his nose;
Without feet, you can’t have toes;”

and a horse would cut a sorry figure without a hoof, although I did see one, once upon a time, without this necessary appendage, and bought him afterwards, when his new toe-nail had begun to grow a little. This may

appear rather a romantic story, but any person doubting the veracity of it will find it substantiated by calling on Mr. Quartermaine, of Piccadilly, of whom I purchased the horse, when he resided at Oxford. He was a large roan-coloured animal, standing about sixteen-and-a-half hands high; and after lying idle for twelve months, during which I succeeded in making his hoof all right, he turned out a capital hunter, and carried me for many years afterwards. Big Ben, as he was called, had received a very imperfect education for a hunter, and being ridden one season by wild Oxonians did not much improve his tactics in the fencing department: he pulled enough at first to tear one's arms out of their sockets, but by dint of coaxing, patting, and civil treatment, he soon became a thorough good huntsman's horse—patient and tractable.

In advocating the out-of-door system of summering hunters, I expect, of course, to meet with great opposition from the supporters of the opposite plan, and I will state some objections that have been made, and endeavour to meet them. The first is, that by turning a hunter out to grass, you put him directly out of hard condition. This, I admit, is partly the case, and I do so purposely. I do not wish, nor is it desirable, to keep horse or hound in training or galloping order all the year round, feeding them upon the same hard and nourishing food with no distinction, whether in work or out of work, during the winter and summer months alike. My object is to unstring the bow when its use is discontinued, and not to keep it ever bent. But in all these matters relative to the treatment of horses and hounds, in season and out of season, it

would be much better, as I have before remarked, if masters would judge their animals by their own feelings, and how they are disposed to live and treat themselves. What can be more refreshing and wholesome in hot weather than a dish of fine, ripe strawberries, or other of our British fruits? There is a time for all things—one for work, one for sleep, another for active exertion, another for inactivity and repose. What object can be gained, let me ask, by keeping a hunter in the same hard condition during the four months he is not required to have a saddle on his back? I shall be told, perhaps, that time is gained, and that our horses are always fit to go all the year round. Very true; but as you do not want them from the first week in May until the last week in September, what is the use or advantage of this plan, which *is* of no use, and a great disadvantage to your horse? Another objection raised to turning horses out is, that they are more liable to injury or cold than in the stable or loose box. I say, if duly and gradually prepared for the change, they will be much less susceptible of cold; and as to injuring themselves or each other by kicking and galloping about, what are such risks in comparison with those encountered every day they go out hunting? I can only say upon that point that, during thirty years' probation of this system, I do not remember that one single instance ever occurred of a horse being so injured.

A third objection is, that horses are tormented with flies and gnats, which cause them to stamp and kick, from which annoyances they are free when under shelter. To this I reply, that our plan was to catch up the horses,

during the heat of a summer's day, and not turn them loose again till the cool of the evening. Still, it may be objected, a great deal of trouble and work was thus occasioned to grooms and helpers. Not so much as may be imagined ; in fact, I may say, none whatever, except a walk by the groom into the park, with his sieve of corn, and a walk back to the stable, with all the horses following him, when each betook himself in the most orderly manner to his own stall or loose box, and there received his quantum of oats. To those who can be induced to believe that a chestnut horse, and a horse chestnut, are not exactly the same thing, it may not appear a very strange assertion that horses may become very tractable and obedient animals, and even when roaming at large, that they will readily respond to the call of a kind master, and follow wherever he may desire to lead them. There is very little trouble attending these things, if people will only set about doing them in a quiet, sensible way. Our hunters exercised themselves, without requiring the aid of grooms and helpers, and when we wanted them to walk back to the stables they obeyed the summons, without making the least demur about it. We always treated them as sensible, sagacious animals, and never discovered that they were mere brute beasts, without understanding.

I am no advocate for turning hunters loose into an open, large, rich pasture for three or four months, without sheds or shelter from the heat or cold storms which so often succeed each other in this variable climate, neither should I desire to see them come up from grass as fat as

bullocks. The pasturage should be thin and scanty—sufficient only to maintain them in good case, and with the allowance of two quarters of oats per day, and hay at night, when it is necessary to keep them in the stable. Horses so treated will lose little of their condition, and require very little physic, when they are again put into training for the ensuing hunting season.

As we generally commenced cub-hunting the second week in August, our hunters' summering seldom exceeded eight or ten weeks, and with this treatment they derived all the benefits of fresh air to invigorate their frames, and the fresh dew to restore their feet and hoofs to their natural state, without any of those disadvantages and drawbacks attending unconditional exposure to flies, and all weathers, which have to be encountered by horses turned out, as many are, without the least preparation, care, or shelter. The effect produced even upon old horses, which I have occasionally purchased for the whippers-in, was most remarkable; in fact, new life seemed to be infused into them, and new strength also, by this careful management; and notwithstanding our severe work throughout the hunting season, we seldom had recourse to blisters or mercurial charges. I may also add that our horses lasted us for many years longer than my neighbours, and to the end of their term were nearly as clean on their legs as four-year-old colts; and not one of them turned out broken-winded, or a roarer, although I did purchase a roarer, and nearly cured him under my system, so that at least he could carry me well to hounds; and I remember upon one occasion, riding him over three gates in succession at the end of a

good run, when the pack were catching their fox. Now, I affirm that hunters thus treated will be not only in better heart, but also in better wind and condition, than those summered upon cut fodder in stables and loose boxes without their regular daily exercise; and it is obvious that such should be the case, for a horse, when at liberty, is always moving about, and he will not eat sufficient to gorge himself having a choice of herbage.

One last objection may be made, as to the state of a horse's coat, whether an out-of-door summering does not conduce to an extra growth of hair. But were such the case—which I have never observed—the benefit is so great in other respects that this is of trifling consideration, particularly since clipping and singeing have come into fashion—a bad fashion, too, in my opinion, since many horses' coats are entirely spoilt by the practice; thoroughbred ones certainly never requiring either one or the other. This is a groom's favourite resource, because it saves him a deal of elbow-work; but a horse once clipped will always require clipping. In some cases, I admit, it is of benefit to the animal, when covered with dirt in the hunting season, and long hair induces greater perspiration. By all means clip a horse with a thick shaggy coat of hair, but never let the scissors be applied to one of a soft silky texture. We must admit, that in days of yore, the use of the currycomb was required very freely upon half-bred horses; and when a boy, I had a pretty good apprenticeship to work of this kind, upon my pony, whose coat was as thick as a door-mat; but although objections have been raised to keeping hunters in a cool stable, the objec-

tors are not perhaps aware, that the very fact of their being thus kept would prevent them breaking out into excessive sweats, which are produced by an overheated atmosphere. My opinion has always been in favour of a cool one for hunters, which are exposed to such inclement weather, and I would rather increase the clothing, if necessary, than increase the heat of the stable.

The late Henry Hunt, of Radical notoriety, was, in his early life, an enthusiastic sportsman, and I have heard it often mentioned by those who knew and hunted with him that his hunters were never stabled in the winter, having only the use of well-protected sheds in the farm-yard, and that with these horses he could and did beat nearly every man in the field; and the gentleman who gave me this information was a superior rider in his day, keeping quite thorough-bred horses. Clipping or singeing was little practised at that time, and no doubt Mr. Hunt's cool treatment of his horses prevented them breaking out in sweats after hunting, even supposing their coats to have been thick and wiry. *Est modus in rebus* however, I am no advocate for extremes; all that I do advocate for horses of every description is rational treatment; but entirely repudiating that hot-house system, which must be productive of debilitating effects upon their constitutions, as well as serving to engender various diseases. Let any man who doubts the necessity of free ventilation go into one of these hot-beds of ammonia and impurities when the stable door is first opened in the morning, and if he does not then become a convert to my opinion, his eyes and lungs must be formed of much stronger materials than I

ever possessed. He may also judge of his own feelings and sensations, after emerging from a crowded fashionable assembly in London, whether the fresh air does not act as a cooling draught to the throat of a thirsty man. Common sense, if not common humanity, will suggest the expediency of more generous and reasonable treatment than that so generally prescribed by ignorant, self-interested grooms, for that most valuable and useful of all the animals intrusted to our care—the horse.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A few Words on the Game Laws—Rearing and selling Game—No Law to preserve Foxes—Scene between Old John and Old Reynard—Wanton Destruction of any Animals reprobated—The Acclimatization Society—Pet Partridges—The Bustard—Cross between the Bison and our Domestic Cattle—The Hon. Grantley Berkeley's Opinion—Taymouth Castle.

As a monied investment, the rearing and selling of pheasants is, I believe, very questionable. It *may* pay, for anything I know to the contrary, as I have never tried the experiment, and never should, did I possess thousands of acres. It was not the fashion in my younger days for gentlemen to deal in this sort of commodity; and my impression still is, that they will derive as little honour as benefit from embarking in such a traffic, although custom reconciles us to many strange phases of society. To the preservation of game to a moderate extent, no reasonable person can raise any objection. It is a necessary means for maintaining certain varieties of animals and birds in this country, supplying our tables with food of a superior quality to beef and mutton, and affording recreation and amusement to country gentlemen during the autumn and winter months of the year, when many, save for the

attraction of field sports, would be spending their time and money in foreign lands.

I am no advocate for the abolition of the game laws, or the encouragement of poachers, but believe the former sufficiently stringent for the purpose of suppressing the latter, without using the police as game-watchers. If noblemen and gentlemen of landed property think proper to convert their woods and fields into huge walks for pheasants, hares, and rabbits, to the destruction of their tenants' crops, and as a lure to attract midnight marauders in large bodies, they must take the consequences—a diminution of rents, and an increased number of keepers and night-watchers to protect their game. This is their private concern, in which the public have no interest; and it is my impression that this evil will soon work out its own cure, without the further intervention of the legislature. To the battue system, carried out to such unreasonable lengths, I have uniformly expressed a decided antipathy for many reasons; and I have never yet heard one good solid argument in its defence, except that of supplying the markets, at particular periods, with a quantity of game at a low price. If that is the chief object of the battue man, he would be entitled to some further consideration and further protection; but we are not green enough to suppose him actuated by such philanthropic motives. There is no law to protect foxes, except that of trespass, yet are they sufficiently abundant in most localities, save those where we should expect to find them more plentiful, under the protection of keepers; but then, unfortunately, they have worse enemies to contend with than the poachers; and as long as game-pre-

servers destroy our sport, they have no reason to complain of fox-hunters being lukewarm, or something less, in supporting theirs.

But some will say, "What is a fox worth? you cannot eat him." No; but he can be stuffed, if not down a man's throat, into his hall; and he has a price put upon his head equivalent to two brace of pheasants. There are fox-poachers as well as game-poachers; and I heard of a funny scene at a public-house, situated on the borders of the Pytchley and Atherstone countries, between an old fox-dealer and an old fox. The man had nabbed and bagged bold Reynard—how, did not transpire—and after carrying him about the country to levy contributions from the disaffected farmers, he resorted to the public-house, to spend the money he had collected, before proceeding to further extremities with his victim by gagging and choking him for the stuffer. Now, it so happened that two or three more jovial spirits were regaling themselves in this afore-said hostelry, one of whom, pitying the condemned animal in the bag, had set his heart upon releasing him.

"Well, ould John, ye ha'e got another, ha'e ye?"

"Ay, Bob, 'tis a whopper this time; I never see'd such a foine un afore; and sich a tag to his tail, as long as my harm; won't he look grand in some gentlefolk's hall?"

"Dang it, John, let's ha'e a squint at the ould varmint."

"He be a ticklish un to handle, Bob; but you can look in upon un at the bottom of the sack,"—which he did without further parley; but opening it wide in a slanting direction, he gave the old fox a kick at the same time,

who, taking the hint, sprang instantly out. Over the chairs, under the table, went the liberated Charley, amidst the cheers and halloas of the company, with his enemy bundling after him, until he was brought to bay up in a corner, when old John, forgetting the bag, tried to seize hold of him by the ear; but Reynard, eluding his grasp, stuck his teeth into the old fellow's arm, to which he held like a vice, John swearing at Bob for letting him out. At this moment in walked Boniface, to know what the row was about, throwing the door open, when out bolted Charley, and was off, "over the hills and far away."

Although addicted to the chase from my youth, even when keeping fox-hounds I had always a sufficient supply of game for myself and friends in those woods where foxes were abundant, and I think no gentleman's place in the country complete without it. I like to see hares and pheasants about the grounds to a moderate extent. They give life and animation to rural scenery, and for other purposes deserve our care and protection. The study of animal nature, in all its varieties, is both interesting and instructive to him who looks "from Nature up to Nature's God," and as he contemplates this beautiful part of the creation, he may well exclaim with David, "Oh, how wonderful are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all."

But does the battue man reflect on these things whilst his hand is red with the slaughter of hundreds of these creatures in one single day? Does the blood of so many victims, shed thus wantonly, suggest to him the words of Queen Tomyris, when she threw the head of Cyrus into a tub of human gore, "*Satia te sanguine quem sitisti?*"

What a vain, empty boast, to vaunt the numbers of the slain as so many proofs of man's skill in the art of destruction ! To take life merely for the sake of taking it ! "Pshaw !" exclaims the battue man, "what maudlin sentimentality ! and from a fox-hunter, too !" But let me ask what you would say of us if we killed even a leash of foxes in one day ? "Wanton destruction ! Blood-thirsty devils ! they deserve to have blank days once a week throughout the season." That is the usual measure meted out to a master of hounds for taking the lives of more foxes than are absolutely necessary to keep his pack in spirit. But you may tell us you want this large quantity of game for yourself and friends, or to sell in the market to help to pay for your keepers. If that be in reality the case, and you do not boast of your butchery, we acquit you of the wanton shedding of blood—not otherwise.

There are very few birds of more beautiful plumage than a full-grown cock pheasant ; and of all game, this bird has the most delicate flavour when brought to table, combining the ornamental with the useful. Although of a roving, rambling disposition in its wild state, yet, when domesticated, the pheasant becomes as tame as a barn-door fowl, and mixes its species with them, producing a very beautiful hybrid ; and although coming from warmer regions, has now become so thoroughly acclimatized, that it would seem to have been an original inhabitant of the British Isles, being quite as hardy in constitution as the blackcock or partridge. There is another bird, as yet little known in this country, which I think deserves more attention than has hitherto been given to it—the curassow, much larger in

size than the pheasant, and of equally good flavour. In its natural habits the curassow resembles the pheasant, by perching on trees, amidst the thick branches of which the nest is generally made with some care. From what I have seen and heard of the bird, and its quiet disposition when confined in aviaries, there can be little doubt that it would soon be made almost as valuable an addition to our farm-yard poultry as the turkey, of which it appears to be a species. The formation of the Acclimatization Society is likely to prove of great benefit to us, by introducing foreign varieties of game and animals, provided their attention is chiefly directed to the useful rather than the ornamental, and selecting from birds those which are not of migratory habits.

The importation of quails, or birds of that species, will prove of little benefit, which would leave our country again at certain seasons, as the common quail and corn-crake now do, for more sunny climes. But the curassow is not of this roving disposition; and having been already inured to our climate, requires a further trial to enable us to judge of its merits, especially as we have been told by M. Temminck that this bird was thoroughly acclimatized in Holland many years ago, where, in a state of domestication, it proved as prolific as any other of the gallinaeous tribe. The establishment in which these birds were raised was broken up during the French Revolution, since which time there does not appear to have been any further attempts at the domestication of this very handsome and most useful bird, although I believe there are still some specimens to be seen in the Zoological Gardens, which

came originally from Lord Darnley's splendid aviary. In its wild state, the curassow is said to be gregarious, large flocks of them being seen together; and the hen lays about the same number of eggs as the turkey, and nearly the same size. I once thought of domesticating some of them, the price only deterring me from the purchase.

The bittern and the peewit have been so familiarized as to feed out of my hand, and answer to my voice when called; and a year or two ago I reared a brood of partridges, which became quite as tame as pigeons. As the season advanced, the *pats*, as I used to call them, rambled away occasionally into a neighbouring farmer's stubble-fields, from which, not having the exclusive right of shooting there, I was obliged to dislodge them; and, aided by my setter, their whereabouts was discovered, and the dog knowing the birds as well as the birds knew the dog, both parties remained stationary until I approached them, when, on *desiring* the birds to walk home, they trotted on before us, through gates and hedges, chattering as if they thoroughly understood my meaning, but never attempting to take wing until they reached home; but fearing at last that they might stray off once too often, I confined them to winter quarters in a large airy room. A neighbour who was one day watching me feeding these birds, which would come round my feet and peck at my shoes, said, "Why don't you eat them, they look fat and plump?"

"Eat them!" I exclaimed, in astonishment; "I would rather eat bread and cheese only, for a month, than kill

one of these little pets, which look up to me as their foster-parent."

Reverting to the acclimatization of new birds and animals—there is one, the finest of our indigenous game tribe, which, if not already quite gone, is disappearing very quickly from the country, the bustard — specimens of which I have seen stuffed, but never one alive, although some few years ago they were to be found in considerable numbers upon Salisbury Plain, and other large barren tracts of down and moorland. In size, this bird is little inferior to the turkey, and its flesh reported to be of superior flavour to anything of the game and poultry kind. At certain seasons they become so fat and unwieldy, having short wings in proportion to their body, that they are easily caught by greyhounds, before they can rise from the ground. I have heard my father speak of bustards in his time frequenting the Wiltshire Downs, where, from their natural shyness, the only mode of approaching them was by means of a covered cart, to the sight of which they were accustomed, from carriers' carts and waggons so often passing along the high road, over those then solitary places, the greater portion of which are now converted into tillage. The bustard has been classed by naturalists with the gallinaceous tribe, and if so, is not out of the pale of domestication, since it does not, like the cock of the wood and grouse, subsist principally upon berries and heather; but I am inclined to the belief that it is of quite a distinct species, from its feeding, like the peewit and golden plover, chiefly on worms. This point, however, can only be determined by anatomical examination of the bird itself. Yet,

whatever may be its habits or mode of living, it is certainly worthy of notice to the ornithologist, as the largest and most useful for the table of all of our British birds.

Of animals, there are several kinds of deer, which might be introduced into this country, superior in size and beauty to our common fallow deer—such as the Ganges stag, some of which were formerly in Lord Darnley's Park, at Cobham Hall, and the Rusa deer, or Sambo stag, also a native of India. A pair of the latter were sent over as a present to King William IV. ; but both being males, and not mixing with the other deer in Windsor Park, they fought so furiously, that one was consigned to the Tower, there to be incarcerated, as a prisoner of war, for life. These, however, with several species of antelope, come under the denomination of ornamental, rather than useful, since they must be confined to the parks of the wealthy, and would be of little advantage to the community at large.

With regard to the progress of the Acclimatization Society, I quite agree with the remarks made by Mr. Grantley Berkeley, that a model farm, or rather a certain quantity of enclosed land, is absolutely indispensable for such a purpose, under the superintendence of an experienced sportsman or naturalist ; and I should think better ground, or a better situation, could not be selected than in the neighbourhood of the New Forest, where there is a variety of soil and a variety of green food also. As to trusting specimens of imported birds or animals to the care of game-keepers, I believe the plan would utterly fail, and the expenses attendant upon their transportation to this country be quite thrown away ; since a man must feel thoroughly

interested in any object he has in view, to carry it out to perfection. Here, as in many other cases, nothing can be done without money, through the lack of which, and of strenuous supporters to this praiseworthy undertaking, we hope it will not fall to the ground. We have been informed by Mr. Grantley Berkeley, through the columns of "The Field," that the late Marquis of Breadalbane had in his park at Taymouth Castle the bison or buffalo, and that the cross between this wild breed and the common cow had proved successful. My impression has always been, that such blood would be beneficial to our stock of cattle, although it may be sneered at by our breeders of short-horns. The fact is, from over-feeding and forcing, our finest breeds, although as to size, symmetry, and aptitude to fatten, unexceptionable, have become weakened in constitution, and liable to diseases, which in former years were unknown. The forcing system has been carried out too far, and these hot-house plants or animals are no longer able to resist the inclemency of our winter seasons, without suffering severely. Now, from Mr. Grantley Berkeley's description of the frame-work of the bison—several of which fell by his hand—we have in it all the requisites to which agriculturists and butchers pay so much regard in our own bullocks—"splendidly-shaped rounds, thickness through the body, amazing depth of carcase, with very short legs." What can the most fastidious agriculturist want more? Here is as perfect symmetry as can be desired; but there is something more to recommend this animal to our attention, to quote again Mr. Grantley Berkeley's words: "To these qualities must

be added immense hardness of constitution, and a coat of such remarkable texture, that the finest, most soft, and delicate stockings can be spun from his hair."

The advantages of such a cross with our finest Durhams, Herefords, and Devons, cannot, I should imagine, be questionable; the frame-work being equal if not superior, the flesh said to be of finer grain and better quality, without any objectionable roughness of hair. The only drawback, as Mr. Grantley Berkeley observes, is the hump; but that may be obviated by breeding in the female line until the hump disappears—that is, putting a short-horn bull to bison heifers or cows. Oxen from this intermixture of blood would also be an improvement upon our present slow, heavy animals, as possessing greater strength in the fore-quarters, and more lively, active dispositions. Yet, from the great reluctance of farmers generally to try experiments themselves, although ever ready to avail themselves of those proved by others, it is tolerably certain that the carrying out of this cross to a successful issue, which does not in the least degree appear problematical, must be undertaken and persevered in by noblemen and private gentlemen, until the fact has become established that the bison blood is of some importance.

CHAPTER XIX.

Huntsmen and Gamekeepers—In what respect they assimilate—Big Bill and Big Tom—Attacks upon Keepers by the Poaching Fraternity—Pheasants *versus* Cochin China Fowls—Quality and Quantity—Directions for raising young Pheasants and Poultry—Enemies to Game—How to trap them—Servants' Perquisites—James Jehu and his Master's Ideas about Chicken—Foxes fascinating Pheasants—Breaking Pointers and Setters—Instinct prevails when Philosophy fails—Truffle-hunters and Turnspits—So-ho and To-ho, a puzzle to young Pointers—Down Charge.

WE scarcely think it would be doing strict justice to gamekeepers by placing them in the second class of field-servants, which is generally considered their proper position, as inferior to huntsmen or whippers-in. Comparisons are said to be odious, notwithstanding the universal practice of estimating men, women, animals, and nearly everything we take cognizance of, by comparisons. A man of five feet eleven is called tall when standing with another measuring five feet six, but the same individual would be pronounced short, walking with a companion six feet four. A pleasing pretty woman is looked upon as rather plain, when sitting by the side of a brilliant beauty; and to descend from animate to inanimate nature, the highly extolled Mont Blanc is brought down from its aerial altitude when compared with Dhawallajere, among the Himalayas,

whose summit is calculated to be twenty-eight thousand feet above the level of the sea, Mont Blanc being barely sixteen thousand. Again, the possessor of a thousand a year is called rich, compared with one only having a third of that sum to spend annually, but poor when compared with a millionaire.

By comparing the duties and responsibilities of huntsmen and keepers with the talents and capabilities required for each in their vocation, although differing in some respects, we shall be enabled to form a tolerably correct judgment whether they ought to stand side by side, or one take precedence of the other, assuming both to be men at the head of their profession or calling. As to the respectability of their families, they would probably start even, since the younger sons of farmers without much capital, are often too glad to obtain a head-keeper's situation. We will first consider in what points huntsmen and keepers ought to resemble each other, and these are—honesty sobriety, and civility. Both occupying places of trust, we of course expect to find each man faithful; but the game-keeper has greater temptation thrown in his way, with less chance of detection, than the huntsman. An experienced master of fox-hounds can calculate to a nicety how many tons of oatmeal his pack ought to consume within the twelvemonths; but the owner of a large game-preserve cannot tell the number of pheasants, hares, and rabbits, bred upon his property, and in this respect the keeper has greater facilities for acting dishonestly; in short, he has the opportunity of supplying himself and family with every delicacy of the season—tender young rabbits, nice leverets,

pheasant poults, and partridges, *ad libitum* ; and after a day's covert shooting with his master and friends, who can say what number of wounded birds and other game may be picked up by himself and his assistants? Then as to sobriety : a huntsman may indulge in deep potations after the business of the day is over, and his hounds done up for the night ; but should the gamekeeper be seen sitting in the back parlour of 'The Fox and Goose,' the poachers would be knocking his pheasants off their roosts whilst he was luxuriating.

Civil and attentive to their masters both will be, who wish to retain their situations. Good temper is a virtue of inestimable value in every relation of life, a comfort to the possessor, and a blessing to all those with whom he is connected or concerned ; and we ought to lay greater stress upon this excellent quality ; yet it unfortunately so happens that some of the best huntsmen and keepers within our knowledge have been very deficient in this respect. A huntsman to fox-hounds has a wider field for the exhibition of his talents and tactics, but courage and decision are alike necessary to both ; the one is called upon to face danger in riding to his hounds, the other stands in peril of his life with midnight marauders. Now that such quantities of pheasants are reared by hand, physical strength is not perhaps so much regarded in a head-keeper who has his *posse comitatus* of night-watchers and assistants ; and we have seen men selected for this office rather for their knowledge of raising game than for their power of defending it from aggressors. This militates against our notions of what we consider one of the first requisites

in this functionary : our idea being that a keeper ought to possess a powerful, muscular frame, combined with activity and the greatest courage. He should also be a proficient in the art of self-defence, with fist and single-stick, and a good wrestler, able to cope with and thrash ten out of a dozen countrymen. A little man may say to his assistants in an encounter with poachers, "Go on," or "Go in,"—but we expect to hear from the captain of his company the encouraging address of "Come on!" and see him rush foremost on the foe.

It is not hereby implied that a keeper must necessarily be of colossal proportions, like the sons of Anak, more conspicuous for length of limb and neck than breadth of chest, since height has little to do with size in man, horse, or hound; and we should select for great strength and activity men rather below than above six feet. An extensive game-preserve, with whom we were in bygone times acquainted, individually of the Lilliputian order, although his name was Long, entertained a preference for tall servants throughout his whole establishment, the stables being the only exception; and when sitting at his hospitable board, the towering forms of both butler and footman appeared to our youthful minds objects of awe and reverence rather than of utility. As for old John, the butler, he was a perfect Magog; the boards creaked and trembled under his ponderous frame as he moved about the room, and his wheezing resembled that of a forty-score bacon-pig, for John, having grown grey in the service, was given to the enjoyment of his *otium cum dignitate* and *multis aliis*, so that from size of limb and rotundity of person he

might have been supposed to be labouring under general elephantiasis. When filling our glass with champagne—real in those days, not as now, a concoction of gooseberry and rhubarb—we cowered down in our chair, fearful of this supercargo of flesh falling upon and crushing us, like a leveret under the supervision of a huge kite hovering above head with extended wings. The field servants surpassed the domestics in stature: Big Bill and Big Tom, the two chief keepers, towering up to an amazing height, the first named being tolerably correct as to his proportions, and possessing courage with great strength, proved a very dangerous opponent to the poachers, whom he knocked about like nine-pins, one go down and t'other come up, or sometimes three down together; in fact, Bill knew how to handle his maulers pretty well at close quarters, and a short, loaded baton attached to his wrist descended upon their sconces with stunning effect. But Big Tom was sadly out of the perpendicular, overtopped and knock-kneed—what countrymen called a *swatchel*-made chap, and his weak points being discovered, the pheasant-stealers, bobbing their heads to avoid his blows, rushed in between his legs, thereby upsetting the leviathan, who, when floored, was as helpless as an infant of a year old; and on these occasions kicks and cuffs being dealt liberally to the prostrate giant, he roared lustily for help to his brother Anak.

Attacks upon keepers in those days were not of that murderous character which, unfortunately, they have now become, and poachers felt satisfied with a bloodless victory, or, if overpowered, submitted quietly to their ill-luck; in

fact, acquainted as we were with many of that class, we thought them, upon the whole, not altogether bad fellows. They told us frankly they would have some of the surplus pheasants and hares if they could get them; and although we could not approve their practice, we rather admired their candour. It has been said that "a poacher makes the best keeper," upon the principle, we suppose, of "setting a thief to catch a thief;" but from his antecedents and former companionship with gentlemen of his profession, we should be loath to intrust him with the care-taking of our game, remembering the old adage that "a dog which has been given to worrying sheep feels always a hankering after mutton." The poacher is, of course, up to all the tricks of wiring, netting, &c., and knows the best nights for committing an onslaught upon pheasants; but he is too frequently an idle, dissolute man, spending the proceeds from his illicit trade in the public-house; besides which, although an adept at knocking down pheasants, he is ignorant how to raise them up, and little acquainted with dog-breaking; to him also the art of trapping vermin (foxes, perhaps, excepted) is a sealed book. For our part, we would prefer a young, energetic farmer's son, of steady habits and honest principles, who, from his knowledge of raising poultry, would more readily acquire the art of breeding up pheasants, since a brood of the latter is as easily managed as a clutch of chickens. The pheasant feeds upon the same food as the barn-door fowl, although in his natural or wild state, when stubbling is over, or in situations where no corn is grown, he lives upon berries—particularly those called dew-berries, the

fruit of a creeper found in most woodlands, and resembling the black-berry—acorns, beech masts, small frogs, worms, and even carrion.

It is a fact either unknown to or not noticed by poultry-fanciers, that this bird carries double the quantity of meat upon his breast, proportionately to a Cochin China fowl, and we need scarcely mention the vast difference in quality and flavour. Yet the Cochins have obtained a celebrity to which they are hardly entitled, for a worse bird at table does not exist. Size is their chief and only recommendation, and on this account a cross with smaller poultry is of advantage where weight is looked upon as the great desideratum, to which all exhibitors pay more than due deference. We prefer a lark to a kite, and on that account became disgusted with the flavour of Cochin China chickens—their yellow legs, resembling kites' claws, and their flesh the most rank and flabby of all poultry kinds. Some years ago, when the variety came into fashion, we embarked largely in the fancy, raising a great quantity of these birds for exhibition and sale; but finding them intolerable at the table, one season sufficed to prove their general inutility. The eggs were rich and good, but few, and the hens exceedingly bad layers, and always wanting to sit, so we gave them up as a failure for farm-yard purposes, taking again to the Dorking; and we purpose crossing them another year with the cock-pheasant for depth of meat on the breast as well as flavour. The flesh of all animals and birds deteriorates in quality as it increases in quantity. The larger the quadruped or biped the coarser the meat. The sirloin of the Scotch kyloe

beats the large Durham ox for fineness of grain ; a haunch of Welsh or Southdown mutton far surpasses that of a Leicester or Cotswold ; and a side of bacon from a ten-score pig the *ne plus ultra* to those who like a really good rasher for breakfast. A young cock-turkey, when fattened for Christmas fare, ought not to exceed twenty pounds in weight, a goose twelve, a couple of ducks ten, and a pair of fowls twelve at the outside. Beyond this they are too coarse and too fat to suit delicate palates.

From this digression we will return to our subject, the pheasant, which, as we have before stated, is as easily reared as a chicken, although when quite young requiring a little more attention and care. Where ants' eggs are attainable, we have always found them relished by the chicks more than any other kind of food ; but failing them, flour and the yolk of an egg, worked together by the hand into a hard mass, and then broken into small crumbs, is a very good substitute, or an egg boiled hard and chopped very fine with crumbs of bread, curds, and boiled oatmeal, in preference to raw grits. The great secret of raising game and poultry is to supply them at first with food easy of digestion, and a variety of it, fresh water two or three times a day, a change of ground not less than every other day, for which the pens should be placed upon dry, healthy, short turf, and a board under them to roost upon. Grass is an indispensable to young game and chickens, of which they eat large quantities. The herbage, therefore, should be short and sweet. From want of attention to these little matters, too often overlooked, distemper spreads through the young broods ; but by observing them, we

have met with uniform success in rearing pheasants, partridges, and poultry of all kinds for many years. Some pretend to great mysteries in this art, than which nothing can be more simple ; and the old saw is an excellent guide —“Children and chicken should always be picking.” Cramming is not here intended, but literally *picking*—eating small quantities of food frequently ; and every observant ornithologist knows the rapid growth of young birds in their natural state, and the unremitting labour of the parents in supplying them with food until the callow brood is covered with feathers.

Next to rearing game arises the consideration how to preserve it from its various enemies, which are legion—polecats, stoats, weasels—the martin cat *was*, but *is* not, few of this genus existing, and those found only in large woodlands—kites, hawks, ravens, crows, and magpies. Hedgehogs and squirrels have been placed by some in this catalogue of delinquents, but we pass them over as more sinned against than sinning, and decidedly not blood-thirsty animals, although they may peradventure suck eggs ; so will jays and rooks occasionally. Owls will purloin young rabbits and leverets, but pheasants and partridges are safe under their mothers' wings before the bird of wisdom descends from his perch in the ivy-clad tree, to commence his nocturnal flight over the fields in search of mice. Trapping, as it is called, forms a necessary part of a game keeper's duties, although neither very onerous nor requiring much skill. Polecats and weasels are the most destructive of all ground vermin, but where rabbits are plentiful, they select this prey in preference to all other game ; and as they

invariably adhere in their runs to hedges, banks, and old hollow walls, they are easily caught in traps placed in their tracks, the most useful of which is a wooden box open at both ends, with falling-doors, called a witch, with a pedal in the middle, on which, when the animal treads, he is immediately inclosed within wooden walls. This trap requires no bait, and should be left quite open a few days before set, for polecats and weasels being very prying little animals, are sure to run through it when placed in or near their usual haunts. We have seen these simple wooden traps used very extensively to catch rabbits by placing them in the wood hedge or bank round the covert, and stopping all the other meuses. Irrespective of their effectiveness, they cannot be too highly spoken of on the score of humanity, for nothing can be more cruel than steel traps, maiming and torturing animals for hours before they are released ; and we know it to be an impossibility (whatever may be urged by keepers to the contrary) to set steel traps for rabbits without catching hares and pheasants also, unless they are placed within the mouth of the burrow, and covered over ; and when rabbits lie much at ground, ferrets and nets are the quickest means of thinning their numbers.

We also know full well that a dishonest servant will find opportunities for robbing his master somehow. Some gentlemen are robbed with their eyes open, some when they are shut, others rather like to be spoiled of their goods and chattels ; and we know an elderly gentleman of quiet, sedate habits, who submits to be pilfered without remonstrance or rebuke by a confounded knave, because he

dislikes changing his servants, thinking it better to submit to the evil he knows, than run the risk of meeting with a greater. More or less, all masters and mistresses are cheated and defrauded by their dependants in the present times, when the universal cry amongst tradesmen and domestics is, "*Oh! Cives, Cives, querenda pecunia primum virtus post nummos;*" but the latter have a very convenient cloak under which to hide their malpractices, called a perquisite, quite as fashionable, and as much worn by the ladies of our establishments, as crinoline or cockle-shell bonnets. A keeper whose conscience might prick him on raising his gun to knock down a pheasant on his own account, may feel little compunction in transferring that bird from a rabbit or vermin trap to his own pocket, and claiming it as a waif or perquisite. We have never recognised this assumed privilege of subtraction in any form, but we allowed our keepers the use of rabbits for themselves and families to eat, not to sell or barter for other commodities.

Possibly some of my readers may have heard the anecdote of the elderly gentleman, who, upon overhearing an observation made by his coachman, tantamount to accusing him of great dereliction of duty in a connubial point of view, gave orders to his cook to supply James Jehu with a chicken for his dinner every day in the week, and nothing else. James's mouth watered at the sight of this dainty dish, when first set before him, expressing himself greatly obliged to master for his kindness in catering for him so deliciously; but on the fifth day, the exclamation escaped his lips, "What, chicken again, Jane?"

“ Yes, 'tis master's orders,” replied the cook.

“ Well, I don't quite fancy the look of this here fowl ; and I be tired of the same meat, however good, every day alike.”

“ Then,” quoth Jane, “ you must speak to master, as I shan't disobey his orders.”

James accordingly submitted his grievance to his lord, who reminded him of the liberty he had taken in calling his own taste in question.

“ Ah ! sir,” said James, “ I were very wrong, and hopes you'll pass it over—but I didn't think I should ever grow tired of a chicken. I knows better now.”

By the same rule we take it for granted that a keeper could not live upon rabbits every day in the week throughout the year, so we may safely give him as many as he can eat, making perhaps a merit of necessity, since, like the naughty young frog “ who would a wooing go, whether his mamma would let him or no,” we suppose our keepers would have their rabbit pies without asking our permission.

The discovery of that deadly poison, strychnine, and its too common adoption to rid people of disagreeable relations and friends, has led keepers to use this as a general panacea for all evils in the shape of crows, magpies, hawks, &c., in preference to traps and gins ; and if the dead lamb or rabbit in which it is placed be tied to the limb of a tree, or deposited in an old pollard, it will be out of the reach of dogs ; although we entertain a decided objection to poison being intrusted to servants for any purpose. Kites and hawks are easily shot at nesting time, long before young

pheasants and partridges are hatched; and for ground vermin, the wooden trap is the best. We have excepted foxes from the catalogue of vermin for two reasons—first, because they are the least destructive to feathered game; and secondly, because in hunting countries the keeper has no right to their disposal. A fox is public property, living at the public expense—here to-day, gone to-morrow—of an erratic nature, and constantly on travelling excursions, taking his supper one night at Squire Hagleton's cost, and the next calling at Farmer Growler's, ten miles distant. Keepers will persuade some masters, whose ears have been more accustomed to the whiz of the spinning-jenny than the whirr of a cock-pheasant, that a fox is sitting up all night in the wood or plantation under a tree on which the pheasants are roosting, and the said birds so fascinated by the brilliancy of the fox's eyes, that, like a love-sick swain, they are irresistibly impelled to fall down at the enchanter's feet. People unacquainted with natural history may believe such old women's fables; but foxes have more sense than to commit such follies, and pheasants too.

Breaking pointers, setters, and retrievers, appertains also to the office of head-keeper, requiring more patience and good temper than these gentlemen in velvet are wont to bestow upon it, and a more intimate acquaintance with the habits and instinct of the dog than they deem it worth their while to consider. Breaking a pointer is generally with them a battle between biped and quadruped, to be fought out by brutal force; and the unfortunate animal intrusted to their tuition is broken literally in heart and

spirit by that infernal piece of torture, a dog-whip, the handle of which is always seen peeping out of every head-keeper's right hand pocket. The cruelties we have seen practised by some ignorant, passionate brutes—keepers we mean—upon an inoffensive, well-disposed young pointer, have made our blood boil with indignation and disgust. We once caught one at this murderous work, who, not content with the use of his flagellator, was kneeling by the side of his prostrate victim, and beating his head against the hard earth, until the blood oozed out from the dog's ears, bellowing out the while, "To-ho."

"Are you not ashamed," we asked, in great wrath, "to punish that unfortunate puppy in such a disgraceful manner?"

"Why, sir," he said, "he would not attend to the word of command, but rushed by old Ponto, and put up the birds."

"Suppose," we said, "your master should give you the word of command to obey orders in Latin or Greek?"

"I shouldn't understand him, sir."

"Neither does that dog yet understand the meaning of your lingo: so now if we see or hear of any more of this cruel treatment, we shall report your conduct at headquarters, and find your master a better man in your place, who can break dogs without half killing them, and add more brains to their heads, instead of trying to knock out what they have against the stones."

The hint had the desired effect. Notwithstanding all that may be said or written to the contrary, the process

of breaking pointers and setters is a very simple one. unattended with cruelty. We have remarked elsewhere that the natural instinct of all dogs leads them to draw upon their game; therefore the pointer and setter are not so entirely artificial animals as many believe, since any other dog may be taught to set or stand his quarry in the like manner. A well-bred pointer, however, has this instinct more clearly developed, by reason of the habits of his progenitors for generations past. Habit, we know, is almost second nature, and we have only to look at home for a confirmation of this fact. Peculiarities, propensities, dispositions, and eccentricities descending from father to son, from mother to daughter, verifying the vulgar adage, "What's bred in the bone will come out in the meat." We have seen truffle-dogs at work, hunting for their game, and pointing out the spot under which lay the root; and we opine that the sons and daughters of these truffle-hunters would exhibit a proneness to the low grovelling pursuits of their parents—a downward tendency in the scale of canine propensities. The use of turnspits in roasting a joint of meat had become out of fashion before our time; but it has been said that puppies of this species exhibited very early indications of a disposition for rotatory motions; and so great has been the force of habit, acting upon the mind as well as upon the crural structure of that little animal, that to this day a dog with fore-legs inclining to the circular is at once pronounced to be a turnspit. Fortunately for the comfort of the species, that horrid barbarity of half-roasting a dog alive, before the sirloin was ready for dinner, attended with other little

cruelties practised by cooks, such as quickening the dog's motions by the insinuation of a red-hot coal into his prison wheel, has been abolished. From the foregoing observations we are led to the inference that pointers and setters, by the force of natural bias with habit, possess a much stronger disposition than other dogs to stand their game. This being granted, we have only to encourage and instruct them in the right direction—encouragement first, instruction second. The young dog or puppy must first become familiarized with and attached to his master before he can render him willing obedience ; and dogs of all kinds are quick to comprehend our wishes by eye, gesture, and the tone of voice ; and this fact cannot be too forcibly or too frequently impressed upon all keepers and masters, “that a dog has the strongest desire to obey his owner's commands when he knows them.” What does a young pointer know about To-ho, or any other Ho, unless he has been taught its meaning, that on hearing this word he must stop or stand ? Keepers appear to think there is something magical in this term, which dogs ought to understand at once by intuitive perception. We never use it, or any other such expressions, either in hunting, shooting, or coursing, knowing the effect generally produced by them. To-ho—is not the vowel e omitted, as meaning “steady toes ?—bellowed out from the stentorian lungs of a keeper, sends the covey of partridges skimming away into the next manor before you can get a shot at them ; So-ho starts the hare from her form, and through the hedge, before the greyhounds catch a glimpse of her ; and Tally-ho-here, Tally-ho-there, is destructive to a fox-chase. The

old vulgarism, that "silent birds get the most grubs," is exemplified in all these cases. Break your pointer at home, before taking him into the field—in the kitchen-garden if you please, but for mercy's sake don't think of Ho-ing him like your peas and beans. By the way, when you do take him into the field, don't think it at all necessary that a three-legged stool should be attached to his under-jaw for the purpose of keeping his head well up, this being rather more than a useless appendage (we hope you are not a member of that very verdant family who believe the moon to be made of green cheese). Some people will tell you this is a *sine quâ non* in breaking young pointers and setters—the thing, I mean, called by some a puzzle, by others, more appropriately, an *upsetter*; and if you wish to dislocate your dog's neck, or the vertebræ of his back, at first starting, I recommend it as the easiest method for effecting that purpose.

Possibly you have witnessed the exhibition of little ragged urchins tumbling for coppers, a very common one in old coaching days, when we were leisurely ascending a very steep hill; they had practised this art at home, and were used to it. But the sure consequence of a young setter-dog, ranging over the field for the first time, with this wooden *affiche* protruding from his chin, is a fearful capsize, or *cock's-headlander*, bringing his tail where his head should be; and if no worse result follows, amazement must, how he could find himself in the reverse direction to that he had been pursuing. The why or wherefore of this puzzle has puzzled us exceedingly to discover, unless to prevent pointers snoozling at a mouse's hole. Some think it is to

prevent them standing larks, as if a few inches' altitude of head would deter them from larking, if so disposed; but *we* don't object to a young dog setting larks. Better do that than rush headlong into a covey of partridges; and when a few brace of the latter have been killed to his point, he will give over larking. The first thing to do with a pointer, setter, or retriever is, to make them understand your meaning when spoken to, and when they do so, strictly to enforce obedience, not by thrashing or beating their brains out against the ground. "Down charge" is a very favourite term with keepers, upon which the dog is required to drop, as if he was shot instead of the partridge. Now, we don't care a rush whether the dog lies down or stands still when the birds rise, and you are loading, yielding a preference for the latter attitude; but if you prefer the former, by placing a loose collar round his neck, and his two fore-feet within it, the dog must lie down, instead of being knocked down, and kept down by the keeper's nailed shoes pressing upon his neck whilst the gun is discharged over his head. This must form part of his home education, in which he ought to be thoroughly lectured, *not hectorred*, before taking the field. The monosyllable down! or stand! with the upraised hand, and accompanying stiffness in your own person, will prove sufficient, after the first few lessons, to check the dog's course at any moment.

CHAPTER XX.

Hares and Rabbits without the Pale of the Protective Law during the Breeding Season—The Injuries inflicted by the latter on the Farmers' Crops—Rabbits as Food when in Season—A learned D.D.'s poetical Grace over Coney Meat—"As mad as a March Hare"—Its interpretation—Coursing the most ancient of old Field-sports—Nimrod, the mighty Hunter—The Gazehound—The Scotch and Welsh Deerhounds—Something in favour of Cambrian Hospitality, although the Goddess of Chastity not overmuch regarded by this People—Welsh Rabbits—Ferretting and its Concomitants—Scene with a Ferret, Retriever, and Terrier—Rivers in North Wales—Salmon-poaching—Supposed origin of the Welsh Language.

WITH the month of February the shooter's occupation, as regards the killing of feathered game, is gone; and although hares and rabbits, by our laws, are still considered in season, Nature's law prescribes a very different rule. Salmon are very necessarily protected during their spawning time, but there are no fence-months for hares and rabbits during their breeding season, which commences in the month of February, and generally ends with the month of August. Rabbits increase so rapidly, and are usually so destructive, not only to farmers' crops, but to everything green and succulent coming within their reach, that few regret their being put out of the pale of

the law ; and we must admit they are, under certain circumstances, as mischievous little animals as can be—barking young trees, and doing great damage to hazel and other coppice-wood during the winter months, when other green food is scarce. It is, moreover, the characteristic of the rabbit to feed at home, and nearly in the same place, until every blade of grass or corn is eaten close to the earth, and even then this pertinacious little brute scratches and tears out every root of clover it can find, so that I am not surprised at farmers hating them like poison, for, in truth, they do poison the land on which they feed. But hares are widely different in their habits, going far to their feeding-grounds, and cropping as they go. Therefore, unless in very large preserves, the hare is the least obnoxious or injurious to the tillers of the soil. The rabbit, however, although seldom seen at the tables of the great, forms a very useful item in every country gentleman's culinary department ; indeed, so prevalent was this dish in former times, when salmon and other fish were equally plentiful, that in some counties servants even stipulated with their masters not to have rabbits or fish for dinner oftener than three days a week ; and many of my readers have heard of the grace said by an old doctor, who had been regaled rather too often on coney meat :—

“ Of rabbits hot, and rabbits cold,
Of rabbits young, and rabbits old,
Of rabbits tender, and rabbits tough,
I thank the Lord, I've had enough !”

which brings me to the point I had first in view—that rabbits, after the first week in February, are scarce worth

the trouble of cooking, the flesh of the buck being hard and tough, and that of the doe flabby and unpalatable; in short, being out of season, no culinary art can render them nutritious food, and the same observation will hold good with respect to hares. Although for this assertion I may call down a host of coursers and thistle-whippers upon my head, it is nevertheless true. We have all heard the old saying, "As mad as a March hare," which means, that hares in this month, being their rutting season, are always on the *qui-vive*, frequently moving and shifting from their forms, even in the open day—Jack hares especially, which from their travelling about, afford the longest runs to harriers during this and the preceding month, after which they may prove more tender for the table, although I must confess that to my taste a hunted hare is the most dry of all animal food, and the only way in which it can be made a savoury dish, in the spring of the year, is by jugging, with plenty of good sauce and port wine. But, in my opinion, a young hare before Christmas is worth half-a-dozen after it, and best of all, a three-part grown leveret, the flesh of which is both tender and juicy.

Coursing is the most ancient of all ancient field sports, and no doubt dates back to the time of Nimrod, who, instead of being a mighty hunter (some commentators on the Old Testament endeavour to prove him a hunter of men, not beasts), was most probably a mighty courser, or deer-stalker, with his bows and arrows, very likely using both in the chase; for if one dog, above all the canine species, can lay claim to the high distinction of being the original of the race, that individual is the greyhound or

gazehound, although cast in a larger and rougher mould than greyhounds of the present day; in short, the dog called the Scotch deer-hound of ancient times, many of which are also to be found at farm-houses in North Wales, large, rough, wiry-coated animals, big and strong enough to pull down a deer or tackle a wolf. Side by side with this dog amongst the Welsh mountains, have I seen many specimens of the original wild pig, monstrous as to size and appearance—long, lanky, lantern-jawed, with a head like a crocodile, and bristles on his back resembling the quills of a porcupine. To those fond of studying nature in its primitive simplicity, I would recommend a tour through the northern parts of Cambria, over which they may walk with greater security than they can down Bond Street or Piccadilly at noonday, in the height of the London season; for these descendants of the Ancient Britons, although not speaking our language, and one would suppose naturally opposed to their conquerors of the Saxon race, are notoriously hospitable and kind to English tourists. Plain and simple in their diet—butter-milk and brown bread—the stranger or wanderer is ever made welcome to partake of their humble fare, without charge or demand upon his purse. Can we say more, or as much of Englishmen, under similar circumstances? Some travellers have denounced the Welsh as a false, thievish people; but my experience of them has taught me a very different lesson. Thieves and rogues are of course found amongst them, as they are in every nation under the sun, but they are not generally and systematically robbers and plunderers, like two-thirds of our own countrymen, who

will cheat and pilfer in every shape and under every pretence.

Of the morality of the Welsh rural population we cannot speak very highly, the Goddess of Chastity not being regarded by the fair Cambrians with much respect. But the strange customs of these people, in matrimonial affairs, have been productive of greater licentiousness than prevails amongst their Saxon neighbours; and if there is any truth in the old proverb—"Happy the wooing that's not long a-doing," there ought to be a great amount of connubial bliss over the border, where courting is the reverse of a tedious process. Of the scenery in North Wales there cannot be much diversity of opinion. The mountains are grand, the country picturesque, the ravines beautiful, and the rivers enrapturing to the eyes of an angler. Of game, also, there is almost every variety, from grouse down to a jack-snipe. Partridges are very abundant—pheasants scarce, except in preserved grounds—hares plentiful, wood-cocks in some parts numerous, wild fowl moderate, rabbits universal, and a Welsh rabbit (I do not mean the dish substituted under that name), a veritable mountaineer, like their sheep, is as superior to an English one as Welsh mutton is to Leicester. The rabbits I have shot on the hills there, were not only larger and longer, but particularly white and delicate when brought to table, and decidedly superior in flavour to any I have eaten in this country, which is readily accounted for by the great variety and sweetness of the herbage growing on the summit of the highest hills. Here a rabbit warren might be made a profitable investment, the value of this stock in

English markets varying from twenty pence to two shillings a couple; and I think at this price, rabbits, in such localities where they could do no damage to anything else, would pay better than the mountain sheep.

Ferretting, although in comparison with other field sports a tame and solitary amusement, is not devoid of excitement, requiring considerable attention and knowledge of the habits of the animal, to be successful; and on a bright frosty day is very far from being bad fun. An experienced rabbit catcher is very particular about his ferrets and nets. The former must be well-trained, so as not only to know, but to follow him also, and come to his hand when called. A bell should be placed round the ferret's neck, which answers the double purpose of scaring the rabbits more quickly from their burrows, and discovering the whereabouts of your little friend, should he escape by some unseen bolting-hole. But in hedgerows and woods the bell may be dispensed with, lest the collar to which it is attached become entangled with the roots of trees. Having had some little experience in this kind of woodcraft, I may state my usual mode of proceeding, the equipment necessary for the work, and my attendants. A dozen or more purse nets, which would draw readily, were first looked over, and placed, with their pegs, in one of my shooting-jacket pockets, the other being occupied by a couple of ferrets, in a strong canvas bag, to admit of respiration, with a bit of soft hay at the bottom of it. Then my two dogs—a retriever and terrier—were summoned to attend me, with a lad to carry the game; a stiff spud, like that used by farmers to cut up weeds, being substituted in

place of the double-barrel. Guns are frequently used by keepers instead of nets, to shoot rabbits as they bolt—a bad practice, and destructive of sport. Our rabbit ground lay upon the side of a steep hill, up which we toiled leisurely and noiselessly, with the dogs and boy at our heels, and the wind in our faces,—the latter a necessary precaution in approaching the burrows, at the mouths of which rabbits are frequently lying, when the least taint in the air of man or dog will send them back sulky to the extremity of the pipe, from which no efforts of the ferret can dislodge them. As a general rule, unless well-trained, dogs should be excluded from this sport; but mine knew their business, and the part they had to perform, quite as well as myself, especially the terrier, which I often sent forward to reconnoitre unlikely-looking burrows. This dog would steal carefully and silently to within a short distance of the mouth of the hole, not poking her head into it; and her nose and ear were so perfectly attuned to the work that she very seldom deceived me. If the burrow contained rabbits, the terrier immediately backed away from it, turning her head towards me, with a significant expression of the eye, and taking up her usual position, some two or three yards below, there to await the laying down of the nets; but if the burrow proved empty, she trotted on to take the wind of another.

In fixing nets properly, great caution is necessary to tread as lightly as possible on the ground, and to prevent your breath entering the burrow. My nets were tanned with oak bark, and a few leaves, if at hand, scattered over them when set, the others, not wanted, being laid on the

ground ready for use; and now, when all these preparations are made, comes the moment of excitement, and pleasure of the sport. One ferret, neither muzzled nor with his mouth sewed up—the latter a barbarous practice—is then slipped from the bag, and after a few gentle strokes on the head, rushes in like a bulldog to a badger. A moment or two of suspense follows—a rumbling noise is then heard, like that of rolling thunder at a distance. The sound catches the ears of the attentive watchful dogs, eager to advance nearer—save for my forbidding finger—a quick hurtling through the burrow, and in a second the rabbit is curled up in the net, like a ball of brown-worsted. A pat on the back of his neck stifles his cries, and he is sent down to the expectant dogs and lad below. The ferret is caught up, patted and caressed, and again sent in to turn out another; but the process of ejection now becomes more tedious. The other rabbits, aware of the domiciliary visit of their enemy, and frightened by the cry of their companion outside, hide their heads at the extremity of the smallest pipes. The ferret pursues them, scratching and biting their backs, until finding this assault in the rear of no avail, he forces his way under their bellies to the throat or nose. This has the desired effect, by making the rabbit back immediately, and a running fight takes place—drag, rabbit—hold firm, ferret—until both roll out together into the net. The rabbit being killed, is then thrown down for a moment or two to allow the ferret a little time for worrying his game and to recover himself; for a well-trained ferret will not bite his prey after life is extinct, and mine were not allowed to suck

blood. There are some cunning old rabbits which cannot be moved when they have once stuck their heads into a narrow pipe or behind a stone, and from these my best ferret always came away, not caring to gnaw their backs, as some will do ; in fact, with half-trained, snappish animals, ferreting is cold, unsatisfactory work, and the rabbits killed by them often so disfigured and torn as to be unfit to bring to table.

Having taken up our nets with the last rabbit boltable, we ascend the hill, my pet ferret following with the dogs, on foot, until we approach other burrows, when he is caught up and bagged until the nets are placed in order. We are now nearly on the summit, trying an isolated burrow with only three pipes. The usual rumbling noise is heard, and out comes a rabbit with such a violent rush that the peg is torn up from the earth, and away he rolls like a foot ball down the steep declivity, followed by the terrier and retriever ; and clinging to the back of the latter sits my favourite ferret, Jack, resolved to have his share in the fun. On, on, rolls the rabbit in the net, bounding over stones and ant-hills with such velocity, that he distances his pursuers, until the bottom of the hill is reached ; but Jack sits firm on his horse's back, his claws entangled in his shaggy coat, and rides bravely to the finish, when the rabbit is brought back by the retriever, the terrier following. Such scenes as these were of no unusual occurrence during my rabbiting excursions in North Wales, for ferrets and dogs were well acquainted, and neither attempted to bite the other. But there is another scene before us now, as we stand on the moun-

tain's top, satisfied with our morning's sport. Beneath us a beautiful Welsh river, the Verniew, is seen for many miles, meandering through the fertile vale, until lost to sight on entering a thickly-wooded glen, where its roar of falling waters may be heard dashing and foaming over its rocky bed. Around us, on every side, hill rises upon hill, as far as the eye can scan ; and barely discernible in the far west, Cader Idris raises its snow-clad head, and in the dip, to the left hand of this giant's chair, the white waves of the Atlantic glitter beneath the rays of the meridian sun.

The splendid river above mentioned, although in bygone times famous as a salmon and trout stream, has of late been so poached that it has almost become barren of fish. Two seasons ago one might whip the waters from sunrise to sunset without catching a trout of a pound weight ; and as to salmon, if one was seen, no matter where or when, in season or out of season, every poacher was at him with hook and net until captured. Since the passing of the new Act, however, steps have been taken to stop these illegal practices, although I have been told that forty salmon had been killed there full of spawn during the preceding winter months. One old woman alone, who occupied a cottage upon the banks of another river above Pont Robert, the name of which I forget, although joining its waters to the Verniew about a mile and a half from the village of Mievod, is reported to have taken with her own hand half that number before the 1st of February. Near the dwelling of this old fisherwoman is a pool or basin in the stream above some shelving rocks, up which

the salmon ascend with great difficulty; but when once in this small reservoir their upward progress is prevented by a net, thus they fall an easy prey into her hands; and when not saleable to her neighbours, the fish, after being dried and smoked, are disposed of at a shilling per pound, or less, and find their way into the English markets as kippered salmon. There is one peculiarity belonging to the salmon of this stream, that they never rise to a fly—such at least was the information I received from an old angler and sportsman, who had whipped these waters for many years with rod and line; and from the dull appearance and muddy taste of those I have seen at table, caught in the height of the season, my impression is that very few of them descend to the sea, the distance from which is very great—and greater still the difficulties opposed to their downward and upward progress. The Welsh rivers being supplied by small tributary streams, become exceedingly low during the summer months, or dry weather; but the rapidity with which they rise, after heavy rain or melting snow, is surprising, and something more, to the villagers living on their banks, when they suddenly overflow, inundating the floors of the cottages; and on such occasions the pigs are hurried from their styes and carried upstairs, lest they be swept away by the flood.

The water of the Verniew is generally very clear, flowing over sand and pebbles, the bed most favourable to salmon and trout; and though, like many Welsh rivers, containing long level reaches, where the water is scarcely at certain seasons up to one's knees, and sometimes so low that one side of the stream is perfectly dry, yet there are at

intervals very deep pools, in which the salmon take refuge, and here they must remain, if of large size, until a fresh flush of water arrives to float them out ; and it is in these places, when water-logged, they fall an easy prey to the poacher—and not the poacher only—for nearly every farmer and miller, near or upon the stream, has his nets, by which the fish are swept off wholesale from all the best parts, which look so inviting to the eye of the angler. Higher up the stream, amidst the rocks, where a fly can scarcely be thrown and nets are of little use, trout abound, although of no great weight, seldom reaching a pound. They have, however, little flavour, and are of a dark colour in the early part of the season. But the most delicate fish this river contains is the samlet—a light, silvery-looking little fellow, averaging in weight from half an ounce to half a pound, quantities of which are taken from June to October by rod and net, and sold at sixpence a pound. Whether these samlets are young salmon or not, it behoveth me not to say, for the best of all reasons, because I don't know—and I might, but will not, add, don't care, for I do care about the preservation and protection of salmon ; not for selfish motives, but in a national point of view, since the salmon is the king of fish in our British waters, and save for the interference of the Legislature would soon have been lost to us for ever.

The public ought to feel especially indebted to 'The Field' newspaper for its continued and energetic advocacy of the salmon question, by which more particular attention has been drawn to this subject than I believe it otherwise would have received. *Gutta cavat lapidem non vi sed sæpe*

cadendo.” And it is the constant dripping of the pen, from this deservedly popular journal, which has at last made the desired impression, and enlisted the public on its side. John Bull is a very sluggish, we might add mulish, animal to move, where his own interest is not directly concerned. He is also very partial to the good things of this life. But as long as he could buy salmon, in season or out of season, he would never take the trouble to inquire whence they came or how caught; but when it was dinned into his ears or brought before his eyes, week after week, year after year, by ‘The Field,’ that he would soon forget the taste of salmon altogether, unless some stringent laws were passed for its preservation and protection, then he began to see that something must be done—so it has been done. And the spirit thus aroused in defence of his palate has extended to his Cambrian neighbours, for I heard that the old fisherwoman’s nets at Pont Robert had been seized, and a summons issued against her to attend before the magisterial bench, upon which occasion, if condescending to appear at all, she doubtless told their worships a bit of her mind in her own vernacular, which to my ears sounds like the odds and ends of all languages jumbled together. Possibly some of my readers may not be aware of its supposed origin, which is said to have been derived from a mason’s boy, at the building of the Tower of Babel, into whose mouth, when looking up a tall ladder, a dab of hot mortar descended, and the sputtering consequent thereon formed the basis of the Cambrian tongue! Half a dozen consecutive consonants, which in English would be simply impossible of pronunciation or

interpretation, elicit some guttural grunt from the throat of a Welshman. Asking my way one day of a man (who understood English also) to a village called Llanfyllin, which I pronounced as spelt, I received for answer, that he knew of no such place. "Well," I, said, "then you have never travelled very far from your own door, for the place I wish to reach cannot be above three miles distant from this," pointing in the direction in which it lay.

"Ah, indeed, sir," he replied, "then it must be *Thanvuthling* ye mean ;" and so it proved.

I like everything Welsh except their language—their mountains, their rivers, their mutton, their game, their fish, and their ale. In short, Wales, to a sportsman fond of fishing and shooting, is a very enjoyable country to live in, and I have always found the natives exceedingly attentive and obliging. The most singular feature in the history of these people is, that to this day they have preserved their own language and customs, although surrounded by and continually mixing with the Sassenach race. ,

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BRISTOL RIOTS; OR, AN EPISODE IN THE LIFE
OF AN M.F.H.

An Episode in the Life of a Master of Fox-hounds—Wielding the Sword instead of the Horn—Troublesome Times—Incendiary Fires—Smashing Machinery—Formation of a Yeomanry Corps—Scrutator heading the Mob—Bristol Riots—Bonfire on a large Scale—Jem, the Head Whip, turned Soldier—Sacking the Bishop's Palace—Missing Magistrates—*In vino veritas*—Parley with leader of the Mob—Charge of the 14th Light Dragoons, led by Captain Musgrave, up a flight of Stone Steps—One of the Mob decapitated—Miserable Fate of the Rioters—Horrible Scene among the Ruins—A Cornet's Duties—Patrolling at Night—Pickwickian Adventure—Troops dismissed—*Io triumphe! Dulce Domum.*

THE winter and spring preceding this outbreak in Bristol had proved very boisterous in more senses than one, and there had been a succession of agrarian outrages committed by the rural population in many districts, from the want of employment and low wages. The cause of this distress being attributed by them to the increasing use of machinery in threshing out the corn, and employment of other agricultural implements in place of manual labour. It was of little avail arguing with a starving man, having a wife and family, that by the threshing-machine wheat could be brought so much more quickly into the market and converted into bread. He would say, "Yes, sir, that's

true enough, but then the farmer won't thresh out till the market gets up very high, and we can't buy bread at that price. Before this machinery came in, Giles and I were threshing with flails all through the winter and spring months, and now we can't get work more than three days a week, and some weeks none at all."

There appeared fair reasoning on the labourer's part, notwithstanding the many plausible arguments in support of the theory that machinery does not diminish the poor man's earnings. We have ever held the contrary opinion, and do still, that but for the emigration of the poorer classes to our colonies and America, they must have been starved at home. Even now, with so many of these outlets, the daily papers teem with cases of destitution and starvation, and a bare existence is hardly obtainable by needlewomen since the introduction of that confounded sewing-machine, by which garments are stitched together in such a slovenly manner that they require sewing again by hand. This, however, being the age for inventions in all kinds of machinery—we don't call many improvements—by which labour is economised and goods prepared for the market with the utmost alacrity, we must swim with the tide, since, "*Sic Diis visum*," the great cotton lords and great manufacturers will have it so. Cheapness is the order of the day, by which the public are gulled and consumers cheated in the purchase of flimsy articles, not worth half the low price at which they are sold.

To resume our subject. At the period to which I allude, the cry was raised, and soon spread quickly through

parts of Berks, Wilts, and Gloucestershire, "Down with the threshing-machines!" Those out of employment joined together in bands to visit the farmers' homesteads and smash the machinery; if opposed, or unceremoniously treated, a conflagration in the rick-yard generally followed a few nights after. There being no constabulary force in the country at that time, the occupiers of land felt powerless to resist these attacks upon their premises, and generally complied with the demands of the malcontents, offering them money and provisions, to save their property from destruction. Emboldened by their success, these bands of marauders were soon joined by all the disaffected in the villages through which they passed, until they became a very formidable body. The yeomanry in some districts where they were established came to the rescue, and dispersed the mob; but in other parts, the rioters had everything their own way. Having no such force in our own neighbourhood, we received the gratifying intelligence from the ringleaders of a rebel raider column of their intention to favour us with a visit of inspection, unless an old rusty threshing machine, unfit for use, was placed outside the farm-yard gates, as a token of submission to their requirements. This polite message having been communicated to me, through one of my own labourers, from a man he met at a neighbouring public-house, and not feeling inclined to submit to dictation of this kind, or any other kind, I desired the medium (a suspicious character) to inform his bellicose friend, that although the said machine was only fit to be sold for old iron, I should not permit it to be broken up without administering a dose of

powder and shot to any one who should lay violent hands upon that, or any other part of my property. Shortly after, another telegraphic message was delivered to me through the same channel, acquainting me with the resolution of the confederate raiders to execute summary vengeance upon myself and my property if resistance were offered to their moderate demands; upon which, without a moment's delay, I sent into the nearest city for a supply of fire-arms and ammunition, sufficient to hold out a rather long siege. Being at that time engaged in farming a considerable tract of land, my labourers and other servants were, of course, pressed into their master's service to resist the threatened invasion; but with the intuitive caution of unwilling belligerents, nearly every man began to make excuses. One pleaded he had never pulled a trigger; another that, with a wife and five small children, he could not run the risk of being shot; a third, that he was not permitted by law to take another man's life, and so on; in short, with very few exceptions, the whole lot were disposed to run riot or turn tail upon the first appearance of the enemy.

"Very well," was my reply. "Now listen to me. I have little to say. My servants must and shall fight for their master; you who decline to do so, may go directly and find better situations if you can—those who disobey my orders are no longer my servants. Come to me this afternoon, and I will pay every man what may be due to him."

None came; and on the morrow all seemed willing and anxious to execute my orders. Sentinels were placed every

night around the house and farm-buildings, with orders to fire upon any midnight marauders, and this precaution operated beneficially to a certain extent ; but I saw clearly that other more effective measures must be taken, and that without delay, to resist openly this combination of disaffected men. In conjunction, therefore, with a neighbouring landowner, we summoned all the farmers living within sound of the parish bells to a meeting, at which these matters were discussed, and the resolution proposed by us, that we should all join together to assist each other, in case of aggression, and equip ourselves accordingly to meet our foes. About fifty bold and true yeomen of the right sort enlisted themselves under our colours at the first meeting, and others soon after joined our company. The majority of these were fox-hunting farmers of the old style, fine resolute-looking men, mounted on good horses ; and the news of such a force being so quickly organized, spread consternation through the rebel camp, which halted some five miles distant from our parish, sending out scouts to ascertain the strength of our position. Our first field-day for practice, on a large open down, was attended by a considerable body of men out of employment from our own parish and adjoining hamlets, and seeing a disposition on their parts to resist rather than assist us in our intentions, we deemed it a *move* of discretion on our part to *remove* them from a too near proximity to the movements of our recently-formed cavalry corps, about to receive their first lesson from a drill-serjeant of dragoons. An opportunity for engaging their attention was soon presented to me, by one of the dissentients, a man above the commonalty, who volunteered

to address me on the distress then prevalent amongst the rural population from want of employment and inadequate wages.

“You have a ready listener,” was my reply, “to any grievances you may set forth on their behalf, with a heart and hand most willing to assist them; but you know who and what I am; my characteristic is, never to submit to brute force and intimidation. Threats, such as I have received, only rouse my spirit, and to these I will never yield so long as life is spared me to resist them. We have assembled these farmers here to-day to maintain the law against those who seem resolved to break it, and to protect our own property.”

“We have no wish to break the law, sir,” he replied, “and our people have committed no violence.”

“As yet, no; but I am told you have sent intimation to the mob in the next county to come down and do that work of destruction in the farmers’ homesteads which you fear to execute yourselves. More than that, I know these ruffians are now on their road here.”

“We have not invited or sent for them.”

“One word more. When they arrive, will you join them or not against your friends and fellow-parishioners? for such are we.”

There was no answer. “So,” I exclaimed, indignantly, “although your boast has been for many years that one man of this parish could thrash two *moonrakers* (the name given to those in the next county), you are a set of cowardly curs, and call in your enemies to fight your battles.”

“We are not cowardly curs, sir, and don’t want these people.”

“Come on, then,” was my quick reply; “I will be your leader against them. Give me this proof of your goodwill, and as you assist me I engage to assist you to the best of my ability.”

In a few moments I found myself the leader of this body of men, and, mounted on an old hunter, was marshalling them down the turnpike road in tolerable order, having supplied them with short sticks from a faggot pile. We marched for several miles in search of the rioters, whom we expected to meet in the next village, where they had been busy in their work of destruction only a few hours previously; but having got wind of our approach, they fled precipitately into their own county—disperse and squander being then the order of the day. Finding pursuit in such a case useless, we retraced our steps, and having replaced the sticks in the yard of a public-house, from whence they were borrowed, we desired the landlord to supply our followers with the contents of his largest barrel of beer; and after thanking them heartily for their loyal conduct, we galloped off amidst the cheers of those who might by different treatment have been made foes instead of friends, and with the conviction of having done a good day’s work. Our slumbers that night were more tranquil than for some weeks past, and not broken by visions of pitchforks and bludgeons in the hands of grimy savages as heretofore.

On the day following, one of the largest land proprietors in the county called to see me, and with a very serious face

said, "he felt not less surprised than pained at hearing I had become the leader of a mob of misguided men who were setting the law at defiance."

"Partly," was my reply; "but you have, I dare say, read Cooper's works on wild life in America, and, perhaps, remember something about 'setting fire to put out fire.' That is what I did yesterday—headed one mob to put down another, and they promised to act under my leadership again whenever I may require their services: that I consider something gained instead of lost."

"Oh, yes!" he exclaimed; "a capital move if you can depend upon these fellows; and I am delighted to find the information given me, as to your joining the malcontents, without foundation, although I could scarcely credit the report."

Notwithstanding, however, affairs wearing a more peaceful aspect in our immediate neighbourhood, there were rumours of war in other districts, and we persevered with our newly-formed corps of yeomanry. From the majority being tenants of the late Sir William Codrington, he was solicited to become our Captain, to which proposition he gladly assented, and thus the Marshfield and Doddington troop of the present Royal Gloucestershire Yeomanry Cavalry was established.

We had scarcely become comfortable in our new accoutrements, with our first drill lessons, when, on a damp, drizzly Sunday afternoon in November, the brother of our Captain rode over to give us the pleasing intelligence that Bristol was in flames, and in the hands of the mob, and that we must immediately join the troop and go down to quell the

riot. Here was an agreeable episode in the life of a master of fox-hounds at the commencement of the hunting season—fighting instead of fox-hunting. *Demitto auriculas ut unque mentis assellus subito cum graviour onus.* Well or ill, there was no help for it, although we wished the Bristolians in quite as hot a place as their city appeared to be in just then, for we could see the red glare of the flames as we went to join our standard, from a hill twelve miles distant. “Forward, threes right—quick march,” was the order, as we turned out of the courtyard at Doddington to encounter a thick-falling rain in a dark November night, with the comfortable prospect before us, if such it could be considered, of a very warm reception at the end of our march, and plenty of fire to dry our clothes by. Tramp, tramp, tramp—splash, splash, splash, through twelve miles of slushy roads, and here we are at the entrance to that most dingy and dirty of all the cities in the west.

“Hurrah! you red devils!” was the first most gracious salutation with which we were greeted by part of the mob (sent, probably to give us an escort into the heart of their city). “Hurrah! you beggars, you shall have a bloody supper to-night!”

“Funny, if not friendly,” we remarked: “these fellows seem very hospitably inclined.”

“I don’t like the look of things, sir,” was hissed back in a hoarse whisper from a thin yeoman, mounted on rather a Rosinante sort of animal, belonging to our rear rank. “I wish I’d never left Oak Farm to join the yeomanry; and there is my poor young wife and three little uns at home.”

“We’re all in the same boat now, Farmer,” was my reply. “I am a married man as well as yourself, but our wives won’t like us the better if we run away like curs, with our tails between our legs; we must do or die now. Cheer up, and have at ’em.”

Our procession moved on in this order towards the scene of conflagration, by which the streets were perfectly illuminated—the mob armed with bludgèons, and other offensive weapons, some with only sticks in their hands, occupying the pavement each side of the street, and our yeomen the middle. Our *furrier*, as the drill-sergeant would call him, the village blacksmith, &c., seeing a man intent on casting a stone at him, cried out in the broad patois of his county, “Thee drow that stone at I, and I’ll drow this bullet at thee,” drawing his pistol from his holster.

“You darn’t do it,” replied his opponent.

“Try me,” quoth the *Furrier*. “Dom thee, dost think I be going to let thee knock my brains out as long as I got this in my hand?” And seeing his big, burly frame, the man of the million wisely forbore to provoke hostilities.

The mob upon the whole, however, seemed in tolerably good humour, hurrahing and cheering us as we passed along, and smashing in the shutters of the tradesmen’s shop windows, more from a spirit of wanton mischief than with felonious intentions, until we approached a much narrower street, across which a barricade had been quickly thrown up in our way, made of tables, chairs, &c., from an upholsterer’s shop, behind which part of the mob attempted to oppose our further progress.

“Come on! Charge!” cried our Captain, as he sent his horse at a high mahogany sideboard. “Come on, my lads;” and in a moment forty yeomen, averaging six feet in height, without their shoes, mounted on their good, powerful hunters, were crashing through the barriers, sending the splinters in every direction.

“Hurrah!” shouted the rabble on the pavement; “go it, ye cripples!” “I say, Bill,” cried one of the leaders, “these red beggars bain’t a bad lot to breed from.”

On reaching College Green, we were drawn up, front and rear rank, facing the Bishop’s palace, then in flames, our front presenting a very soldier-like appearance, from being formed of our best men and horses. Our first business was, of course, to know what to do and how to act; but where were the city authorities, under whose orders we must proceed? Nowhere to be seen or found, that we could learn from two or three of the tradesmen who came to welcome our arrival. One was reported to have fled from the city to his country villa, with all his books and papers, saying, as he left, “The city might now be burnt to the ground for all he cared;” another, to have barricaded his house, from which no summons would extract him; and the chief magistrate to be *hiding under his bed!*

“What’s to be done?” asked the Captain of his brother officers. “We can’t keep our men here all night, sitting in their saddles.” But just then Colonel Brereton making his appearance, the Captain and Lieutenant withdrew with him a short distance, leaving your humble servant, *Crownet*, as we were called, in charge of the troop during

their deliberations; and at that time part of the rabble were engaged in ransacking the Bishop's palace, and having broken open his cellars, wine and other liquors were flowing freely, and beginning to tell upon the marauders' heads. Still the Green was occupied by a dense mass, who were closely pressing round our troop, in the hope of breaking it; and one fellow, I observed, dressed in a sailor's jacket, to be particularly busy, and trying to engage some of our men in conversation to divert their attention.

"Close up, rear rank," was our immediate order, "and let every man feel his neighbour's knee." And as we rode along the front, and in passing, told each not to answer a word to any question.

"Now, sir," we said, riding dash at the blue jacket, "what do you mean by meddling with our men? Be off, or I'll cut you down."

"*You* cut me down!" he replied, with a sneer. "I should like to see you try that dodge."

"Then you shall pretty quickly," drawing my sword, "if you dare to press an inch nearer."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "a lot of louting yeomen! you'd better have kept them at home, ploughing and sowing, than to bring 'em down here to be made mince-meat of."

"Did you ever see yeomanry in this uniform?" we asked with a laugh.

"Well, no," he said, "you're dressed like regulars; but, hang it! you look like yeomen, and so you are."

"Hah! hah! hah!" we laughed again, "you are a good judge of soldiers; blue jackets are more in your line."

“Red or blue, it don’t matter,” he said, “those fellows of yours are not used to this sort of work, and not a soul of them will get out of this place alive.”

“Tall talking, my friend, but woe betide those who attack us. Now, make yourself scarce.”

He disappeared for a few minutes, and we gave the order, “Return swords,” speaking encouragingly to our men, some of whom, overhearing the blue jacket’s remarks, began to look very serious; and to speak the truth, we did not ourselves expect to lie on a bed of roses that night. In a very short time we again encountered our friend, trying to worm himself into the rear rank, and accosted him: “You have changed your coat, but forgot to change your face. I know you.”

“Well, my young lobster, what is it now?” he asked in good humour.

“’Bout ship, and be off, or I shall send a shot into your lugger.”

“Bah! you musn’t do that; you know I’m doing no mischief; more than that, don’t wish to hurt you, or one of your men. Take my advice—cut it; we can cook our goose without your assistance; those funking magistrates have cut it already, so there’s nobody to read the Riot Act.”

“We are under orders, and must obey them.”

“Ah! yes, my young cockspur, good-night; ’tis hot work standing before this fire. I’m off for a bottle of the Bishop’s champagne.”

“Send us up half a dozen, will you?” we said, laughing.

“Ay, ay, my lad.” And he was gone.

Who or what this man was never transpired, although evidently by his looks, manner, and conversation above the lower grade, calculated rather to command than obey; but being, as we considered ourselves, in a very ticklish position, we deemed it the wisest policy to keep on good terms with the mob and their leader, as long as they would let us alone, for hitherto we had no authority whatsoever to interfere with them. Pending this little divertissement with my sailor friend, our two superior officers were discussing matters with the Colonel, and I could overhear the Captain speaking rather sharply about being sent for in such haste, and then to find no magistrate to direct them. "A company of the 14th Light Dragoons had been ordered by him," the Colonel said, "out of the city just before our arrival, thinking they might do more harm than good."

"Very well, sir," was the Captain's reply; "then, as it appears our services are not required, we shall march back to a certain inn on the road to give our men and horses refreshment, and you will know where to find us. If not recalled before three o'clock, we shall return home again."

We had reached Bristol between eight and nine o'clock Sunday evening, and after remaining drawn up in College Green, under fire and arms, for more than three hours, without orders what to do, we retraced our steps; and having no recall at the wayside inn, reached home about five o'clock Monday morning, not without sundry anathemas against the Bristolians for their inhospitable reception, since not even a glass of beer or morsel of bread had been prepared for us, or shelter for our horses. In short,

the city had been given up by its legitimate protectors to plunder and pillage; *sauve qui peut* being the order of the day amongst the civic authorities.

We were congratulating ourselves upon our escape from "durance vile," in this murky city, and giving orders for our hunting on the morrow, when up comes a messenger on horseback, in hot haste, requesting our immediate return.

"Well, sir," said Jem, our head-whip, "as we can't go out hunting, perhaps you would not object to my going down with you for a day or two. I should like to see the fun, and may help in the fray. The feeder can take care of the hounds, and perhaps, sir, I may take care of you, as valet?"

"So you shall, Jem; I know what you mean."

"Which horse shall I ride, sir?" was the only other question.

"Bob; and I shall ride Barbary: bring them round as soon as possible."

Now Jem, from his stature, prowess, and courage, being quite as fit to handle a sword as he was a hunting-whip, and being moreover an attached and trustworthy servant, who would have shed his own blood to save his master's, we were not the less gratified by his willing proffer of assistance in time of need, than secure of a faithful adherent in case of trouble.

On our return to the smoking city, we found Captain Musgrave had been also recalled, and with his small troop of gallant dragoons, numbering, I think, only thirty-five, had been charging the mob most effectively, making them

fly in all directions ; but more fell by fire than by the sword—in fact, unwittingly they had prepared for themselves a most dreadful fate, being burnt to death by the flames they had fanned to destroy the property of others. The Bishop was fearfully avenged for the sacking of his house and cellars, since numbers of this misguided rabble, from getting intoxicated with his wine, fell down, dead drunk, and perished in the burning ruins—an awful retribution ! and others were scalded to death by the burning lead from the roof of the house descending upon them.

The most gallant feat was performed by Musgrave and his bold dragoons, who charged the mob up a long flight of stone steps, leading into College Green, whence they thought it impossible to be dislodged by cavalry ; but the Captain, being a fox-hunter as well as a soldier, cheering his men to follow, went at them as if riding at a five-barred gate, greatly to their consternation. Another act of his, of which, although not proud, he had no cause to be ashamed, was sweeping off a rascal's head when at the point of killing one of his troopers. The facts were these, as told me by himself, when meeting at the same billet a short time after :—Leading his men through Queen Square, he observed one of the mob spring over a low wall, in front of the houses, with something in his hand and immediately crouch down behind it. The Captain's suspicions being aroused, he ordered his men to go on, falling back himself to the rear ; and as the last trooper was passing, the fellow behind the wall suddenly started up with a pick-axe in his hand, which he was about to dig into the back of the last trooper, when he dealt him

a back-handed blow with his sabre, thinking only to knock him over, when to his amazement, off flew his head. "There," said Musgrave, placing his sword upon the table, "judge for yourselves : it is a new blade, which has never yet been sharpened. I did not wish to kill any of the rabble—only to knock them about a little ; yet that fellow deserved his fate, by trying to kill a better man than himself."

The upshot of this business was, that the mob vowed vengeance against the Fourteenth, swearing they would kill every one of them at their billets, sleeping or waking ; and in consequence of this threat they slept under the mangers in the stables, at their horses' heads, ready armed, to spring up at a moment's notice. Our bold yeomen fraternised with this little band,³ and their officers messed together during our sojourn in this murky city. Being the youngest officer, holding our commission as cornet, we had plenty of work on hand—morning, noon, and night,—and a precious deal more than we relished. We had neither time for breakfast, dinner, nor supper, with any degree of comfort ; and in addition to other daily occupations, ours was the agreeable task of patrolling at night the suburbs, for some few miles around, with a chosen band, to see that all was going on right. Fortunately we had some acquaintances in the neighbourhood, whose houses we had orders to visit, where we got a few glasses of wine for ourselves, and strong ale for our companions. Then occasionally, to diversify the scene, we were posted over the smouldering ruins, during the night, whence arms, legs, and heads of the dead had been drawn forth in the course

of the day. Having strict injunctions not to allow any one to pass that way after a certain hour, we observed one night a portly-looking aldermanic personage, of the Pickwickian type, sneaking along, in the hope of eluding our vigilance. In a moment we were confronting him, with the point of our carving knife almost touching his stomach.

“For God’s sake, don’t kill me!” he exclaimed, starting back in horror, “I am a respectable citizen, going home to sup with my wife and children.”

“Very likely,” we said; “but, citizen or no citizen, respectable or otherwise, you are our prisoner, and instead of going home to sup with your wife and children, must go to the guard-house, where, I fear, you won’t get any supper at all.”

“Oh dear! oh dear!” cried the old man, in piteous accents, “don’t, for goodness sake, be too hard upon a poor inoffensive old gentleman. Indeed, indeed, I meant no offence, only a short cut home.”

“Sorry for it, sir; military orders must be obeyed. Lucky you did not meet with one of our men, who might have cut your throat, instead of allowing you a short cut home. Come, sir; quick march, forward. We shall prick you behind if you don’t walk faster.”

“Oh! no, no, my dear sir, for I see you are an officer, and, of course, a gentleman; don’t disgrace my grey hairs by putting me under arrest; I will give anything if you will let me proceed.”

“What, sir! this to an officer and a gentleman,” we said indignantly.

“I beg a thousand pardons, sir, for my imprudence; but one of my children is very ill, and I am most anxious to get home.”

“Had you told me this at first, I should not have detained you, although my orders are strict, to let no person pass this way; in such case, however, and seeing you are respectable, I should have ventured to waive them.”

The elderly gentleman, after expressing his thanks, presented his card, saying he hoped to have the honour of seeing us at his house when off duty. In return we could not do less than proffer our own; and a few days after a polite little note was left at our billet or hotel, requesting the honour of the officers of the R. G. Yeomanry Cavalry's company at dinner, any hour most convenient to themselves. Having a leisure day, from the influx of other large military arrivals, including Artillery, which was rapidly poured into the city after the row had been settled—as not unfrequently occurs—we were at liberty to accept the invitation, and had no cause to speak lightly of the *cuisine* exhibited by our elderly friend. Bristol has long been notorious for its turtle-soup, which cannot be surpassed in the mighty Babylon; and frequenters in former days of the old ‘Bush Tavern,’ well remember two or three of these highly-flavoured amphibious creatures being exposed to view on entering the vestibule, lying on their backs, apparently very comfortable, until their presence was required below for culinary purposes. We confess a partiality for turtle-soup, perhaps our taste is not very singular, and we enjoy a good glass

or two of wine—genuine wine—when we can get it, which is not very often.

Our host being a West-Indian merchant, had prepared such a feast of good things, besides turtle-soup; the best of vintages and conserves of all kinds, the production of these despised islands, that we began to wonder at our audacity in treating so lightly a respectable citizen of this class, when trying to make a short cut through forbidden ground. My brother officers and self passed a most agreeable evening; this being the only comfortable dinner-hour we had spent since our sojourn in this city, where we remained altogether about a fortnight, until all symptoms of insubordination had subsided. The rabble had inflicted upon themselves the most severe punishment for this outbreak; and the horrible sight of the blackened and mutilated remains of their former companions, which were continually dug out from the ruins, operated as a fearful warning in deterring the survivors from any other attempt to fire the city. We believe the actual number of those who perished in the flames, or lay buried under the burning *débris*, has never been ascertained, the bodies of many being reduced to ashes before they could be extricated.

We need scarcely add with what alacrity we obeyed the order to return home again, to handle the horn instead of the sword.

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