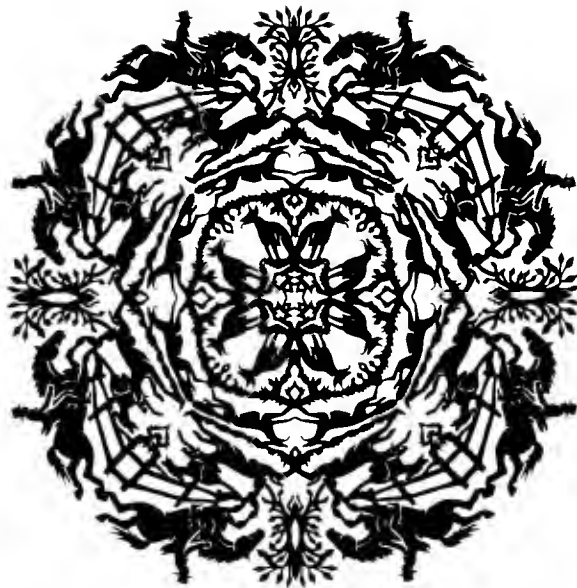




BRITISH SPORT PAST & PRESENT

Illustrated in colour by
G-DENHOLM ARMOVR





JOHN A. SEAVERNS



3 9090 014 546 762

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

IN THE SHADOW OF THE PAGODA

WITH THE JUNGLE FOLK

WONDERS IN MONSTER LAND

(With J. A. SHEPHERD)

THE ARCADIAN CALENDAR

THREE JOVIAL PUPPIES

(With SIR WALTER GILBEY)

GEORGE MORLAND: HIS LIFE AND WORKS





1907
J. B. G.

Fox-hunting :
'Farrard away'

BRITISH SPORT
PAST AND PRESENT

BY

E. D. CUMING

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

G. DENHOLM ARMOUR

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LONDON MCMIX

PREFACE

THIS book has been compiled in pursuance of a suggestion that extracts from the works of old writers on sport, with passages from those of modern authorities, would be of interest to sportsmen who take interest in the history of the subject.

No attempt has been made to trace the development of sports till they reached the form in which we know them; and indeed an attempt to render justice to any one of those which receive notice in the following pages would obviously demand a volume to itself.

The old sporting classics have been freely laid under contribution. The pre-eminence of Somerville, Beckford, C. J. Apperley ('Nimrod'), William Scrope, and H. H. Dixon ('The Druid') singles them out for quotation: and if the essays on sport left us by such men as Professor Wilson ('Christopher North') and Charles Kingsley are less familiar to the present generation of sportsmen than their merits deserve, it is merely because these have been overshadowed by the wider celebrity of the authors' work in other fields of literature.

For permission to make extracts from modern works my thanks are due to Messrs. Vinton and Co., Ltd., who have

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

allowed me to draw upon *Saddle and Sirloin* for the Druid's account of 'A Waterloo Cup Day'; upon *The Life and Times of the Druid* for the same author's account of the St. Leger of 1850; and upon *Baily's Magazine* for Major Whyte-Melville's poem, 'The Lord of the Valley'; to Messrs. Longmans, Green and Co. for leave to take passages from Mr. Stuart Wortley's contribution to *The Partridge* ('Fur, Feather and Fin Series'); from the Hon. A. E. Gathorne-Hardy's *Autumns in Argyleshire with Rod and Gun* descriptions of grouse shooting and loch fishing, and from Sir Ralph Payne Gallwey's *Letters to Young Shooters*, 3rd Series, a description of wild fowling; and to the Hon. Secretary of the Cotswold Field Naturalists' Society for permission to reproduce from their *Proceedings* part of the late Major Hawkins Fisher's address on Falconry.

If there be anything in the adage that when a new book comes out you should read an old one, this compilation has claim upon the sportsman.

E. D. C.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

	PAGE
FOX-HUNTING	1
‘ ODE TO THE NORTH-EAST WIND ’	30

CHAPTER II

STAG-HUNTING	31
‘ THE LORD OF THE VALLEY ’	41

CHAPTER III

HARE-HUNTING	43
------------------------	----

CHAPTER IV

OTTER-HUNTING	58
-------------------------	----

CHAPTER V

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING	66
‘ THE FIRST OF SEPTEMBER ’	83

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

CHAPTER VI

	PAGE
GROUSE SHOOTING	84
‘ THE GROUSE-SHOOTER’S CALL ’	97

CHAPTER VII

PHEASANT SHOOTING	99
-----------------------------	----

CHAPTER VIII

WILD FOWLING	112
------------------------	-----

CHAPTER IX

COACHING	123
‘ SONG OF THE B.D.C. ’	148

CHAPTER X

TANDEM DRIVING	149
--------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XI

COURSING	152
--------------------	-----

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER XII	
SALMON FISHING	165
‘ THE TAKING OF THE SALMON ’	179
CHAPTER XIII	
TROUT FISHING	181
‘ SPRING ’	195
CHAPTER XIV	
PIKE AND OTHER FISHING	197
‘ THE SOUTH WIND ’	209
CHAPTER XV	
POLO	210
CHAPTER XVI	
DEER-STALKING AND COURSING	223
CHAPTER XVII	
FALCONRY	236

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

CHAPTER XVIII

RACING	PAGE 248
------------------	-------------

CHAPTER XIX

STEEPLE-CHASING	260
---------------------------	-----

ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR

I

FOX-HUNTING, *Frontispiece*
‘FORWARD AWAY.’

II

FOXHOUNDS, SHOWING ROUNDED AND UN-
ROUNDED EAR, *To face page 8*

III

FOX-HUNTING, „ 16
THE VALE.

IV

FOX-HUNTING, „ 24
JUMPING THE BROOK.

V

STAG-HUNTING, „ 32
STAG ON HILL.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

VI	
STAG-HUNTING,	<i>To face page 40</i>
STAG IN WATER.	
VII	
HARE-HUNTING,	48
AN OLD-FASHIONED HUNTSMAN.	
VIII	
OTTER HUNTING,	64
HOUNDS MARKING AT A HOLT.	
IX	
OLD-TIME PARTRIDGE SHOOTING,	72
X	
GROUSE DRIVING,	80
XI	
GROUSE OVER DOGS,	88
XII	
PHEASANT SHOOTING,	96
OLD STYLE.	

ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR

XIII

MODERN PHEASANT SHOOTING, *To face page 104*

XIV

WILD FOWLING, ,, 112
FLIGHTING.

XV

THE STAGE COACH, ,, 120
OLD TIMES.

XVI

MAIL COACHES RACING, ,, 128
SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE OPPOSITION COACH.

XVII

COACHING. AN AMATEUR DRIVER IN DAYS
OF THE 'WHIP CLUB,' ,, 136

XVIII

MODERN COACHING, ,, 144
IN THE SHOW RING.

XIX

TANDEM, ,, 152

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

	XX	
COURSING: THE SLIPPER.		<i>To face page 160</i>
	XXI	
'BURNING THE WATER,'		168
	XXII	
SALMON FISHING,		176
THE FIRST JUMP.		
	XXIII	
TROUT FISHING,		184
	XXIV	
A QUIET BACKWATER,		208
	XXV	
POLO,		216
	XXVI	
DEER-STALKING,		224
'A ROYAL.'		
	XXVII	
DEER COURSING,		232

ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR

XXVIII

HAWKING, *To face page 240*
A FLIGHT AT A HERON.

XXIX

RACING IN OLD TIMES, ,, 248
BETWEEN THE HEATS.

XXX

MODERN RACING, ,, 256
THE STARTING GATE.

XXXI

STEEPLE-CHASING, ,, 264

FOX-HUNTING

‘**F**OX-HUNTING,’ wrote Beckford in 1787, ‘is now become the amusement of *gentlemen*: nor need any gentleman be ashamed of it.’

Time had been when fox-hunting and fox-hunters lay under social ban. Lord Chesterfield kindly bore testimony to the good intentions of him who followed the hounds, but could say little else in his favour: in the days of Queen Anne a ‘fox-hunter,’ in the esteem of some, meant a boor or something very like it; but the slighting significance attaching to the word must surely have become only a memory long ere Beckford wrote.

There is, however, room for doubt whether fox-hunting in its early days was the amusement of others than gentlemen, and whether any such were ever ashamed of it. William the Third hunted with the Charlton in Sussex, inviting thither foreign visitors of distinction; and Charlton continued to be the Melton of England in the days of Queen Anne and the two first Georges, for fox-hunting was the fashion. Harrier men maintain that their sport was reckoned the higher in these times; but, I venture to think, harrier men are mistaken. Read this,¹ dated 14th July 1730, from Sir Robert Walpole to the Earl of Carlisle:—

‘I am to acquaint your Lordship that upon the old Establishment of the Crown there have usually been a Master of the Buckhounds and a Master of the Harriers. The first is now enjoyed by Colonel Negus; the latter is vacant, and if your Lordship thinks it more agreeable to be Master of the Foxhounds, the King has no objection to the style or name of

¹ Letters of Sir Robert Walpole, *Hist. MSS. Comm.*

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

the office ; but, as the Master of the Harriers is an ancient and known office, thinks it may be better if your Lordship takes the addition of Foxhounds, and the office to be called Master of Foxhounds and Harriers, which his Majesty is willing to grant to your Lordship with the salary of £2000 for yourself, deputy, and all charges attending the same.'

Lord Carlisle would not have sought the title of M.F.H. had that of M.H. carried the greater consideration.

May it not be that eighteenth-century hare-hunting owes something of the prestige it has enjoyed in the eyes of posterity to William Somerville? Might we not have seen fox-hunting in somewhat different light had that been the theme of *The Chace*? Perhaps, unconsciously, we attach to the sport the supremacy that has never been denied the poem; whereby fox-hunting, lacking a chronicler, is thrown out of its true perspective.

When the chronicler arrived he was worthy of the office. This, his picture of a hunt,¹ shows him a hound man above all things:—

' . . . Now let your huntsman throw in his hounds as quietly as he can, and let the two whippers-in keep wide of him on either side, so that a single hound may not escape them; let them be attentive to his halloo, and be ready to encourage, or rate, as that directs; he will, of course, draw up the wind, for reasons which I shall give in another place.—Now, if you can keep your brother sportsmen in order, and put any discretion into them, you are in luck; they more frequently do harm than good: if it be possible, persuade those who wish to halloo the fox off, to stand quiet under the cover-side, and on no account to halloo him too soon; if they do, he most certainly will turn back again: could you entice them all into the cover, your sport, in all probability, would not be the worse for it.

' How well the hounds spread the cover! The huntsman, you see, is quite deserted, and his horse, who so lately had a crowd at his heels, has not now one attendant left. How

¹ Beckford's frequent quotations from *The Chace* are omitted.

FOX-HUNTING

steadily they draw ! you hear not a single hound, yet none of them are idle. Is not this better than to be subject to continual disappointment from the eternal babbling of unsteady hounds ?

‘ How musical their tongues !—And as they get nearer to him how the chorus fills !—Hark ! he is found—Now, where are all your sorrows, and your cares, ye gloomy souls ! Or where your pains and aches, ye complaining ones ! one halloo has dispelled them all.—What a crash they make ! and echo seemingly takes pleasure to repeat the sound. The astonished traveller forsakes his road, lured by its melody ; the listening plowman now stops his plow ; and every distant shepherd neglects his flock, and runs to see him break.—What joy ; what eagerness in every face !

‘ Mark how he runs the cover’s utmost limits, yet dares not venture forth ; the hounds are still too near !—That check is lucky !—Now, if our friends head him not, he will soon be off—hark ! they halloo : by G—d he’s gone ! Now, huntsman, get on with the head hounds ; the whipper-in will bring on the others after you : keep an attentive eye on the leading hounds, that should the scent fail them, you may know at least how far they brought it. Mind *Galloper*, how he leads them !—It is difficult to distinguish which is first, they run in such a style ; yet *he* is the foremost hound.—The goodness of his nose is not less excellent than his speed :—how he carries the scent ! and when he loses it, see how eagerly he slings to recover it again !—There—now he’s at head again !—See how they top the hedge !—Now, how they mount the hill !—Observe what a head they carry, and shew me, if thou canst, one shuffler or skirter amongst them all ; are they not like a parcel of brave fellows, who, when they engage in an undertaking, determine to share its fatigues and its dangers, equally amongst them ? It was, then, the fox I saw, as we came down the hill ;—those crows directed me which way to look, and the sheep ran from him as he passed along. The hounds are now on the very spot, yet the sheep stop them not, for they dash beyond them. Now see with

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

what eagerness they cross the plain!—*Galloper* no longer keeps his place, *Brusher* takes it.—See how he slings for the scent, and how impetuously he runs! how eagerly he took the lead, and how he strives to keep it—yet *Victor* comes up apace.—He reaches him!—See what an excellent race it is between them!—It is doubtful which will reach the cover first.—How equally they run!—how eagerly they strain! Now, *Victor*—*Victor*!—Ah! *Brusher*, you are beaten; *Victor* first tops the hedge.—See there! see how they all take it in their strokes! the hedge cracks with their weight, so many jump at once.

‘Now hastes the whipper-in to the other side of the cover; he is right unless he head the fox.

‘Listen! the hounds have turned. They are now in two parts: the fox has been headed back, and we have changed at last. Now, my lad, mind the huntsman’s halloo, and stop to those hounds which he encourages. He is right!—that, doubtless, is the hunted fox.—Now they are off again. Ha! a cheek.—Now for a moment’s patience!—We press too close upon the hounds!—Huntsman, stand still! as they want you not.—How admirably they spread! how wide they cast! Is there a single hound that does not try? If there be, ne’er shall he hunt again. There, *Trueman* is on the scent—he feathers, yet still is doubtful—’tis right! How readily they join him! See those wide-casting hounds, how they fly forward to recover the ground they have lost!—Mind *Lightning*, how she dashes; and *Mungo*, how he works! Old *Frantic* too, now pushes forward; she knows as well as we the fox is sinking.

‘Huntsman! at fault at last? How far did you bring the scent?—Have the hounds made their own cast?—Now make yours. You see that sheep-dog has coursed the fox:—get forward with your hounds, and make a wide cast.

‘Hark! that halloo is indeed a lucky one.—If we can hold him on, we may yet recover him; for a fox so much distressed must stop at last. We shall now see if they will hunt as well as run; for there is but little scent, and the impending cloud

FOX-HUNTING

still makes that little less. How they enjoy the scent!—See how busy they all are, and how each in his turn prevails. Huntsman! Huntsman! be quiet! Whilst the scent was good, you pressed on your hounds; it was well done: when they came to a check you stood still, and interrupted them not; they were afterwards at fault: you made your cast with judgment and lost no time. You now must let them hunt;—with such a cold scent as this you can do no good; they must do it all themselves; lift them now, and not a hound will stoop again.—Ha! a high road, at such a time as this, when the tenderest-nosed hound can hardly own the scent!—Another fault! That man at work there, has headed back the fox. Huntsman! cast not your hounds now, you see they have over-run the scent; have a little patience, and let them, for once, try back. We must now give them time;—see where they bend towards yonder furze brake—I wish he may have stopped there!—Mind that old hound, how he dashes o'er the furze; I think he winds him.—Now for a fresh *entapis*! Hark! they halloo! Aye, there he goes. It is nearly over with him; had the hounds caught view he must have died.—He will hardly reach the cover; see how they gain upon him at every stroke! It is an admirable race! yet the cover saves him. Now be quiet, and he cannot escape us; we have the wind of the hounds, and cannot be better placed:—how short he runs!—he is now in the very strongest part of the cover.—What a crash! every hound is in, and every hound is running for him. That was a quick turn! Again another!—he's put to his last shifts.—Now *Mischief* is at his heels, and death is not far off.—Ha! they all stop at once: all silent, and yet no earth is open. Listen! now they are at him again! Did you hear that hound catch him? They over-ran the scent, and the fox had laid down behind them. Now, Reynard, look to yourself! How quick they all give their tongues!—little *Dreadnought*, how he works him! the terriers too, they are now squeaking at him.—How close *Vengeance* pursues! how terribly she presses!—it is just up with him! Gods! what a crash they make; the

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

whole wood resounds!—That turn was very short!—There!—now!—aye, now they have him! Who—hoop!’ . . .

The practice of trailing up to the fox had been, by some masters at least, abandoned at this time. Beckford drew a covert in the modern style, though he would have us at the covert-side by sunrise.

Colonel John Cook, Master of the Essex 1808-1813, suggests that the practice of meeting at sunrise was adopted with the definite purpose of hunting the fox before he was in running trim, or the slow hounds of an older generation would never have caught him.¹ However this may be, the system of meeting soon after sunrise and trailing up to the fox continued in the New Forest during the earlier years of the nineteenth century, and is still pursued by the fox-hunters of the Fells, and in Wales: and these latter do not find their foxes unable to run in the early morning. When Colonel Cook wrote, in 1829, the sunrise meet had been generally renounced: ‘The breed of hounds, the feeding, and the whole system is so much improved that the majority of foxes are found and killed . . . after twelve o’clock.’

There was, it must be said, at least one among the improvements the Colonel did not regard as such: to wit, the second horse system, which by this time had been commonly adopted, no doubt as a result of the greater speed of hounds. It was introduced by Lord Sefton during his Mastership (1800-1802) of the Quorn. Lord Sefton was a heavy weight, but his example was speedily followed by those who had not burthen of flesh to excuse them.

The sporting ethics of a century ago were lenient on the subject of bagmen. It would seem from this note, culled from the *Sporting Magazine* of 1807, that if the owner of a pack wanted to hunt any particular district, and foxes hap-

¹ They certainly required time to catch their fox on occasion: witness the famous Charlton run of 26th January 1738: hounds found a vixen at 7.45 a.m. and killed her at 5.50 p.m., having covered a distance conscientiously affirmed to be 58 miles 2 furlongs 10 yards.

FOX-HUNTING

pened to be scarce therein, he might temporarily stock the country without reproach :—

‘Mr. Fermor’s excellent pack is come, or coming at the end of this month (December), from his seat in Oxfordshire to Epsom, for the purpose of hunting there during the remainder of the season. The gentlemen of Surrey expect much sport, as Mr. Fermor will turn out a great number of bagged foxes.’

When Squire Osbaldeston hunted in Suffolk, season 1822-3, Mr. E. H. Budd used to buy half-grown foxes for him from Hopkins in Tottenham Court Road, at thirty shillings a brace, and send them down in a covered cart, ten or twelve brace at a time.

It was very usual to turn out a bagman for a day’s sport ; and such a fox often gave a much better run than the practice deserved. On 18th December 1905 the Master of the Chester Harriers had a bag fox turned out in Common Wood at a quarter-past twelve : he was given five minutes’ law, was run to ground at Pick Hill, was bolted, and thereafter stood up before hounds till dark, when ‘hounds were called off by the New Mills near Whitchurch. The whole chase is computed to be upwards of forty miles as the crow flies, and with scarcely a check.’ Mention of bag foxes recalls a comical story told of Tom Hills, the famous Old Surrey huntsman. He was carrying home, in the capacious pocket of his blouse, a fox he had been sent to buy in Leadenhall market. Stopped by a highwayman on Streatham Common, he responded to the demand for his money by bidding his assailant help himself from the pocket which contained the fox : and while the highwayman was bewailing his severely bitten fingers, Hills made his escape.

Long runs are frequently reported in the *Sporting Magazine* during the first decades of the nineteenth century. On Friday, 7th December 1804, Mr. Corbet’s hounds found near Wellesbourne pastures, ran their fox for three hours with one five minutes’ check, and killed—nay, ‘most delightfully ran into’ him at Weston, about a mile from Broadway : a sixteen-mile

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

point. Of a field of nearly a hundred 'eager amateurs of fox-hunting,' fifteen were up or in view at the kill.

Nimrod's classic, best known as his 'Quarterly,' essay, by reason of its publication in that Review in 1832, gives us as vivid and spirited a picture of fox-hunting as we could wish:—

' . . . Let us suppose ourselves to have been at Ashby Pasture, in the Quorn country, with Mr. Osbaldeston's hounds, in the year 1826, when that pack was at the height of its well-merited celebrity. Let us also indulge ourselves with a fine morning in the first week of February, and at least two hundred well-mounted men by the cover's side. Time being called—say a quarter past eleven, nearly our great-grandfathers' dinner hour—the hounds approach the furze-brake, or the gorse, as it is called in that region. "*Hark in, hark!*" with a slight cheer, and perhaps one wave of his cap, says Mr. Osbaldeston,¹ who long hunted his own pack, and in an instant he has not a hound at his horse's heels. In a very short time the gorse appears shaken in various parts of the cover—apparently from an unknown cause, not a single hound being for some minutes visible. Presently one or two appear, leaping over some old furze which they cannot push through, and exhibit to the field their glossy skins and spotted sides. "Oh, you beauties!" exclaims some old Meltonian, rapturously fond of the sport. Two minutes more elapse; another hound slips out of cover, and takes a short turn outside, with his nose to the ground and his stern lashing his side—thinking, no doubt, he might touch on a drag, should Reynard have been abroad in the night. Hounds have no business to *think*, *thinks* the second whipper-in, who observes him; but one crack of his whip, with "*Rasselas, Rasselas, where are you going, Rasselas? Get to cover, Rasselas*"; and Rasselas immediately disappears. Five minutes more pass away. "No fox here," says one. "Don't be in a hurry," cries Mr. Cradock,² "they are drawing

¹ Master from 1817 to 1821, and again from 1823 to 1827.

² This gentleman resided within the limits of the Quorn hunt, and kindly superintended the management of the covers. He has lately paid the debt of nature (Author's note).

*Foxhounds, showing Rounded and
Unrounded Ear*



FOX-HUNTING

it beautifully, and there is rare lying in it." These words are scarcely uttered, when the cover shakes more than ever. Every stem appears alive, and it reminds us of a corn-field waving in the wind. In two minutes the sterns of some more hounds are seen flourishing above the gorse. "*Have at him there,*" hollas the Squire,¹ the gorse still more alive, and hounds leaping over each other's backs. "*Have at him there again,* my good hounds; a fox for a hundred!" reiterates the Squire, putting his finger in his ear, and uttering a scream which, not being set to music, we cannot give here. Jack Stevens (the first whipper-in) looks at his watch. At this moment John White, Val. Maher, Frank Holyoake (who will pardon us for giving them their *noms-de-chasse*), and two or three more of the fast ones, are seen creeping gently on towards a point at which they think it probable he may break. "Hold hard there," says a sportsman; but he might as well speak to the winds. "Stand still, gentlemen; *pray* stand still," exclaims the huntsman; he might as well say so to the sun. During the time we have been speaking of, all the field have been awake—gloves put on—cigars thrown away—the bridle-reins gathered well up into the hand, and hats pushed down upon the brow.

'At this interesting period, a Snob, just arrived from a very *rural* country, and unknown to any one, but determined to witness the start, gets into a conspicuous situation: "Come away, sir!" hollas the master (little suspecting that the Snob may be nothing less than one of the Quarterly Reviewers). "What mischief are you doing there? Do you think *you* can catch the fox?" A breathless silence ensues. At length a whimper is heard in the cover—like the voice of a dog in a dream: it is Flourisher, and the Squire cheers him to the echo.

'In an instant a hound challenges—and another—and another. 'Tis enough. "*Tally-ho!*" cries a countryman in a tree. "He's gone," exclaims Lord Alvanley; and, clapping his spurs to his horse, in an instant is in the front rank.

¹ Mr. Osbaldeston was popularly called 'Squire' Osbaldeston.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

‘As all good sportsmen would say, “‘Ware, hounds!” cries Sir Harry Goodricke. “Give them time,” exclaims Mr. John Moore. “That’s right,” says Mr. Osbaldeston, “spoil your own sport as usual.” “*Go along,*” roars out Mr. Holyoake, “there are three couple of hounds on the scent.” “That’s your sort,” says “Billy Coke,”¹ coming up at the rate of thirty miles an hour on Advance, with a label pinned on his back, “SHE KICKS”; “the rest are all coming, and there’s a rare scent to-day, I’m sure.”

‘Bonaparte’s Old Guard, in its best days, would not have stopped such men as these, so long as life remained in them. Only those who have witnessed it can know in what an extraordinary manner hounds that are left behind in a cover make their way through a crowd, and get up to leading ones of a pack, which have been fortunate in getting away with their fox. It is true they possess the speed of a race-horse; still nothing short of their high mettle could induce them to thread their way through a body of horsemen going the best pace with the prospect of being ridden over and maimed at every stride they take. But, as Beckford observes, “’Tis the dash of the foxhound which distinguishes him.” A turn, however, in their favour, or a momentary loss of scent in the few hounds that have shot ahead—an occurrence to be looked for on such occasions—joins head and tail together, and the scent being good, every hound settles to his fox; the pace gradually improves; *vires acquirit eundo*; a terrible burst is the result!

‘At the end of nineteen minutes the hounds come to a fault, and for a moment the fox has a chance; in fact, they have been pressed upon by the horses, and have rather overrun the scent. “What a pity,” says one. “What a shame!” cries another; alluding, perhaps, to a young one, who would and could have gone still faster. “You may thank yourselves for this,” exclaims Osbaldeston, well up at the time, Ashton²

¹ Said to be the designer of the ‘billy-cock’ hat.

² Mr. Osbaldeston sold Ashton to Lord Plymouth for four hundred guineas after having ridden him six seasons (Author’s note).

FOX-HUNTING

looking fresh ; but only fourteen men out of the two hundred are to be counted ; all the rest *coming*. At one blast of the horn, the hounds are back to the point at which the scent has failed, Jack Stevens being in his place to turn them. “ *Yo doit ! Pastime !* ” says the Squire, as she feathers her stern down the hedge-row, looking more beautiful than ever. She speaks ! “ Worth a thousand, by Jupiter ! ” cries John White, looking over his left shoulder as he sends both spurs into Euxton, delighted to see only four more of the field are up. Our Snob, however, is amongst them. He has “ gone a good one,” and his countenance is expressive of delight, as he urges his horse to his speed to get again into a front place.

‘ The pencil of the painter is now wanting ; and unless the painter should be a sportsman, even his pencil would be worth little. What a country is before him !—what a panorama does it represent ! Not a field of less than forty—some a hundred acres—and no more signs of the plough than in the wilds of Siberia. See the hounds in a body that might be covered by a damask table-cloth—every stern down, and every head up, for there is no need of stooping, the scent lying breast-high. But the crash !—the music !—how to describe these ? Reader, there is no crash now, and not much music. It is the tinker that makes great noise over a little work, but at the pace these hounds are going there is no time for babbling. Perchance one hound in five may throw his tongue as he goes to inform his comrades, as it were, that the villain is on before them, and most musically do the light notes of Vocal and Venus fall on the ear of those who may be within reach to catch them. But who is so fortunate in this second burst, nearly as terrible as the first ? Our fancy supplies us again, and we think we could name them all. If we look to the left, nearly abreast of the pack, we see six men going gallantly, and quite as straight as the hounds themselves are going ; and on the right are four more, riding equally well, though the former have rather the best of it, owing to having had the inside of the hounds at the last two turns, which must be placed to the

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

chapter of accidents. A short way in the rear, by no means too much so to enjoy this brilliant run, are the rest of the *élite* of the field, who had come up at the first check ; and a few who, thanks to the goodness of their steeds, and their determination to be with the hounds, appear as if dropped from the clouds. Some, however, begin to show symptoms of distress. Two horses are seen loose in the distance—a report is flying about that one of the field is badly hurt, and something is heard of a collar-bone being broken, others say it is a leg ; but the pace is *too good* to inquire. A cracking of rails is now heard, and one gentleman's horse is to be seen resting, nearly balanced, across one of them, his rider being on his back in the ditch, which is on the landing side. "Who is he ?" says Lord Brudenel¹ to Jack Stevens. "Can't tell, my Lord ; but I thought it was a queerish place when I came o'er it before him." It is evidently a case of peril, but the pace is *too good* to afford help.

'Up to this time, Snob has gone quite in the first flight ; the "dons" begin to eye him, and when an opportunity offers, the question is asked, "Who is that fellow on the little bay horse ?" "Don't know him," says Mr. *Little* Gilmour (a fourteen-stone Scotchman, by-the-by), ganging gallantly to his hounds. "He can ride," exclaims Lord Rancliffe. "A tip-top provincial, depend upon it," added Lord Plymouth, going quite at his ease on a thorough-bred nag, three stone above his weight, and in perfect racing trim. Animal nature, however, will cry "enough," how good soever she may be, if unreasonable man press her beyond the point. The line of scent lies right athwart a large grass ground (as a field is termed in Leicestershire), somewhat on the ascent ; abounding in ant-hills, or hillocks, peculiar to old grazing land, and thrown up by the plough, some hundred years since, into rather high ridges, with deep, holding furrows between each. The fence at the top is impracticable—Meltonicè, "a stopper" ; nothing for it but a gate, leading into a broad green lane, high and

¹ Afterwards Lord Cardigan.

FOX-HUNTING

strong, with deep, slippery ground on each side of it. "Now for the timber-jumper," cries Osbaldeston, pleased to find himself upon Ashton. "For Heaven's sake, take care of my hounds, in case they may throw up in the lane." Snob is here in the best of company, and that moment perhaps the happiest of his life; but, not satisfied with his situation, wishing to out-Herod Herod, and to have a fine story to tell when he gets home, he pushes to his speed on ground on which all regular Leicestershire men are careful, and the death-warrant of the little bay horse is signed. It is true he gets first to the gate, and has no idea of opening it; sees it contains five new and strong bars, that will neither bend nor break; has a great idea of a fall, but no idea of refusing; presses his hat firmly on his head, and gets his whip-hand at liberty to give the good little nag a refresher; but all at once he perceives it will not do. When attempting to collect him for the effort, he finds his mouth dead and his neck stiff; fancies he hears something like a wheezing in his throat; and discovering quite unexpectedly that the gate would open, wisely avoids a fall, which was *booked* had he attempted to leap it. He pulls up, then, at the gate; and as he places the hook of his whip under the latch, John White goes over it close to the hinge-post, and Captain Ross, upon Clinker, follows him. The Revicwer then walks through.

'The scene now shifts. On the other side of the lane is a fence of this description: it is a newly plashed hedge, abounding in strong growers, as they are called, and a yawning ditch on the further side; but, as is peculiar to Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, a considerable portion of the blackthorn, left uncut, leans outwards from the hedge, somewhat about breast-high. This large fence is taken by all now with the hounds—some to the right and some to the left of the direct line; but the little bay horse would have no more of it. Snob puts him twice at it, and manfully too; but the wind is out of him, and he has no power to rise. Several scrambles, but only one fall, occur at this rasper, all having enough of the killing

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

pace ; and a mile and a half further, the second horses are fallen in with, just in the nick of time. A short check from the stain of sheep makes everything comfortable ; and, the Squire having hit off his fox like a workman, thirteen men, out of two hundred, are fresh mounted, and with the hounds, which settle to the scent again at a truly killing pace.

“ Hold hard, Holyoake ! ” exclaims Mr. Osbaldeston (now mounted on Clasher), knowing what double-quick time he would be marching to, with fresh pipes to play upon, and the crowd well shaken off ; “ *pray* don’t press ’em too hard, and we shall be sure to kill our fox.¹ *Have at him there*, Abigail and Fickle, good bitches—see what a head they are carrying ! I’ll bet a thousand they kill him.” The country appears better and better. “ He ’s taking a capital line,” exclaims Sir Harry Goodricke, as he points out to Sir James Musgrave two young Furrier hounds, who are particularly distinguishing themselves at the moment. “ Worth a dozen Reform Bills,” shouts Sir Francis Burdett,² sitting erect upon Sampson,³ and putting his head straight at a yawner. “ We shall have the Whissendine brook,” cries Mr. Maher, who knows every field in the country, “ for he is making straight for Teigh.” “ And a bumper too, after last night’s rain,” holloas Captain Berkeley, determined to get first to four stiff rails in a corner. “ So much the better,” says Lord Alvanley, “ I like a bumper at all times.” “ A fig for the Whissendine,” cries Lord Gardner ; “ I am on the best water-jumper in my stable.”

‘ The prophecy turns up. Having skirted Ranksborough gorse, the villain has nowhere to stop short of Woodwell-head

¹ One peculiar excellence in Mr. Osbaldeston’s hounds was their steadiness under pressure by the crowd (Author’s note).

² Sir Francis Burdett, M.P. for Westminster 1807-1837, was prominent among the organisers of the ‘ Hampden Clubs,’ founded in 1816 and after, for parliamentary reform. He was twice imprisoned on political charges, in 1810 and 1820.

³ A favourite hunter of the baronet’s, which he once honoured by coming all the way from London to Melton to ride *one* day with hounds (Author’s note).

FOX-HUNTING

cover, which he is pointing for ; and in ten minutes, or less, the brook appears in view. It is even with its banks, and as

“Smooth glides the water where the brook is deep,”

its deepness was pretty certain to be fathomed. “Yooi, OVER he goes!” hollas the Squire, as he perceives Joker and Jewell plunging into the stream, and Red-rose shaking herself on the opposite bank. Seven men, out of thirteen, take it in their stride ; three stop short, their horses refusing the first time, but come well over the second ; and three find themselves in the middle of it. The gallant Frank Forester is among the latter ; and having been requested that morning to wear a friend’s new red coat, to take off the gloss and glare of the shop, he accomplishes the task to perfection in the bluish-black mud of the Whissendine, only then subsiding after a three days’ flood. “Who is that under his horse in the brook ?” inquires that good sportsman and fine rider, Mr. Green of Rolleston, whose noted old mare had just skimmed over the water like a swallow on a summer’s evening. “It’s Middleton Biddulph,” says one. “Pardon me,” cries Mr. Middleton Biddulph ; “Middleton Biddulph is here, *and here he means to be!*” “Only Dick Christian,” answers Lord Forester, “and it is nothing new to him.”¹ “But he’ll be drowned,” exclaims Lord Kinnaird. “I shouldn’t wonder,” observes Mr. William Coke. But the pace is *too good* to inquire.

The fox does his best to escape : he threads hedgerows, tries the out-buildings of a farm-house, and once turns so short as nearly to run his foil ; but—the perfection of the thing—the hounds turn shorter than he does, as much as to say—*die you shall*. The pace has been awful for the last twenty minutes. Three horses are blown to a stand-still, and few are going at their ease. “Out upon this great carcase of mine ! no horse that was ever foaled can live under it at this pace, and over this country,” says one of the best of the welter-weights, as

¹ ‘Talk of tumbles ! I have had eleven in one day down there [Melton] when I was above seventy.’—*Dick Christian’s Lectures*, see *Post and Paddock* by ‘The Druid.’

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

he stands over his four-hundred-guinea chestnut, then rising from the ground after giving him a heavy fall—his tail nearly erect in the air, his nostrils violently distended, and his eye almost fixed. “Not hurt, I hope,” exclaimed Mr. Maxse, to *somebody* whom he gets a glimpse of through the openings of a tall quickset hedge which is between them, coming neck and croup into the adjoining field, from the top bar of a high, hog-backed stile. His eye might have been spared the unpleasing sight, had not his ear been attracted to a sort of *procumbit-humi-bos* sound of a horse falling to the ground on his back, the bone of his left hip indenting the greensward within two inches of his rider’s thigh. It is young Peyton, who, having missed his second horse at the check, had been going nearly half the way in distress; but from nerve and pluck, perhaps peculiar to Englishmen in the hunting field, but very peculiar to himself, got within three fields of the end of this brilliant run. The fall was all but a certainty; for it was the third stiff timber-fence that had unfortunately opposed him, after his horse’s wind had been pumped out by the pace; but he was too good to refuse them, and his horse knew better than to do so.

The *Æneid* of Virgil ends with a death, and a chase is not complete without it. The fox dies within half a mile of Woodwell-head cover, evidently his point from the first; the pack pulling him down in the middle of a large grass field, every hound but one at his brush.’

Such was fox-hunting in Leicestershire in the days of William the Fourth. Multiply the number of the field by three or four, stir in references to railways, ladies, and perhaps to an overlooked strand of wire, and the story might stand as of to-day.

Wire began to come into use in the late ’fifties: in 1862 the Atherstone country was dangerously wired: in 1863-1864 Mr. Tailby’s was so much wired that special endeavours were successfully made to remove it. Barbed wire was first used in England in 1882.

Fox-hunting :
The Vale



FOX-HUNTING

Here are, epitomised, some of the great runs of the last eighty years:—

17th March 1837.—Mr. Delmé Radcliffe's Wendover Run. Found at Kensworth at half-past two, ran their fox to Hampden and lost him at dusk: 2 hours 35 minutes: $18\frac{1}{2}$ miles point to point, 26 as hounds ran. Fox found dead in a rick-yard next morning.

9th February 1849.—The Old Findon (Surrey). Ran their fox 45 miles in 4 hours 50 minutes: last 22 miles nearly straight: killed in Dorking Glory, Surrey.

2nd February 1866.—The Pytchley, Waterloo Run. Found in Waterloo Gorse at five minutes past two, ran to Blatston: 3 hours 45 minutes: whipped off in the dark at 5.30. 13 couples of hounds up of $17\frac{1}{2}$ out.¹

3rd February 1868.—The Meynell, Radburne Run. Found in the Rough: fast but erratic run to near Biggin, 3 hours 37 minutes: 36 miles: fox believed to have been knocked over when dead beat by a farmer.

22nd February 1871.—Duke of Beaufort's Greatwood Run. Found Grettenham Great Wood: marked to ground on Swindon side of Highworth: 14 miles point to point: 28 miles as hounds ran. 3 hours 30 minutes.

16th February 1872.—Mr. Chaworth Musters's Harlequin Run. Found in the Harlequin Gorse, Ratcliffe-on-Trent: ran very straight to Hoton Spinney and back to beyond Kinmoulton Woods. Killed. Over 35 miles: 3 hours 26 minutes. $15\frac{1}{2}$ couples of hounds up of $17\frac{1}{2}$ out.

9th February 1881.—Mr. Rolleston's Lowdham Run. Found in Halloughton Wood: ran 16 miles to Eakring Brales: 12 mile point, gave up at dusk: very fast all the way, but time not recorded. Dead fox found in Eakring Brales two days after.

1st December 1888.—The Grafton, Brafield Run. Found

¹ Mr. Robert Fellowes, who rode in this run, thinks it much overrated: 'hounds were continually changing foxes and were never near catching one of them. It was only a journey.'

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

in Brafield Furze on Mr. Christopher Smythe's property : ran perfectly straight for 8 miles : turned left-handed and killed after another 50 minutes' fast hunting. Every hound up.

14th December 1894.—The Quorn, Barkby Holt Run. Found in Barkby Holt : 27 miles in 2 hours 5 minutes to ground in Bolt Wood. Grass all the way : very fast : horses stopping in every field.

2nd January 1899.—The Craven Sydmonton Run. Found in Sydmonton Big Wood. Hounds stopped at Tubbs Copse near Bramley Station. 10 miles point to point : 20 miles as hounds ran. First ten miles so fast nobody could get near hounds.

27th March 1903.—The Quorn Barkby Holt Run. 12 miles to just short of Oakham Pastures. Killed.

It is the exception rather than the rule for one of these long runs to end with a kill. The fact that six out of the eleven occurred in February will be remarked.

These are some of the strange places wherein foxes have been killed or left :—On the housekeeper's bed upstairs, Catas Farm, near Heather, Leicestershire : late in October or early November 1864 (clubbed while asleep by a waggoner). Kitchen of a builder at Wetherby, Bramham Moor killed 31st May 1875. In Mr. Fernie's country : took refuge beside a ploughman and his team, November 1899. Killed in Broughton Astley Church, near Leicester, while congregation assembling, Friday, 12th August 1900. Down farmhouse chimney from the roof : fire raked out, and left by Essex and Suffolk, 26th December 1903. Mineral water factory : employés usurped function of hounds and lost : Atherstone, March 1904.

The height from which a fox can drop without hurting himself is very extraordinary. Foxes often seek refuge in trees,¹ and if disturbed drop to ground without hesitation.

¹ This trait seems to be of modern development. I have found no mention of tree-climbing foxes in the records of a century back.

FOX-HUNTING

The greatest drop of which I have record occurred on the 19th February 1886 in the Blackmore Vale country. The second whipper-in ascended the slightly slanting elm up which the fox, helped by ivy, had climbed. The fox eventually went nearly to the top, and as it was thought he must fall and be killed when he tried to get down, he was dislodged. He dropped a distance of forty-four feet, falling on his nose and chest, but stood up before hounds for two miles before they killed him.

A season never passes without half a dozen foxes seeking shelter in dwellings—rather a pathetic tribute to humanity; but the most resolute seeker after such sanctuary is that recorded of a fox hunted by the Border on 4th February 1904. First he tried, and failed, to take refuge in a smithy wash-house at Yetholm : then crossed the village and hid in the room of a house undergoing repairs : driven out, he entered yet another house by the kitchen window and went upstairs to a bedroom : dislodged again, he was run into and killed in a neighbouring garden. There is record of a fox seeking a hiding-place in the cleaned carcase of a recently killed sheep, but I cannot find particulars.

The strangest place in which to lay up her litter was chosen by a Heythrop vixen in July 1874. There is at Oddington an old disused church : the vixen established her nursery in the pulpit.

When we consider how closely the country is hunted, it is not wonderful that packs should occasionally clash. On 3rd April 1877 Lord Galway's, on their way to draw Maltby Wood, after a morning run, hit off the line of a fox : he showed signs of being beaten, and they killed him after a comparatively short burst. While breaking him up Lord Fitzwilliam's hounds came up : Lord Galway's had ' cut in ' and killed the fox they were hunting.

The average weight of the fox is put at from 11 to 14 lbs. : of a vixen, 9 to 12 lbs. All the heaviest foxes recorded have been fell foxes : the biggest actually weighed was killed by

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

the Ullswater on Cross Fell Range : 23 lbs., four feet four inches from tip to tip : date not given. In March 1874 Mr. F. Chapman weighed alive a bagman turned out at Palmer Flat, Aysgarth, Yorkshire, 21 lbs. On 13th December 1877 the Melbrake killed two foxes, $20\frac{1}{4}$ and $18\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. On 4th January 1878 the Sinnington killed a $19\frac{1}{2}$ -lb. fox. The fox that was too heavy for a 20-lb. scale, but was estimated to weigh 26 lbs., must be regretfully omitted from the list.

As I write comes one having pretty talent for conundrums, to ask when the practice of rounding the ears of hounds came into use. The question is difficult to answer. The few hound pictures of Francis Barlow (b. 1626, dec. 1702) show no rounded ears : the many pictures of John Wootton (b. *circa* 1685, dec. 1765) show ears rounded, but in less degree than at a later date, but also ears in the natural state. In his 'Death of the Fox' some of the hounds are rounded and some are not : in his 'Portraits of Hounds' three are rounded and one is not. Unfortunately none of these works are dated. Stephen Elmer's portrait of Mr. Corbet's Trojan, entered 1780, shows the ears closely rounded. In the engravings from Wootton's works some hounds' ears seem to be cut to a point ; 'peaked' would describe the shape ; but I have never seen any reference in early hunting books to this or any other method of cutting the ears. Peaking would answer much the same purpose as rounding, an operation now not universally practised.

Is there anything in the literature of the chase more delightful than this from Charles Kingsley's 'My Winter Garden' ?¹

' . . . Stay. There was a sound at last ; a light footfall. A hare races towards us, through the ferns, her great bright eyes full of terror, her ears aloft to catch some sound behind. She sees us, turns short, and vanishes into the gloom. The mare pricks up her ears too, listens, and looks : but not the way the hare has gone. There is something more coming ; I can trust the finer sense of the horse, to which (and no wonder)

¹ *Fraser's Magazine*, April 1858.

FOX-HUNTING

the Middle Ages attributed the power of seeing ghosts and fairies impalpable to man's gross eyes. Beside, that hare was not travelling in search of food. She was not "loping" along, looking around her right and left, but galloping steadily. She has been frightened, she has been put up : but what has put her up ? And there, far away among the fir-stems, rings the shriek of a startled blackbird. What has put him up ? That, old mare, at sight whereof your wise eyes widen until they are ready to burst, and your ears are first shot forward toward your nose, and then laid back with vicious intent. Stand still, old woman ! Do you think still, after fifteen winters, that you can catch a fox ? A fox, it is indeed ; a great dog-fox, as red as the fir-stems between which he glides. And yet his legs are black with fresh peat stains. He is a hunted fox : but he has not been up long. The mare stands like a statue : but I can feel her trembling between my knees. Positively he does not see us. He sits down in the middle of a ride, turns his great ears right and left, and then scratches one of them with his hind foot, seemingly to make it hear the better. Now he is off again and on.

' Beneath yon firs, some hundred yards away, standeth, or rather lieth, for it is on dead flat ground, the famous castle of Malepartus, which beheld the base murder of Lampe, the hare, and many a seely soul beside. I know it well : a patch of sand heaps, mingled with great holes, amid the twining fir roots ; ancient home of the last of the wild beasts.

' And thither, unto Malepartus safe and strong, trots Reinecke, where he hopes to be snug among the labyrinthine windings, and innumerable starting-holes, as the old apologue has it, of his ballium, covert-way and donjon keep.

' Full blown in self-satisfaction he trots, lifting his toes delicately, and carrying his brush aloft, as full of cunning and conceit as that world-famous ancestor of his, whose deeds of unchivalry were the delight, if not the model, of knight and kaiser, lady and burgher, in the Middle Age.

' Suddenly he halts at the great gate of Malepartus ;

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

examines it with his nose, goes on to a postern; examines that also, and then another and another; while I perceive afar, projecting from every cave's mouth, the red and green end of a new fir-faggot. Ah Reinecke! fallen is thy conceit, and fallen thy tail therewith. Thou hast worse foes to deal with than Bruin the bear, or Isegrim the wolf, or any foolish brute whom thy great ancestor outwitted. Man, the many-counselled, has been beforehand with thee; and the earths are stopped.

'One moment he sits down to meditate, and scratches those trusty counsellors, his ears, as if he would tear them off, "revolving swift thoughts in a crafty mind." He has settled it now. He is up and off—and at what a pace! Out of the way, Fauns and Hamadryads, if any be left in the forest. What a pace! And with what a grace beside!

'Oh Reinecke, beautiful thou art, of a surety, in spite of thy great naughtiness. Art thou some fallen spirit, doomed to be hunted for thy sins in this life, and in some future life rewarded for thy swiftness, and grace, and cunning by being made a very messenger of the immortals? Who knows? Not I. I am rising fast to Pistol's vein. Shall I ejaculate? Shall I notify? Shall I waken the echoes? Shall I break the grand silence by that scream which the vulgar view-halloo call? It is needless; for louder and louder every moment swells up a sound which makes my heart leap into my mouth, and my mare into the air. . . .

'Music? Well-beloved soul of Hullah, would that thou wert here this day, and not in St. Martin's Hall, to hear that chorus, as it pours round the fir-stems, rings against the roof above, shatters up into a hundred echoes, till the air is live with sound! You love Madrigals, or whatever Weelkes, or Wilbye, or Orlando Gibbons sang of old. So do I. Theirs is music fit for men: worthy of the age of heroes, of Drake and Raleigh, Spenser and Shakspeare; but oh, that you could hear this madrigal! If you must have "four parts," then there they are. Deep-mouthed bass, rolling along the ground;

FOX-HUNTING

rich joyful tenor : wild wistful alto ; and leaping up here and there above the throng of sounds, delicate treble shrieks and trills of trembling joy. I know not whether you can fit it into your laws of music, any more than you can the song of that Ariel sprite who dwells in the Eolian harp, or the roar of the waves on the rock, or

“ Myriads of rivulets hurrying through the lawn,
And murmur of innumerable bees.”

But music it is. A madrigal ? Rather a whole opera of *Der Freischütz*—dæmonic element and all—to judge by those red lips, fierce eyes, wild hungry voices ; and such as should make Reinecke, had he strong æsthetic sympathies, well content to be hunted from his cradle to his grave, that such sweet sounds might by him enrich the air. Heroes of old were glad to die if but some “ vates sacer ” would sing their fame in worthy strains : and shalt not thou too be glad, Reinecke ? Content thyself with thy fate. Music soothes care ; let it soothe thine, as thou runnest for thy life ; thou shalt have enough of it in the next hour. For as the Etruscans (says Athenæus) were so luxurious that they used to flog their slaves to the sound of the flute, so shall luxurious Chanter and Challenger, Sweet-lips and Melody, eat thee to the sound of rich organ-pipes, that so thou mayest,

“ Like that old fabled swan, in music die.”

‘ And now appear, dim at first and distant, but brightening and nearing fast, many a right good fellow and many a right good horse. I know three out of four of them, their private histories, the private histories of their horses ; and could tell you many a good story of them : but shall not, being an English gentleman, and not an American *littérateur*. They are not very clever, or very learned, or very anything, except gallant men : but they are good enough company for me, or any one ; and each has his own *spécialité*, for which I like him. That huntsman I have known for fifteen years, and sat many

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

an hour beside his father's deathbed. I am godfather to that whip's child. I have seen the servants of the hunt, as I have seen the hounds, grow up round me for two generations, and I look on them as old friends, and like to look into their brave, honest, weather-beaten faces. That red coat there, I knew him when he was a school-boy ; and now he is a captain in the Guards, and won his Victoria Cross at Inkerman : that bright green coat is the best farmer, as well as the hardest rider, for many a mile round ; one who plays, as he works, with all his might, and might have made a *beau sabreur* and colonel of dragoons. So might that black coat, who now brews good beer, and stands up for the poor at the Board of Guardians, and rides, like the green coat, as well as he works. That other black coat is a county banker : but he knows more of the fox than the fox knows of himself, and where the hounds are, there will he be this day. That red coat has hunted kangaroo in Australia ; that one has—but what matter to you who each man is ? Enough that each can tell me a good story, welcome me cheerfully, and give me out here, in the wild forest, the wholesome feeling of being at home among friends.

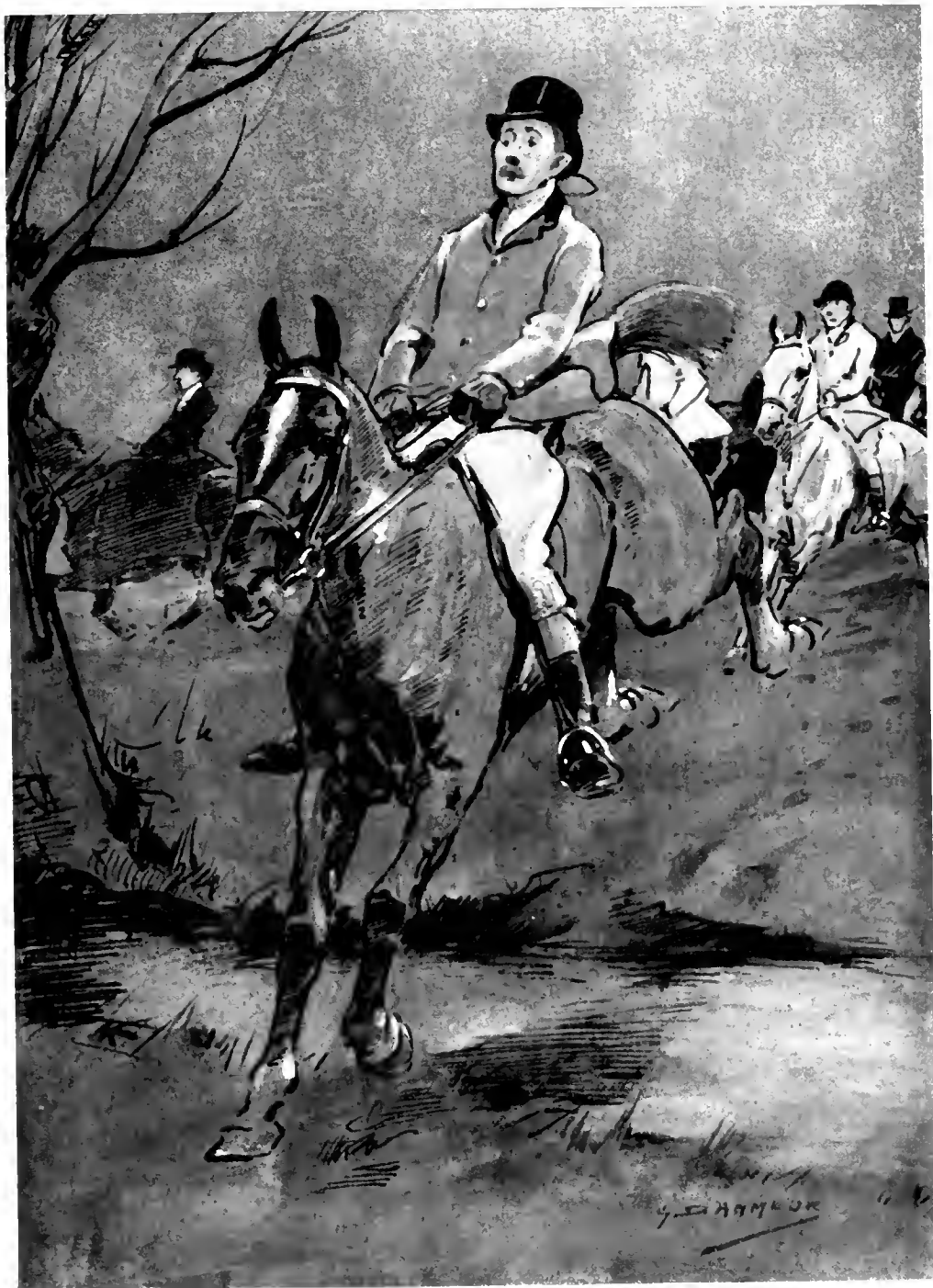
‘ And am I going with them ?

‘ Certainly. He who falls in with hounds running, and follows them not as far as he can (business permitting, of course, in a business country) is either more or less than man. So I who am neither more nor less, but simply a man like my neighbours, turn my horse's head to go.

‘ There is music again, if you will listen, in the soft tread of those hundred horse-hoofs upon the spongy vegetable soil. They are trotting now in “common time.” You may hear the whole Croats' March (the finest trotting march in the world) played by those iron heels ; the time, as it does in the Croats' March, breaking now and then, plunging, jingling, struggling through heavy ground, bursting for a moment into a jubilant canter, as it reaches a sound spot. . . .

‘ But that time does not last long. The hounds feather a moment round Malepartus, puzzled by the windings of Rei-

Fox-hunting :
Jumping the Brook



FOX-HUNTING

necke's footsteps. Look at Virginal, five yards ahead of the rest, as her stern flourishes, and her pae quickens. Hark to Virginal ! as after one whimper, she bursts out full-mouthed, and the rest dash up and away in chorus, madder than ever, and we after them up the ride. Listen to the hoof-tune now. The common time is changed to triple ; and the heavy steady thud—thud—thud—tells one even blindfold that we are going. . . .

'Going, and "going to go." For a mile of ride have I galloped tangled among men and horses, and cheered by occasional glimpses of the white-spotted backs in front ; and every minute the pace quickens. Now the hounds swing off the ride, and through the fir trees ; and now it shall be seen who can ride the winter-garden.

'I make no comparisons. I feel due respect for "the counties." I have tasted of old, though sparingly, the joys of grass ; but this I do say, as said the gentlemen of the New Forest fifty years ago, in the days of its glory, when the forest and the court were one, that a man may be able to ride in Leicestershire, and yet not able to ride in the forest. It is one thing to race over grass, light or heavy, seeing a mile ahead of you, and coming up to a fence which, however huge, is honest, and another to ride where we are going now.

'If you will pay money enough for your horses ; if you will keep them in racing condition ; and having done so simply stiek on (being of course a valiant man and true), then you can ride grass, and

"Drink delight of battle with your peers."

or those of the realm in Leicestershire, Rutland, or Northampton. But here more is wanted, and yet not so much. Not so much, because the pace is seldom as great ; but more, because you are in continual petty danger, requiring continued thought, promptitude, experience. There it is the best horse who wins ; but here it is the shrewdest man. Therefore, let him who is fearful and faint-hearted keep to the rides ; and

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

not only he but he who has a hot horse ; he who has no hand ; he who has no heel, or a horse who knows not what heel means ; for this riding is more like Australian bush-coursing, or Bombay hog-hunting, than the pursuit of the wily animal over a civilized country, as it appears in Leech's inimitable caricatures.

' Therefore, of the thirty horsemen, some twenty wisely keep the ride, and no shame to them. They can go well elsewhere ; they will go well (certainly they will leave me behind) when we reach the enclosures three miles off : but here they are wise in staying on *terra firma*.

' But there are those who face *terram infirmam*. Off turns our Master, riding, as usual, as if he did not know he was riding, and thereby showing how well he rides.

' Off turns the huntsman ; the brave green coat on the mouse mare ; the brave black coat on the black mare. Mark those two last, if you do not know the country, for where the hounds are there will they be to the last. Off turns a tall Irish baronet ; the red coat who has ridden in Australia ; an old gentleman who has just informed me that he was born close to Billesden-Coplow, and looks as if he could ride anywhere, even to the volcanoes of the moon, which must be a rough country, to look at it through a telescope. Off turns a gallant young Borderer, who has seen bogs and wolds ere now, but at present grows mustachios in a militia regiment at Aldershot : a noble youth to look at. May he prosper this day and all days, and beget brave children to hunt with Lord Elcho when he is dead and gone. And off turn poor humble I, on the old screwed mare. I know I shall be left behind, ridden past, possibly ridden over, laughed to scorn by swells on hundred-and-fifty-guinea horses ; but I know the winter-garden, and I want a gallop. Half an hour will do for me ; but it must be a half hour of mad, thoughtless, animal life, and then if I can go no further, I will walk the mare home contentedly, and do my duty in that state of life to which Providence has been pleased to call me. . . .

' . . . Racing indeed ; for as Reinecke gallops up the

FOX-HUNTING

narrow heather-fringed pathway, he brushes off his scent upon the twigs at every stride, and the hounds race after him, showing no head indeed, and keeping, for convenience, in one long line upon the track, but going, head up, sterns down, at a pace which no horse can follow.—I only hope they may not overrun the scent.

‘They have overrun it; halt, and put their heads down a moment. But with one swift cast in full gallop they have hit it off again, fifty yards away in the heather, long ere we are up to them; for those hounds can hunt a fox because they are not hunted themselves, and so have learnt to trust themselves; as boys should learn at school, even at the risk of a mistake or two. Now they are showing head indeed, down a half cleared valley, and over a few ineffectual turnips, withering in the peat, a patch of growing civilization in the heart of the wilderness; and then over the brook—woe’s me! and we must follow—if we can.

‘Down we come to it, over a broad sheet of burnt ground, where a week ago the young firs were blazing, crackling, spitting turpentine for a mile on end. Now it lies all black and ghastly, with hard charred stumps, like ugly teeth, or caltrops of old, set to lame charging knights.

‘Over a stiff furze-grown bank, which one has to jump on and off—if one can; and over the turnip patch, breathless.

‘Now we are at the brook, dyke, lode, drain, or whatever you call it. Much as I value agricultural improvements, I wish its making had been postponed for at least this one year.

‘Shall we race at it, as at Rosy or Wissendine, and so over in one long stride? Would that we could! But racing at it is impossible; for we stagger up to it almost knee-deep of newly-cut yellow clay, with a foul runnel at the bottom. The brave green coat finds a practicable place, our Master another; and both jump, not over, but in; and then out again, not by a leap, but by clawings as of a gigantic cat. The second whip goes in before me, and somehow vanishes head-long. I see the water shoot up from under his shoulders full

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

ten feet high, and his horse sitting disconsolate on his tail at the bottom, like a great dog. However they are up again and out, painted of a fair raw-ochre hue ; and I have to follow in fear and trembling, expecting to be painted in like wise.

‘ Well, I am in and out again, I don’t know how : but this I know, that I am in a great bog. Natural bogs, red, brown or green, I know from childhood, and never was taken in by one in my life ; but this has taken me in, in all senses. Why do people pare and trim bogs before draining them ?—thus destroying the light coat of tenacious stuff on the top, which Nature put there on purpose to help poor horsemen over, and the blanket of red bog-moss, which is meant as a fair warning to all who know the winter-garden.

‘ However I am no worse off than my neighbours. Here we are, ten valiant men, all bogged together ; and who knows how deep the peat may be ?

‘ I jump off and lead, considering that a horse plus a man weighs more than a horse alone ; so do one or two more. The rest plunge bravely on, whether because of their hurry, or like Child Waters in the ballad, “ for fying of their feet.”

‘ However “ all things do end,” as Carlyle pithily remarks somewhere in his *French Revolution* ; and so does this bog. I wish this gallop would end too. How long have we been going ? There is no time to take out a watch ; but I fancy the mare flags : I am sure my back aches with standing in my stirrups. I become desponding. I am sure I shall never see this fox killed ; sure I shall not keep up five minutes longer ; sure I shall have a fall soon ; sure I shall ruin the mare’s fetlocks in the ruts. I am bored. I wish it was all over, and I safe at home in bed. Then why do I not stop ? I cannot tell. That thud, thud, thud, through moss and mire has become an element of my being, a temporary necessity, and go I must. I do not ride the mare ; the Wild Huntsman, invisible to me, rides her ; and I, like Bürger’s *Lenore*, am carried on in spite of myself, “ tramp, tramp, along the land, splash, splash, along the sea.”

FOX-HUNTING

‘ By which I do not at all mean that the mare has run away with me. On the contrary, I am afraid that I have been shaking her up during the last five minutes more than once. But the spirit of Odin, “ the mover,” “ the goer ” (for that is his etymology) whom German sages connect much with the Wild Huntsman, has got hold of my midriff and marrow, and go I must, for “ The Goer ” has taken me. . . .

‘ . . . The hounds, moreover, have obligingly waited for us two fields on. For the cold wet pastures we are entering do not carry the scent as the heather did, in which Reinecke, as he galloped, brushed off his perspiration against every twig : and the hounds are now flemishing up and down by the side of the brown, alder-fringed brook which parts the counties. I can hear the flap and snort of the dogs’ nostrils as they canter round me ; and I like it. It is exciting ; but why—who can tell ?

‘ What beautiful creatures they are too ! Next to a Greek statue (I mean a real old Greek one ; for I am a thoroughly anti-preraphaelite benighted pagan heathen in taste, and intend some day to get up a Cinque-Cento Club, for the total abolition of Gothic art)—next to a Greek statue, I say, I know few such combinations of grace and strength, as in a fine fox-hound. It is the beauty of the Theseus—light and yet massive ; and light not in spite of its masses, but on account of the perfect disposition of them. I do not care for grace in man, woman, or animal, which is obtained (as in the old German painters) at the expense of honest flesh and blood. . . .’

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

ODE TO THE NORTH-EAST WIND

Welcome, wild North-easter!
Shame it is to see
Odes to every zephyr;
Ne'er a verse to thee.
Welcome, black North-easter!
O'er the German foam;
O'er the Danish moorlands,
From thy frozen home.
Tired we are of summer,
Tired of gaudy glare,
Showers soft and steaming,
Hot and breathless air.
Tired of listless dreaming,
Through the lazy day:
Jovial wind of winter
'Turns us out to play!
Sweep the golden reed-beds;
Crisp the lazy dyke;
Hunger into madness
Every plunging pike.
Fill the lake with wild-fowl;
Fill the marsh with snipe;
While on dreary moorlands
Lonely curlews pipe.
Though the black fir-forest
'Thunder harsh and dry,
Shattering down the snow-flakes
Off the curdled sky.
Hark! the brave North-easter!
Breast-high lies the scent,
On by holt and headland,
Over heath and bent.
Chime, ye dappled darlings,
Through the sleet and snow.
Who can over-ride you?

Let the horses go!
Chime, ye dappled darlings,
Down the roaring blast;
You shall see a fox die
Ere an hour be past.
Go! and rest to-morrow,
Hunting in your dreams,
While our skates are ringing
O'er the frozen streams.
Let the luscious South-wind
Breathe in lovers' sighs,
While the lazy gallants
Bask in ladies' eyes.
What does he but soften
Heart alike and pen?
'Tis the hard grey weather
Breeds hard English men.
What's the soft South-wester?
'Tis the ladies' breeze,
Bringing home their true-loves
Out of all the seas:
But the black North-easter,
Through the snowstorm hurled,
Drives our English hearts of oak
Seaward round the world.
Come, as came our fathers,
Heralded by thee,
Conquering from the eastward,
Lords by land and sea.
Come, and strong within us
Stir the Vikings' blood;
Bracing brain and sinew;
Blow, thou wind of God!

CHARLES KINGSLEY, 1854.

STAG-HUNTING

TURBERVILLE'S description of the approved methods of harbouring, rousing and hunting a stag in the sixteenth century would in the main apply as well to those in vogue on Exmoor, in the New Forest and Lancashire at the present time, as they would to the sport in the days of the Normans, when chase, by the unprivileged, of the 'King's Great Game' was an offence punishable by death or mutilation. The most noteworthy change has been in the hounds. When Mr. Lucas, Master of the hunt since known as the Devon and Somerset,¹ in 1825 sold his pack to go to France, the last of the old breed of staghounds left England. 'For courage, strength, speed and tongue, they were unrivalled: few horses could live with them in the open. Their rarest quality perhaps was their sagacity in hunting in the water. Every pebble, every overhanging bush or twig which the deer might have touched was quested . . . and the *crash* with which the scent, if detected, was acknowledged and announced made the whole country echo again.' Daniel says 'the Staghound is large and gallops with none of the neatness of the Foxhound': it would seem also to have been more temperate, as he observes that its only excellence (!) 'is the being more readily brought to stop when headed by the Huntsman or his assistants, altho' in the midst of his keenest pursuit.'

There is no better picture of stag-hunting on Exmoor than that of Dr. C. P. Collins:—

' . . . But we must move onward; below us we gaze on the lovely vale of Porlock, a strip of richly cultivated land, beyond which the plantations of Selworthy rise green and high, hiding the cliffs against which the angry waters of the

¹ The name was not adopted until 1837.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

Bristol Channel chafe and surge in vain. There, in the valley, you may see the garden and grounds of Holnicote, Sir Thomas Acland's lovely summer abode.¹ Below us lie Cloutsham farm, and the famed coverts of Horner. We descend the steep, cross the stream, and ascend again until we reach the knoll on which the farm-house stands. . . . But there is no time to be lost. The covert is large and deep, and the chances are that much time must elapse ere we see the tufters fairly settled on their stag, and the monarch of the woods driven from his stronghold.

'The harbourer approaches; and around him is held a council. He is certain that the same stag that we found in the covert a week ago has again made that favourite haunt his resting-place. He fed in the turnips beyond the oak copse this morning, and, though there are many hinds and calves in the wood, by care and perseverance we are assured that he will be found and got away. The order is given to draft out the tufters, and Sam proceeds to perform the duty. Let us follow him. The hounds are shut up in a large barn, and we hear them baying, as if to chide the delay which takes place while preliminaries are being settled. Cautiously Sam opens the door. A rush of hounds is checked by the old fellow's voice and whip. "Get back, my darlin's!" says Sam, as he checks the impetuous advance of the eager babblers, and singles out the staid and steady veterans, to whom the business of "tufting" is to be confided. Far back in the dim recesses of the hovel sits old "Shiner," looking as if he were ashamed to appear concerned, yet shuddering all over with excitement. "Shiner," says Sam; "Shiner, old man," and the noble hound springs from his place, clears the youngsters, and in a moment is rolling on the greensward, and giving utterance to his joy in notes loud, deep, and prolonged. "Constant! Constant!" cries Sam, and the wary old bitch slips round the door-post as if by magic, and whence

¹ Holnicote, Sir T. D. Acland's residence, was destroyed by fire in August 1851. It is now (1862) in the course of rebuilding.

Stag-hunting :
Stag on Hill



STAG-HUNTING

nobody can tell. "*Rewin! Rewin!*" cries the huntsman; and, after a few coy wriggles and yells, pretty "Ruin" is emancipated, and displays her joy by knocking down a small boy, and defacing a spotless pair of leathers, the property of a gentleman who is very particular about his costume. "Trojan" next responds to the summons, and the tale of the tufters is complete. Sam shuts the door, leaves the pack under the care of the whip, mounts his hack, tries the effect of his voice to silence the hounds he leaves behind him, which, to testify their disappointment, lift up their voices and lament, but in vain; and off we go to the edge of the covert, where, under a friendly oak-tree, we take up our position, while Sam and the harbourer proceed to their duties. . . .

"Hark, "Constant" speaks! "Ruin" confirms it. The tufters open all together, and every eye strains to catch a view of the game. Here they come: not what we want, but it's a pretty sight. A yeld hind in advance, a second hind which knoweth the cares of maternity, her calf beside her, canter up towards the tree where we stand—stop, sniff, and trot away, as if they thought we were dangerous and to be avoided. "Shiner" is close upon them, the rest of the tufters following him. A little rating and a few cracks of the whip, and their heads are up; they know that they are not on the "real animal," and as soon as Sam's horn summons them, back they go, and resume their labours. Again they open, and again we are on the alert. The cry increases—they run merrily, and we are high in hope.

"Ware fox!" says an M.F.H., the best sportsman in the West, as he views Charley slinking along towards the gap in the hedgerow. Then with his stentorian voice he calls out to Sam, "Your hounds are on a fox, Sam." Sam does not hear, but rides up within a hundred yards of us. "What, Sir?" "Your hounds are on a fox, Sam," repeats the M.F.H. "Think not, Sir," says Sam. "*My* hounds won't hunt fox!" "I tell you they are on a fox, Sam—call them off," says the fox-hunter. Sam looks vicious, but he obeys,

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

saying in a voice which *could* be heard by the Master of Foxhounds, but certainly not by the tufters, "Get away hounds, get away; *ain't you ashamed of hunting of a stinking little warmint, not half the size of yourselves?* Get away!" Sam still maintains his creed that *his* tufters were not on the fox, and two minutes afterwards a yell announced that a different sort of animal was afoot. Another tally: Tom W——'s voice, a guarantee that it is the right thing—for a good yeoman is the best and truest stag-hunter that ever cheered a hound. Every one is on the alert; we ride forward, and presently, in the distance, view, not a stag, alas! but a hind breaking towards the moor. "How is this, Tom? You were wrong for once." "No, Sir, not I; I'll swear it was a stag, and a good one—but you see he has pushed up the hind and gone down, and we must have him up again." So the tufters are stopped again, and sent back on heel, and by and by that unmistakable "yell" which announces a view is heard, and this time the antlered monarch reveals himself to the whole of the assembled multitude. It is but for a moment; again he seeks the depths of the covert, but the tufters rattle him along, and are so close that he has no time for playing tricks, and beyond all doubt must now face the open. We ride towards the spot where in all probability he will break, and as the voice of the hounds comes nearer and yet more near, you may almost hear the pulses of the throng of spectators standing by the gate of that large oat-stubble beat with excitement.

'Hark! a rustle in the wood, then a pause. Then a rush, and then—in his full glory and majesty, on the bank separating the wood from the field, stands the noble animal! Look at him—mark his full, thoughtful eye—his noble bearing. Look at his beamed frontlet—how he bears it—not a trace of fear about his gestures—all dignified and noble, yet how full of thought and sagacity. He pauses for a minute, perfectly regardless of the hundreds at the gate who gaze upon him.

'You need not fear that he will be "blanched," that is headed, by the formidable array drawn up to inspect him.

STAG-HUNTING

He has too well considered his course of action to be deterred from making good his point. Quietly and attentively he listens to the tufters, as with unerring instinct they approach—"the cry is still they come." His noble head moves more quickly from side to side—the moment for action has arrived—the covert is no longer safe. He must seek safety in flight, and look to securer shades wherein to rest. So he gathers himself together to run his course.

'There! you have seen a wild stag break covert, and stretch away over the open. Did you ever see a finer sight—did you mark well the beauty of his action as he bounded from the fence of the wood? Did you not view with admiration his stately form as he gazed on the hunters drawn up at the gate—the momentary pause, ere he stalked a few strides, as if to show that he feared us not? Was not the bounding trot into which he then broke the very "poetry of motion"? And when at length he exchanged it for a long, easy, steady gallop, did you ever witness movement more elastic and graceful?

'Now, my friends, draw your girths, lend your aid to stop the tufters, and make up your minds for a run. If you see that stag again this side of Brendon Barton (unless by chance we fall in with him, and he is "set up," brought to bay, that is, in Badgworthy Water) I am very much mistaken. The tufters are stopped, not without some difficulty. Sam and his coadjutors emerge from the covert, the pack leave their barn, and are taken carefully up to a spot where it is convenient to lay on. A shepherd who has viewed the deer on the open moor lifts his hat on a stick. We go to the signal—the hounds press forward and are unrestrained—they dash—fling their sterns—a whimper—a crash—they are off, and a hundred horsemen follow as best they may across the wild open waste.

'The pace is tremendous—the ground uneven and often deep—already a tail, and many a gallant steed sobbing. On—on still—till we come to the Badgworthy Water, a river, or large burn, running down by the covert bearing that name.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

Now, Sam, show yourself worthy to bear the horn, for there are few things requiring nicer judgment and discretion than making a cast in water. On go the pack—they reach the stream, and check for a moment. Then half the hounds rush through it, while many swim down stream, giving tongue as they go, and apparently hunting the deer down the water.

‘Beware! for this is a critical moment. If the stag has gone *up* stream the water will carry the scent downwards, and the hounds will go on and on for miles in a different direction from that in which the deer has gone. In this instance I will wager he has not gone *far* down stream, for from our vantage-ground, as we come over the crest of the hill, I saw the sheep feeding quietly in yonder coombe by the river side, not huddled as they would have been, if our quarry had passed near them—and, moreover, I descried a watchful heron which was fishing in a shallow pool, while his companion flapped heavily and securely down the water in quest of other feeding-grounds. If our deer had passed these shy birds, they would have been careering high above our heads in search of more quiet and undisturbed retreats. For such signs as these the huntsman must ever be on the look-out, if he desire to match his powers of reasoning and observation against the cunning and sagacity of a deer. . . .

‘He has refreshed himself in a deep pool close to the spot where he took soil, and without staying long to enjoy the luxury of the bath, has risen, though not “fresh as the foam,” again to stretch across the moor, and if possible, to seek safety among the herd on Scab Hill, whose numbers saved him only last week.

‘Away! away! over the stone walls and across the forest. Fortunately not one deer is in the line to divert the attention of the hounds; though far to the left are to be seen against the sky-line, the forms of some fifteen or twenty deer, whose watchful eyes and ears have seen sights and heard sounds which bode danger, and warn them to be on the alert. The Master goes gallantly to the fore on “Little Nell,” though his

STAG-HUNTING

headdress, consisting of a bandana twisted about his brows, looks rather "out of order." He *had* a hat, but in the deep ground the other side of the last wall, he shook it off, and in the next stride Little Nell's forefoot planted it two feet deep in a bog. Onward stride the hounds, mute as mice, and the select few ride anxiously and carefully, hands well down and helping their horses as best they can, each man wishing in his heart of hearts that there may be a friendly check ere long, except perhaps old Mr. Snow, of Oare, whose threescore years and ten have not tamed the warmth of his blood or his ardour in the chase, and who now is in the very height of his happiness, for below him he sees his own farms and the roof of his own homestead, and under him "Norah Creina" strides along in her lashing, easy gallop, with the confidence which an intimate knowledge of every sod beneath her feet inspires and creates. The ground is open. A little on a decline and far away, close, close to the wall of the Scab Hill enclosure, I see something moving along "with hobbling gait and high" which I cannot doubt is our quarry. Unless the herd shelter him, "this day the stag shall die." Forward! forward! and again the hounds lash and stride over the long sedges, the faintest whimper possible from time to time announcing that they are running on a burning scent, but have too much to do to be able to own it.

' We gain the wall of the enclosure over which the pack scrambles with difficulty while the remaining horsemen seek a friendly gate. A shepherd has viewed the stag, and to our joy reports that he has not joined the herd, but turned to the right to seek the covert, and take soil in the limpid waters of the impetuous Lynn. Down rush the hounds, and we reach the ford in time to see the body of the pack struggling in the foaming waters of the torrent, while the leading hounds are carrying on the scent up the opposite steep. Onward we urge our sobbing steeds, though some of the few who still keep their place look as though they had had enough . . . and on Countisbury Common catch the fresh and welcome breezes of the Channel,

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

and slacken our speed as the pack turn unmistakably towards the sea where we know our gallant stag will stop to refresh himself. Nor are we mistaken, for as we turn into one of the steep paths of Glenthorne overhanging the Channel we see below us our quarry dripping from his recent bath, standing proudly on a rock surrounded by the flowing tide, and watching his pursuers with anxious eyes. The hounds bay him from the land: one adventurer from the pack takes the water and already is at the base of the cliff on which the deer stands. Poor victim! Scarce has he lifted himself from the waves when he is dashed back again by an unerring blow struck quick as lightning by the forefoot of the deer, and floats a corpse in the waters from which a moment ago he emerged.

‘Meantime the news of the chase has brought together the rustics who are working near the spot. Their endeavours to dislodge the stag from his stronghold by shouts and stones are successful and, dashing through the water, he reaches the cliffs, gains a craggy path leading along them, and stretches away above Glenthorne House towards Yeanworth. But it is evident his race is run. The heavy gallop, the faltering stride and the lowered head, proclaim that his strength is failing. The check has increased his stiffness, though it has enabled him partially to regain his wind. His pursuers are not to be baffled, and their speed now exceeds his. He is unable again to face the open, runs feebly and painfully along the beaten paths, and turning through the woods towards the sea, he reaches the edge of the cliff, just above the boathouse and beach of Glenthorne. His foes are close behind. He gives one wild and hurried look of fear, and dares the desperate leap. It is done. He has jumped from a height of at least thirty feet on to the shore, and in the next moment is floating in the salt sea waves. Fortunately, one or two sportsmen on the beach keep back the eager hounds, or some of the best of the pack would in all probability have been sacrificed, or at least maimed, in the attempt to follow their quarry in his deed of daring. A few minutes suffice to man a boat, and put a rope round the horns

STAG-HUNTING

of the deer. The victim is dragged in triumph to the beach, the knife is at his throat, and amid the baying of the pack, and the loud whoo' whoops of the crowd, the noble and gallant animal yields up his life.'

The generally accepted idea that carted-deer hunting is an invention of degenerate modernity is mistaken. The Royal Buckhounds enlarged deer from a cart at the beginning of George II.'s reign. There are references in the Accounts of the Great Wardrobe to the 'deer van' or 'deer waggon' as far back as 1630, but there is nothing to show that this vehicle was used for conveying the deer to the meet. It *may* have been so used: but its main purpose was to convey deer which had been caught in other royal forests to the park at Windsor. The earliest mention of carted deer refers to Saturday, 14th September 1728, when 'an elk' (presumably a wapiti) was uncarted at Windsor and gave a brilliant run:¹ and from this time forward carted deer were frequently used by the royal pack. Hounslow Heath, Sunbury and Richmond were often the scenes of meets to hunt a carted deer during the years ensuing, and there is at least one mention of the deer being enlarged at Epsom. In those days the deer cart, or 'waggon' as it was then called, was only brought into use when occasion required. Until the end of the eighteenth century the system varied: a deer was either cut out from a herd in the Park, was turned out from Swinley paddocks and hunted therefrom, or it was carted at Swinley and conveyed 'to such place and at such time as may have been previously appointed.'

Some very long runs have been given by deer. On 26th January 1899, the Ripley and Knaphill got on the line of an outlying hind near Lord Pirbright's house and ran her for 5 hours 40 minutes till whipped off at dark near Woking: a thirty-miles point, and much more as hounds ran. During February of the present year the Mid Kent took an outlier after a thirty-mile run, and the Essex a few days later enlarged a deer which gave a run of the same length. On 20th September

¹ *History of the Royal Buckhounds*, by J. P. Hore.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

1880 the Devon and Somerset lost their stag after a thirty-mile run : he beat them, as many a stag has done, before and since, by putting out to sea, whence he was rescued by fishermen.

Deer make extraordinarily big jumps on occasion. Lord Ribblesdale says that the deer Runaway earned his name by jumping the oak palings of Swinley paddocks, 8 feet high : he had been startled by the crack of a whip. A fallow buck which, having escaped from Chippenham Park, was run by harriers, made two wonderful leaps to regain its old quarters : the first 27 feet over a rail and bank into a road, the next over the park wall which, with the bank on which it stood, was 9 feet in height : the two consecutive leaps covered 42 feet.

Fallow deer have given some long runs : but perhaps they are more remarkable for their craft than for straight running. Mr. George Race maintains that a fallow deer shows greater resource in eluding hounds than either fox or hare. ' I have seen them when beaten jump into a brook and submerge themselves till only their nose remained above water. They will spring sideways from their tracks and crouch in covert while hounds over-run the scent. I have seen them drop down in a wood of a year's growth in a large bunch of grass and briars, hiding cleverly where you would think it impossible for so large an animal to find concealment.'

Cervine methods, in a word, have not changed during the centuries : ' and bicause they should have no sent of him nor vent him he wil trusse all his iiii feete under his belly and will blow and breath upon ye grounde in some moyst place in such sorte yt I have seene the houndes passe by such an Harte within a yeard of him and never vent him . . . if he have taken the soyle in such sort, that of all his body you shal see nothing but his nose : and I have seen divers lye so untill the houndes have beene upon them before they would ryse' (*The Booke of Hunting*, 1576).

Stag-hunting :
Stag in Water



STAG-HUNTING

THE LORD OF THE VALLEY

A STAG-HUNTER'S SONG

Hunters are fretting, and hacks in a lather,
Sportsmen arriving from left and from right,
Bridle-roads bringing them, see how they gather!
Dotting the meadows in scarlet and white.
Foot-people staring, and horsemen preparing;
Now there 's a murmur—a stir—and a shout!
Fresh from his carriage, as bridegroom in marriage,
The Lord of the Valley leaps gallantly out.

Time, the Avenger, neglecting, or scorning,
Gazes about him in beauteous disdain,
Lingers to toy with the whisper of morning,
Daintily, airily, paces the plain.
Then in a second, his course having reckoned,
Line that all Leicestershire cannot surpass,
Fleet as a swallow, when summer winds follow,
The Lord of the Valley skims over the grass.

Where shall we take him? Ah! now for the tussle,
These are the beauties can stoop and can fly;
Down go their noses, together they bustle,
Dashing, and flinging, and scorning to cry!
Never stand dreaming, while yonder they 're streaming;
If ever you meant it, man, mean it to-day!
Bold ones are riding and fast ones are striding,
The Lord of the Valley is Forward! Away!

Hard on his track, o'er the open and facing,
The cream of the country, the pick of the chase,
Mute as a dream, his pursuers are racing,
Silence, you know, 's the criterion of *pace*!
Swarming and driving, while man and horse striving
By cranming and hugging, scarce live with them still;
The fastest are failing, the truest are tailing,
The Lord of the Valley is over the hill!

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

Yonder a steed is rolled up with his master ;
Here, in a double, another lies cast ;
Thicker and faster comes grief and disaster,
All but the good ones are weeded at last.
Hunters so limber, at water and timber,
Now on the causeway are fain to be led ;
Beat, but still going, a countryman sowing
Has sighted the Lord of the Valley ahead.

There in the bottom, see, sluggish and idle,
Steals the dark stream where the willow-tree grows !
Harden your heart, and catch hold of your bridle !
Steady him—rouse him—and over he goes !
Look ! in a minute a dozen are in it !
But Forward ! Hark Forward ! for draggled and blown,
A check though desiring, with courage untiring
The Lord of the Valley is holding his own.

Onward we struggle in sorrow and labour,
Lurching and lopping, and 'bellows to mend' ;
Each, while he smiles at the plight of his neighbour,
Only is anxious to get to the end.
Horses are flagging, hounds drooping and lagging,
Yet gathering down yonder, where, press as they may,
Mobbed, driven, and haunted, but game and undaunted,
The Lord of the Valley stands proudly at bay !

Then here 's to the Baron,¹ and all his supporters—
The thrusters—the skitters—the whole of the tale ;
And here 's to the fairest of all hunting quarters,
The widest of pastures—three cheers for the Vale ;²
For the lovely she-rider, the rogue, who beside her,
Finds breath in a gallop his suit to advance ;
The hounds, for our pleasure, that time us the measure,
The Lord of the Valley, that leads us the dance !

G. J. WHYTE MELVILLE,
Baily's Magazine, Feb. 1868.

¹ Rothschild.

² Of Aylesbury.

HARE-HUNTING

THE old system of hare-hunting with slow hounds, which were frequently followed on foot, was going out of fashion at the end of the eighteenth century. Sport with the Southern hound 'or such heavy dogs as Sussex Gentlemen use on the weald,' says William Blaine in 1781, appealed to him 'that delights in a long chace of six hours, often more, and to be with the dogs all the time.' The delights of such prolonged hunts, however, had begun to pall even on the most enthusiastic; and really, unless the music for which Southern hounds were so famous might be regarded as the principal feature of the business, we cannot feel surprise. These hounds had splendid noses, but their appreciation of scent had drawbacks. On occasion, overcome by the delights that were in their nostrils, the whole cry would sit down on the line and, heeding naught else, upraise their voices in chorus of ecstasy. This exhibition of music and emotion too frequently resulted in the loss of the hare; which, remarks Blaine temperately, 'is by some thought necessary to complete the sport.'

Slow and phlegmatic, 'these grave sort of dogs' were peculiarly amenable to discipline and were usually 'hunted under the pole,' as the old term had it. The huntsman carried a light leaping-pole with which to vault fences and brooks, and he had the pack under such command that he could stop them at pleasure by throwing down the pole before the pack. Sir Roger de Coverley's 'Stop hounds,' described by Budgell in the *Spectator*,¹ were manifestly of the Southern breed.

¹ 12th July 1711. Eustace Budgell, cousin of Addison, was a frequent contributor. We need not doubt that he describes such a hunt as any country gentleman enjoyed in Queen Anne's time.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

‘Sir Roger being at present too old for fox-hunting, to keep himself in action, has disposed of his beagles and got a pack of stop-hounds. What these want in speed, he endeavours to make amends for by the deepness of their mouths and the variety of their notes, which are suited in such manner to each other, that the whole cry makes up a complete concert. He is so nice in this particular, that a gentleman having made him a present of a very fine hound the other day, the knight returned it by the servant with a great many expressions of civility ; but desired him to tell his master, that the dog he had sent was indeed a most excellent bass, but that at present he only wanted a counter-tenor. Could I believe my friend had ever read Shakespeare, I should certainly conclude he had taken the hint from Theseus in the *Midsummer Night’s Dream* :—

“ My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
So flu’d, so sanded ;¹ and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew,
Crook-knee’d and dew-lap’d like Thessalian bulls,
Slow in pursuit, but match’d in mouths like bells,
Each under each. A cry more tunable
Was never halloo’d to, nor cheer’d with horn.”

‘Sir Roger is so keen at this sport, that he has been out almost every day since I came down ; and upon the chaplain’s offering to lend me his easy pad, I was prevailed on yesterday morning to make one of the company. I was extremely pleased as we rid along, to observe the general benevolence of all the neighbourhood towards my friend. The farmers’ sons thought themselves happy if they could open a gate for the good old knight as he passed by ; which he generally requited with a nod or a smile, and a kind inquiry after their fathers or uncles.

‘After we had rid about a mile from home, we came upon a large heath, and the sportsmen began to beat.² They had

¹ Marked with small specks.

² ‘Some huntsmen trail to a hare, others trouble themselves not at all about trailing

HARE-HUNTING

done so for some time, when, as I was at a little distance from the rest of the company, I saw a hare pop from a small furze-brake almost under my horse's feet. I marked the way she took, which I endeavoured to make the company sensible of by extending my arm; but to no purpose, till Sir Roger, who knows that none of my extraordinary motions are insignificant, rode up to me, and asked me, if puss was gone that way? Upon my answering yes, he immediately called in the dogs, and put them upon the scent. As they were going off, I heard one of the country-fellows muttering to his companion, "that 'twas a wonder they had not lost all their sport, for want of the silent gentleman's crying Stole away."

'This, with my aversion to leaping hedges, made me withdraw to a rising ground, from whence I could have the pleasure of the whole chase, without the fatigue of keeping in with the hounds. The hare immediately threw them above a mile behind her; but I was pleased to find, that instead of running straight forwards, or in hunter's language, "flying the country," as I was afraid she might have done, she wheeled about, and described a sort of circle round the hill where I had taken my station, in such a manner as gave me a very distinct view of the sport. I could see her first pass by, and the dogs sometime afterwards unravelling the whole track she had made, and following her through all her doubles. I was at the same time delighted in observing that deference which the rest of the pack paid to each particular hound, according to the character he had acquired amongst them. If they were at a fault, and an old hound of reputation opened but once, he was immediately followed by the whole cry; while a raw dog, or one who was a noted liar, might have yelped his heart out, without being taken notice of.

'The hare now, after having squatted two or three times,

to her, but proceed with the company to threshing the hedges for a wide compass, being so sparing of their pains as often to beat over as beat a hare up. For my part I think trailing fairly and starting the nicest part of the whole pastime, provided wind and weather permit' (William Blaine).

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

and been put up again as often, came still nearer to the place where she was at first started. The dogs pursued her, and these were followed by the jolly knight, who rode upon a white gelding, encompassed by his tenants and servants, and cheering his hounds with all the gaiety of five and twenty.

‘One of the sportsmen rode up to me, and told me, that he was sure the chase was almost at an end, because the old dogs, which had hitherto lain behind, now headed the pack. The fellow was in the right. Our hare took a large field just under us, followed by the full cry *In View*. I must confess the brightness of the weather, the cheerfulness of everything around me, the chiding of the hounds, which was returned upon us in a double echo from two neighbouring hills, with the hallooing of the sportsmen, and the sounding of the horn, lifted my spirits into a most lively pleasure, which I freely indulged because I was sure it was innocent. If I was under any concern, it was on the account of the poor hare, that was now quite spent, and almost within the reach of her enemies ; when the huntsman getting forward threw down his pole before the dogs. They were now within eight yards of that game which they had been pursuing for almost as many hours ; yet on the signal before-mentioned they all made a sudden stand, and though they continued opening as much as before, durst not once attempt to pass beyond the pole. At the same time Sir Roger rode forward, and alighting took up the hare in his arms ; which he soon after delivered up to one of his servants with an order, if she could be kept alive, to let her go in his great orchard ; where it seems he has several of these prisoners of war, who live together in a very comfortable captivity. I was highly pleased to see the discipline of the pack, and the good-nature of the knight, who could not find in his heart to murder a creature that had given him so much diversion.’

The ‘beagles’ of which Sir Roger had disposed would be the hounds known then and later as ‘Northern Beagles,’ whose original home appears to have been Lancashire. They

HARE-HUNTING

were used for fox-hunting and, as the old slow system of hare-hunting lost vogue, for that sport also.

Such discipline as Budgell admired can be matched among foxhounds. It is recorded of Mr. Meynell that one day, in the Market Harborough country, he was drawing a thin gorse covert, and the fox was in danger of being chopped. He called to Jack Raven to take the hounds away, and at one of his usual rates every hound stopped and was taken to the hedge side. Meynell then called three steady hounds by name and threw them into the covert. The fox was so loth to break that the three hunted him for about ten minutes in the hearing of the whole pack ; but so perfect was the discipline, they lay quietly about Raven's horse until the fox went away. Then the Master gave ' his most energetic, thrilling halloo,' and every hound flew to him. An instance of discipline equally striking is cited on the authority of Sir Arthur Halkett in Lord Ribblesdale's book, *The Queen's Hounds*. And let us not forget the vast difference of temperament between Sir Roger de Coverley's ' Stop hounds ' and the foxhound.

It has been remarked by a modern writer that if Sir Roger's rescue of the hare exemplified the usual practice, those Southern hounds must have been above such material considerations as blood. There is much reason to think that the chase was far more than the quarry to the Southern hound : which suggests the reflection that fox-flesh is an acquired taste, and one that all hounds have not yet acquired. Welsh hounds do not always break up their fox, unless urged on to do it or encouraged by English companions : the late Sir Richard Green Price told me he had ' often known them leave their dead fox if they kill him by themselves.' The foxhounds of the fells also do not break up their quarry. Hounds would not eat fox-flesh in Turberville's day (1575) ; but when Nicholas Cox wrote in 1685 he said, ' Many hounds will eat the fox with eagerness.' Evidently they had learned to do it during the hundred years preceding.

It is permissible to suspect the unqualified charity of the

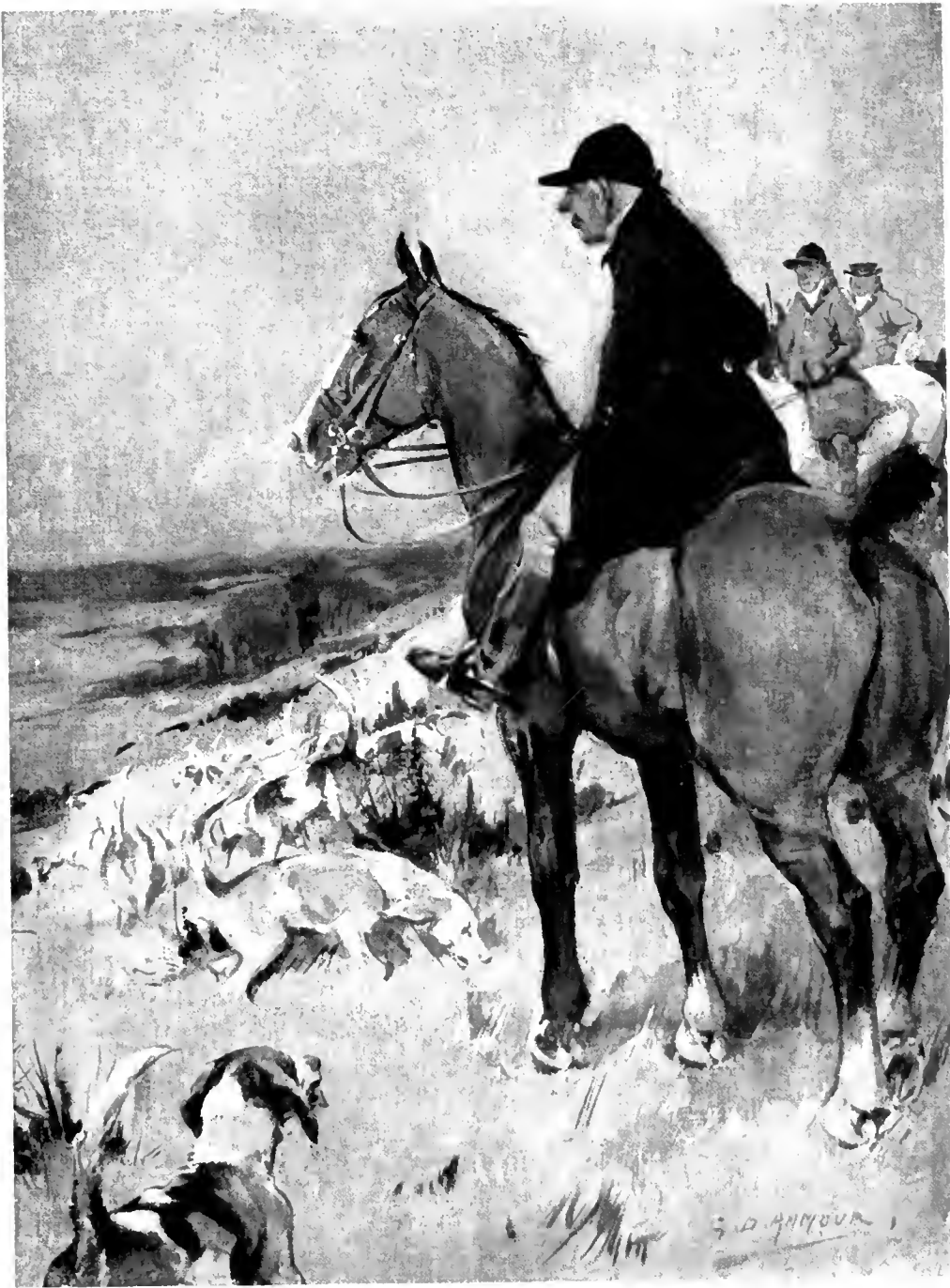
BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

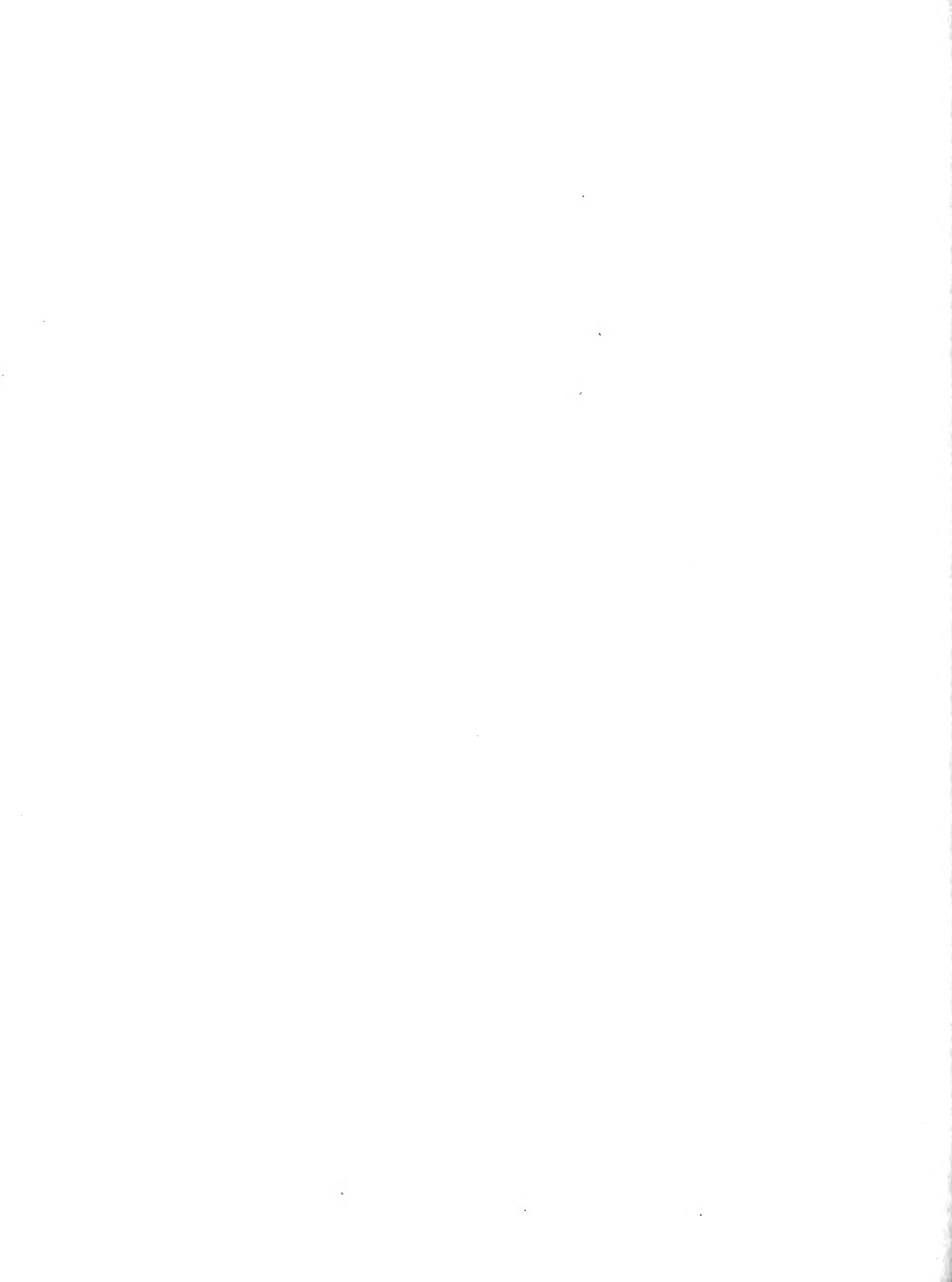
motives which actuated Sir Roger in ordering that hare to be turned out in the orchard. Hares are not the most desirable live stock to maintain among fruit trees ; it is likely that in Queen Anne's time, as at the end of the century, the practice of hunting ' basket ' or ' trap ' hares may have been in vogue. No more scruple was held about hunting basket hares than bag foxes. Beckford, you remember, kept a paled warren with brick meuses, and trapped a hare whenever he happened to want one for hunting or coursing.

To write of hare-hunting and omit at least a passage from *The Chace* would savour of heresy :—

‘ . . . As captive boys,
Cow'd by the ruling rod, and haughty frowns
Of pedagogues severe, from their hard tasks
If once dismiss'd, no limits can contain,
The tumult rais'd within their little breasts,
But give a loose to all their frolic play :
So from their kennel rush the joyous pack ;
A thousand wanton gaieties express
Their inward ecstasy, their pleasing sport
Once more indulg'd, and liberty restor'd.
The rising sun that o'er th' horizon peeps,
As many colours from their glossy skins
Beaming reflects, as paint the various bow
When April show'rs descend. Delightful scene !
Where all around is gay, men, horses, dogs,
And in each smiling countenance appears
Fresh-blooming health, and universal joy.
Huntsman, lead on ! behind the clust'ring pack
Submiss attend, hear with respect thy whip
Loud-clanging, and thy harsher voice obey :
Spare not the straggling cur that wildly roves,
But let thy brisk assistant on his back
Imprint thy just resentments, let each lash
Bite to the quick, till howling he return
And whining creep amid the trembling crowd.
Here on this verdant spot, where Nature kind
With double blessings crowns the farmer's hopes ;

Hare-hunting :
An Old-fashioned Huntsman





HARE-HUNTING

Where flow'rs autumnal spring, and the rank mead
Affords the wand'ring hares a rich repast ;
Throw off thy ready pack. See, where they spread
And range around, and dash the glitt'ring dew.
If some stanch hound, with his authentic voice,
Avow the recent trail, the jostling tribe
Attend his call, then with one mutual cry
The welcome news confirm, and echoing hills
Repeat the pleasing tale. See how they thread
The brakes, and up yon furrow drive along !
But quick they back recoil, and wisely check
Their eager haste ; then o'er the fallow'd ground
How leisurely they work, and many a pause
Th' harmonious concert breaks ; till more assur'd
With joy redoubled the low valleys ring.
What artful labyrinths perplex their way !
Ah ! there she lies ; how close ! she pants, she doubts
If now she lives ; she trembles as she sits,
With horror seiz'd. The wither'd grass that clings
Around her head, of the same russet hue,
Almost deceiv'd my sight, had not her eyes
With life full-beaming her vain wiles betray'd.
At distance draw thy pack, let all be hush'd,
No clamour loud, no frantic joy be heard,
Lest the wild hound run gadding o'er the plain
Untractable, nor hear thy chiding voice.
Now gently put her off ; see how direct
To her known mews she flies ! Here, huntsman, bring
(But without hurry) all thy jolly hounds,
And calmly lay them on. How low they stoop,
And seem to plough the ground ; then all at once
With greedy nostrils snuff the foaming steam
That glads their flutt'ring hearts. As winds let loose
From the dark caverns of the blust'ring god,
They burst away, and sweep the dewy lawn,
Hope gives them wings, while she 's spurr'd on by fear,
The welkin rings, men, dogs, hills, rocks, and woods,
In the full concert join. Now, my brave youths,
Stripp'd for the chace, give all your souls to joy !
See how their coursers, than the mountain roe

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

More fleet, the verdant carpet skim, thick clouds
Snorting they breathe, their shining hoofs scarce print
The grass unbruised; with emulation fired,
They strain to lead the field, top the barr'd gate,
O'er the deep ditch exulting bound, and brush
The thorny-twining hedge: the riders bend
O'er their arch'd necks; with steady hands by turns
Indulge their speed, or moderate their rage.
Where are their sorrows, disappointments, wrongs,
Vexations, sickness, cares? All, all are gone,
And with the panting winds lag far behind.
Huntsman! her gait observe; if in wide rings
She wheel her mazy way, in the same round
Persisting still, she'll foil the beaten track,
But if she fly, and with the favouring wind
Urge her bold course, less intricate thy task:
Push on thy pack. Like some poor exil'd wretch,
The frighted chace leaves her late dear abodes,
O'er plains remote she stretches far away,
Ah! never to return! For greedy death
Hov'ring exults, secure to seize his prey.
Hark! from yon covert, where those towering oaks
Above the humble copse aspiring rise,
What glorious triumphs burst in ev'ry gale
Upon our ravish'd ears! The hunters shout,
The clanging horns swell their sweet-winding notes,
The pack wide-op'ning load the trembling air
With various melody; from tree to tree
The propagated cry redoubling bounds,
And winged zephyrs waft the floating joy
Thro' all the regions near. Afflictive birch
No more the schoolboy dreads; his prison broke,
Scamp'ring he flies, nor heeds his master's call;
The weary traveller forgets his road,
And climbs the adjacent hill; the ploughman leaves
Th' unfinished furrow; nor his bleating flocks
Are now the shepherd's joy; men, boys, and girls,
Desert th' unpeopled village: and wild crowds
Spread o'er the plain, by the sweet frenzy seized.
Look how she pants! and o'er yon op'ning glade

HARE-HUNTING

Slips glancing by; while, at the further end
The puzzling pack unravel, wile by wile,
Maze within maze. The covert's utmost bound
Slyly she skirts: behind them cautious creeps,
And in that very track, so lately stain'd
By all the steaming crowd, seems to pursue
The foe she flies. . . .

Now the poor chace
Begins to flag, to her last shifts reduc'd.
From brake to brake she flies, and visits all
Her well-known haunts, where once she rang'd secure,
With love and plenty blest. See! there she goes,
She reels along, and by her gait betrays
Her inward weakness. See, how black she looks!
The sweat that clogs th' obstructed pores, scarce leaves
A languid scent. And now in open view
See, see, she flies! each eager hound exerts
His utmost speed, and stretches ev'ry nerve,
How quick she turns! their gaping jaws eludes,
And yet a moment lives; till round enclos'd
By all the greedy pack, with infant screams
She yields her breath, and there reluctant dies.'

Passages in Somerville's poem appear hardly in accordance with his avowed principles. His field, unless poetic licence set practical knowledge at naught, had to ride for all they were worth to live with the pack; though granting the presence of thrusters, we need not imagine speed comparable to that of the modern hunter. Somerville himself could not have ridden very hard, as we are told that he used to pull out his favourite hunter, Old Ball, three times a week: of this useful animal his owner has left record that he 'would not hold out two days together.' Old Ball was a 'real good English hunter standing about 15 hands high, with black legs, short back, high in the shoulders, large barrel, cropped ears, and a white blaze.'

The Royal Harriers, which had been re-established in 1730,¹ seem to have been the first pack of hounds to advertise meets. During the Regency they were kennelled at Brighton, then at

¹ The pack had been given up in James II.'s reign.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

the zenith of its fame as a winter resort, and met 'for the amusement of all who choose to join the hunt' on Mondays near Portslade Windmill, on Wednesdays near Patcham, and on Fridays on the Race Hill. The field was not always well behaved: upon a day in October 1804 the huntsman was compelled to go home 'before the accustomed time' by reason of the misconduct of men who persisted in riding before the hounds.

Five or six miles is accounted a good point for a hare when 'forced to make out endwaies,' as Turberville so happily puts it. Mr. Eames, Master of the Cootley, has been good enough to tell me of a run which must be unique for length. It occurred in the time of his grandfather sixty or seventy years ago: finding near Chard, hounds ran their hare to Wellington Monument and killed her after a fifteen-mile point.

Mr. George Race, now in his seventieth year of Mastership (surely the 'record' in the whole history of hunting), once saw a run of twelve miles. He writes: 'It took place on 28th December 1848. We found our hare in Litlington field, and she went straight to the bottom part of Morden Heath, where there was a wood sale going on. The people turned her to the left, and she went over the Royston and Baldock road, up the hill into the open, nearly to the top of Royston town. Here she came down the hill, and was evidently going back to Litlington field, but there were so many foot-people, carriages and waggons passing, she would not cross the road, and turned up the hill again, and leaving Mr. Thurnall's gorse just on our right, went over the open to Seven Riders, where a waggon turned her to the right. She went up the hill to Reed village and straight across the fields to the Old North Road, up which she ran as hard as she could go to just below Backland, where a road-mender turned her to the left over the fields down to Capon's Wood. Here hounds raced into view and bowled her over in a rackway in the wood. The time was not taken, but it was a fine run. Mr. William Pope, Mr. Chas. Lindsell (Master of the Cambridgeshire for seventeen years), and myself

HARE-HUNTING

were the only people who really saw this run. The greater part of it was in the Puckeridge country.'

Mr. Race recalls another remarkable run, straight—and eight miles from point to point.

Mr. Baron D. Webster, for ten years master and owner of the Haldon, has kindly sent me some interesting notes:—'I have, during my experience, seen less of the extraordinary cunning of the hare than might have been expected. Where our country is mostly moor or woodland, hares are scarce, and they run far more like foxes than they do in an enclosed district. . . .

'During my first season as Master of the Haldon we had a run which for pace and distance can very seldom have been surpassed. On Monday, 14th February 1898, we met at Ashwell Cross: we did no good with our first hare. It was the second one that gave the run: we found her exactly at one o'clock on the open moor between Lidwell and Newtake. She got up behind the hounds, so they did not see her, and they were laid on the line with as little noise as possible. Our hare made at once for Newtake, and hounds ran at a fair pace the whole length of this long narrow gorse brake and checked a moment at the Ashwell end. Hitting off the line again, they ran well over the open part of Humber Moor and seemed to be making for the Pheasant covert about Lindridge House, but turning away from Lindridge they ran well down the green lane, and skirting Luton Moor, were brought to their noses on some plough till they came to the dreaded Luton Bottom. Crossing this deep "goyle" or dingle, hounds hesitated a little on the further side and gave such of the field who were inclined to negotiate it time to find the only possible crossing. Those who did not care to face the difficulties of the goyle saw no more of the hunt. The hare then took us into Rixtail Moor (she had been crossing a good deal of partly enclosed moorland) and hence she ran the road for a very long distance. I kept the now much reduced field well behind hounds, but had just begun to fear we had pressed them over the point where the

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

hare had left the road, when they turned to the right and once more we were racing on the rough moorland. It seemed certain that the hare was making for the depths of Luscombe Wood, an enormous covert, and the huntsman with one detachment of the field rode for that, while I with the remainder kept as near as possible to hounds, now running hard. A nasty fence caused us almost to lose hounds, such was the pace they were going, but I just caught sight of old black-and-tan Gambler doing his best to catch up the body of the pack outside the wood which hounds never entered.

“ They have gone for Dawlish town,” cried a labourer from a high bank as we swept past him ; and presently one of the field saw them “ miles ahead,” driving up the mound on which Dawlish reservoir is situated. Wire and locked gates in a country then (fourteen years ago) entirely new to us caused loss of time, but when we got up to and beyond the reservoir I saw to my relief the hounds at check not far below, in a large field of wheat. Just as I was going to take hold of them, the huntsman—who had had a terribly rough journey from Luscombe Wood—arrived : he made a bold forward cast and hit off the line at a gate. From here hounds simply flew ; crossing Secmaton Trench, which bothered us all considerably, they raced to Langdon Lodge on the Dawlish and Starcross road, where they came to a decided check. Something was said about a holloa forward, but I heard nothing myself, and feeling sure the hare had thrown up close by, persevered in trying every hedgerow and bit of covert. It was in vain, and I had just given the word for home when a groom, riding bare-backed, galloped up and said he had seen the hare on the Warren, where the golf links are : his was the holloa that had been heard. After such a run as she had given I felt sure that if we did not have the hare, some one else would : so to the utter astonishment of the golfers and the crowd on the sea front of Exmouth just across the Exe, we galloped up to the links and hit off the line in a moment. The hare soon got up under my horse, and I never saw one so black ; she ran as strong as ever, though,

HARE-HUNTING

while the high sandhills and the frequent views hounds got, were all in her favour until we at last pressed her on to the open beach, when we felt sure of her. Hounds, however, had got their heads up, and feeling sure that the hare was dodging among the sandhills they came unwillingly and slowly to the holloa. Eventually she took the water close under my horse : I could have jumped off and caught her easily, but was unwilling to spoil such a run as this by an irregular kill. Nothing we could do availed to make hounds see her : the current was strong, and by the time I realised that they could not be got to follow her, she was out of reach. Boats came out from Exmouth, but were too late to pick her up, and she sank before our eyes. I was greatly annoyed with myself then for not having picked her up when I might have done so.

‘ From Ashwell to the far end of the Warren, where the hare went into the sea, is just over eight miles, but as hounds ran it was very much farther : to Langdon Lodge it was nine miles, allowing for the round by Lindridge and Luton, and as to that point the time was an hour and a quarter, it will be admitted that this was one of the finest runs on record.

‘ These exceptional runs,’ Mr. Webster adds, ‘ happily result almost always in a kill.’

Concerning the manœuvre usually first tried by a hunted hare, he gives a good example :—‘ We were once hunting over Little Haldon, an extensive open moor that marches with Luton Moor, an enclosed area containing boggy brakes which form excellent covert. About 150 yards from the bank enclosing Luton Moor we ran through a small patch of gorse : and on coming to the bank hounds checked a moment, then turned and ran back to the gorse led by a reliable hound named Pleader. I was near enough to see Pleader’s eye, and I knew he was right and was running for blood, so stopped the cry of war’ heel and forbade the huntsman trying over the bank for a minute or two. I heard myself called uncomplimentary names, but Pleader was right. He *almost* had the

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

hare in the gorse : she broke under his nose, raced away up hill, and thanks to the advantage this naturally gave, saved her scut.

‘ Hares will make leaps almost incredible from the open field into the hedge, and will do the same at a gate. They fly to gates to escape the exertion of getting over a fence wherein they know no certain meuse ; as soon as harriers become at all unsteady they will forsake the line and make for the first gate or rail forward—a very bad habit.

‘ The hare’s peculiarity of turning up or down a fence after passing through it instead of going straight away makes running a fox, which does just the reverse, ruinous to harriers. If good harriers are not pressed by horsemen they will at once try up and down the fence : let but one horseman go over before the pack is again settled on the line, and he spoils everything. A steady field makes a steady pack.

‘ Here is a curious fact that may interest you :—There is in our country a certain estate with a very large demesne, and we are only allowed to hunt over an unenclosed portion of the property. The demesne, which is luckily quite on our boundary, is full of hares, but they are very seldom seen out of it. On three occasions I have known hares make straight for this demesne, all three having been found within a few yards of the same spot which is at a considerable distance from the place referred to and, moreover, on the further side of the river Teign. We killed all three, one, by the way, in the river itself, after runs as hard and straight as possible. But why should all these three bucks have been found on that one spot ? It may be conjectured that the gentlemen were tired of the ladies of their own district and came hither in search of variety : but against this must be set the fact that hares are by no means plentiful in the district about the place where the three were found.

‘ Hare-hunting, according to the Almanac, ends on 1st March, but for my own part I like to go on till Lady Day, 25th March, because, as in fox-hunting, the best sport of the season is obtained during February and March. And here I

HARE-HUNTING

may remark that when, after 1st February or thereabouts, you find two hares together, be sure and lay the pack on the line of the one that goes away first, for that is sure to be the buck. It is true that he *may* keep circling round to the doe, but on the other hand he is just as likely to fly to the district whence he came, and may then give a straight run with an exceptional point.'

There be those who maintain that the hare is every whit as resourceful as the fox. Was it not Beckford who attributed to her cunning the hare's legendary connection with witches? A beaten hare will go to ground in drain or rabbit hole: in the *Field* of 15th February 1875 there is record of a ferret having bolted a rabbit from a burrow, which rabbit was quickly followed by a hare which appeared with the ferret clinging to her. Whether harriers had recently been in the neighbourhood does not appear. Mr. Webster once had this same experience. The Haldon got a hare away from a dense woodland known as Black Forest,¹ and after a fine gallop checked close to a house and buildings known as Gulliford. While trying to recover the line an astonished cry of 'A hare, a hare' was heard. The hunted hare had gone to ground in a bank which was being at that moment ferreted by people without guns, and one of the party caught the hare as she bolted (a ferret will bolt a hare in a moment). 'Never,' says Mr. Webster, 'spare a hare that goes to ground; she will do it again on the next opportunity, and the habit is very likely to be hereditary. He also remarks that anything in the shape of an open door offers peculiar attractions to the hunted hare. 'When hounds come to a decided check near buildings of any description, the huntsman should be most careful to try every open door. One may lose hares in all sorts of queer places, stables and outhouses and the like: it is also judicious to look behind anything like boxes or barrels or a pile of faggots. An old aunt of mine once saved a hare from the Eton Beagles by opening a door for her.'

¹ The woodlands in the Haldon country are seldom drawn by foxhounds as they are full of wild fallow deer.

OTTER-HUNTING

THE modern otter is born under a more fortunate star than his ancestor of a century ago. The net is barred, the spear disused, 'tailing' is discountenanced: if his foes cannot kill him by fair means he has nothing to fear from means now deemed foul.

Otter-hunting is an old sport: but there is some evidence to show that, in parts of the country at least, the otter was regarded as vermin the compassing of whose death was the first consideration. This is quite comprehensible when we consider how important a source of food supply in old days was the fish pond or stew maintained by them who dwelt far from sea or river.

'My servant informs me,' wrote Sir Henry Savill, of Sothill, Yorks., to his 'cossin Plompton,' 'that in your country there is a man that kills otters very well: wherefore I have sent him to get him to me for a week. I assure you they do me exceeding much harm in divers places. My folks see them daily, and I cannot kill them: my hounds be not used to them.'¹

This was written on 8th November; the letter is not fully dated, but it seems to be referable to somewhere about 1540-1550. Sir Henry did not, it is evident, look upon the otters as affording opportunity of sport: the 'exceeding much harm' to which he refers can only mean to the fish in river or stew; and, regarding the otters as vermin, he simply wanted them killed down.

In the seventeenth century it would seem that hounds found the otter and the field killed him: says Nicolas Cox:—

¹ *The Plumpton Letters.*

OTTER-HUNTING

‘Remember in the Hunting of the Otter that you and your friends carry your otter spears to watch his vents: for that is the chief advantage and if you perceive where the otter swims under water, then strive to get to a stand before him where he would vent and then endeavour to strike him with your spear: but if you miss, pursue him with the hounds which, if they be good otter hounds and perfectly entered will come chauntering and trailing along by the Riverside and will beat every tree-root, every osier bed and tuft of Bull rushes: nay, sometimes they will take the water and beat it like a spaniel. And by these means the Otter can hardly escape you.’

Thus if you got home with your spear-thrust, there was nothing for the hounds to do: their task had been finished when they found the quarry. For them to hunt in the stream itself would seem to have been the exception.

Cox, of course, falls foul of the otter for his wasteful habits: ‘For greediness he takes more than he knows what to do with.’ The otter’s shortcomings as a housekeeper have always been cast up against him, unfairly as it seems to me. What do we expect of him? Do we require of the hungry otter that he, reckoning the needs of the hour to a mouthful, shall suffer to pass an eight-pound grilse because a two-pound trout would serve his turn? Is he blameworthy for that he, wisely preferring fresh fish, omits to seek out what the carrion crow and his like may have left him of the meal of yesterday?

By the time Somerville wrote, otter-hunting had taken upon itself a form somewhat different; if we read him aright hounds played a more prominent part, though the spear used, as we gather, either to thrust or throw javelin-wise, was always ready to help them. That portion of *The Chace* which describes an otter-hunt is less familiar than the description of hare-hunting, though no whit its inferior in vigour, spirit and directness. It has, however, the demerit of blood-thirstiness. Either the poet entertained for the otter none of the sense of justice and fair play he cherished as the meed of the hare, or

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

he had qualms concerning the legitimacy, in a sporting sense, of the methods employed by the otter-hunter of his day. 'Give the otter a bad name and spear him,' seems to be the keynote of the lines : and he blackened the quarry's character by way of justifying the spear. Truly we had need be impressed with a sense of the otter's iniquity ere we could share the rejoicing when 'wriggling he hangs and grins and bites in vain.'

'This subtle spoiler of the beaver kind,
Far off, perhaps, where ancient alders shade
The deep still pool, within some hollow trunk,
Contrives his wicker couch ; whence he surveys
His long purlieu, lord of the stream, and all
The finny shoals his own. But you, brave youths,
Dispute the felon's claim ; try ev'ry root,
And ev'ry reedy bank : encourage all
The busy-spreading pack, that fearless plunge
Into the flood, and cross the rapid stream.
Bid rocks, and caves, and each resounding shore,
Proclaim your bold defiance ; loudly raise
Each cheering voice, till distant hills repeat
The triumphs of the vale. On the soft sand
See there his seal impress'd ! and on that bank
Behold the glitt'ring spoils, half-eaten fish,
Scales, fins and bones, the leavings of his feast.
Ah ! on that yielding sag-bed, see, once more
His seal I view. O'er yon dank, rushy marsh
The sly goose-footed prowler bends his course,
And seeks the distant shallows. Huntsman, bring
Thy eager pack, and trail him to his couch.
Hark ! the loud peal begins, the clam'rous joy,
The gallant chiding, loads the trembling air.
Ye Naiads fair, who o'er these floods preside,
Raise up your dripping heads above the wave,
And hear our melody. 'Th' harmonious notes
Float with the stream ; and ev'ry winding creek
And hollow rock, that o'er the dimpling flood
Nods pendant ; still improve from shore to shore
Our sweet reiterated joys. What shouts !

OTTER-HUNTING

What clamour loud ! What gay, heart-cheering sounds
Urge through the breathing brass their mazy way !
Not choirs of Tritons glad with sprightlier strains
The dancing billows, when proud Neptune rides
In triumph o'er the deep. How greedily
They snuff the fishy steam, that to each blade
Rank-scenting clings ! See ! how the morning dews
They sweep, that from their feet besprinkling drop
Dispers'd, and leave a track oblique behind.
Now on firm land they range ; then in the flood
They plunge tumultuous ; or thro' reedy pools
Rustling they work their way : no holt escapes
Their curious search. With quick sensation now
The foaming vapour stings ; flutter their hearts,
And joy redoubled bursts from ev'ry mouth,
In laden symphonies. Yon hollow trunk,
That, with its hoary head incurv'd, salutes
The passing wave, must be the tyrant's fort,
And dread abode. How these impatient climb,
While others at the root incessant bay :
They put him down. See, there he dives along !
Th' ascending bubbles mark his gloomy way,
Quick fix the nets, and cut off his retreat
Into the shelt'ring deeps. Ah, there he vents !
The pack plunge headlong, and protruded spears
Menace destruction ; while the troubled surge
Indignant foams, and all the scaly kind
Affrighted hide their heads. Wild tumult reigns,
And loud uproar. Ah, there once more he vents !
See, that bold hound has seiz'd him ; down they sink,
Together lost : but soon shall he repent
His rash assault. See, there escap'd he flies,
Half-drown'd, and clambers up the slipp'ry bank
With ooze and blood distain'd. Of all the brutes,
Whether by nature form'd or by long use,
This artful diver best can bear the want
Of vital air. Unequal is the fight
Beneath the whelming element. Yet there
He lives not long ; but respiration needs
At proper intervals. Again he vents ;

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

Again the crowd attack. That spear has pierc'd
His neck; the crimson waves confess the wound.
Fix'd is the bearded lance, unwelcome guest
Where'er he flies; with him it sinks beneath,
With him it mounts; sure guide to ev'ry foe.
Inly he groans, nor can his tender wound
Bear the cold stream. So! to yon sedgy bank
He creeps disconsolate; his num'rous foes
Surround him, hounds and men. Pierc'd thro' and thro'
On pointed spears they lift him high in air;
Wriggling he hangs, and grins, and bites in vain:
Bid the loud horns, in gaily-warbling strains,
Proclaim the felon's fate; he dies, he dies.
Rejoice, ye scaly tribes, and leaping dance
Above the waves, in sign of liberty
Restor'd; the cruel tyrant is no more.'

Otter-hunting had gone out of fashion in the earlier years of the nineteenth century. It 'was formerly considered excellent sport,' says Daniel by way of introducing his account of the method. He proceeds to say that it 'has still however its staunch admirers, who are apparently as zealous in this pursuit as in any other we read of. In 1796, near Bridgenorth, on the River Ware, four otters were killed; one stood three, another four hours before the dogs and was scarcely a minute out of sight. The hearts, etc., were dressed and eaten by many respectable people who attended the hunt and allowed to be very delicious.' I wonder what that 'etc.' covers.

On the other hand, there were those who held a very poor opinion of it. Mr. T. B. Johnson, who wrote the *Hunting Directory* in 1826, says: 'It is at present but little followed. Of all field amusements otter-hunting is perhaps the least interesting. Foxhounds, harriers, or indeed any kind of hounds, will pursue the otter: though the dog chiefly used for the purpose has been produced by a cross between the southern hound and the water spaniel. Those who have never witnessed otter-hunting, may form a tolerable notion of the business by imagining to the mind a superior duck-hunt.'

OTTER-HUNTING

Ardent otter-hunters will hold this to be evidence in favour of duck-hunting, a sport now forgotten.

That there was 'brave hunting this water dog' in Devon two hundred and fifty years ago, we have on Izaak Walton's authority. Devonshire may claim the honour of possessing the oldest pack of otter-hounds now in existence. Mr. Pode of Slade established in 1825 what is now the Dartmoor pack. The Culmstock was started in 1837 by Mr. W. P. Collier. There were otter-hounds in Cumberland as far back as 1830, when the Rev. Hylton Wyburgh took the mastership of the pack now known as the West Cumberland.

Otter-hunters began to discard the spear eighty years ago : it had been laid aside by Mr. Bulteel and his followers in Devonshire in 1839, in obedience to the feeling that it was not sportsmanlike. By degrees other hunts adopted the same view : in some cases the followers of a pack renounced their spears and left these weapons to the Master and Huntsman, who reserved use of them until hounds held the otter, when he was killed to prevent unnecessary injury to the pack—for the otter's teeth are strong and his bite may disable.

Mr. Grantley Berkeley enjoyed some otter-hunting in the New Forest during the 'fifties and 'sixties : this is his account of a run which ended in a fair kill :—

'The next morning Mr. Radcliffe informed me that his man had tracked three otters, side by side, over some mud, going up stream in the direction of my draw of the day, asserting that no seal of the otter had been there impressed before. I thought this news too good : one otter would have done ; but my host declared he could trust to the truth of the report, and we sallied forth in joyful expectation. I was drawing a sort of back-water adjoining a cover, and, observing both hounds and terriers were busy, I gave the word "to look out, for we were about to find." I had sent on my groom, Thomas Newman, to a shallow some distance off to watch it, when, having hardly said that we were about to find, I heard the most extraordinary noise proceeding from my groom and his

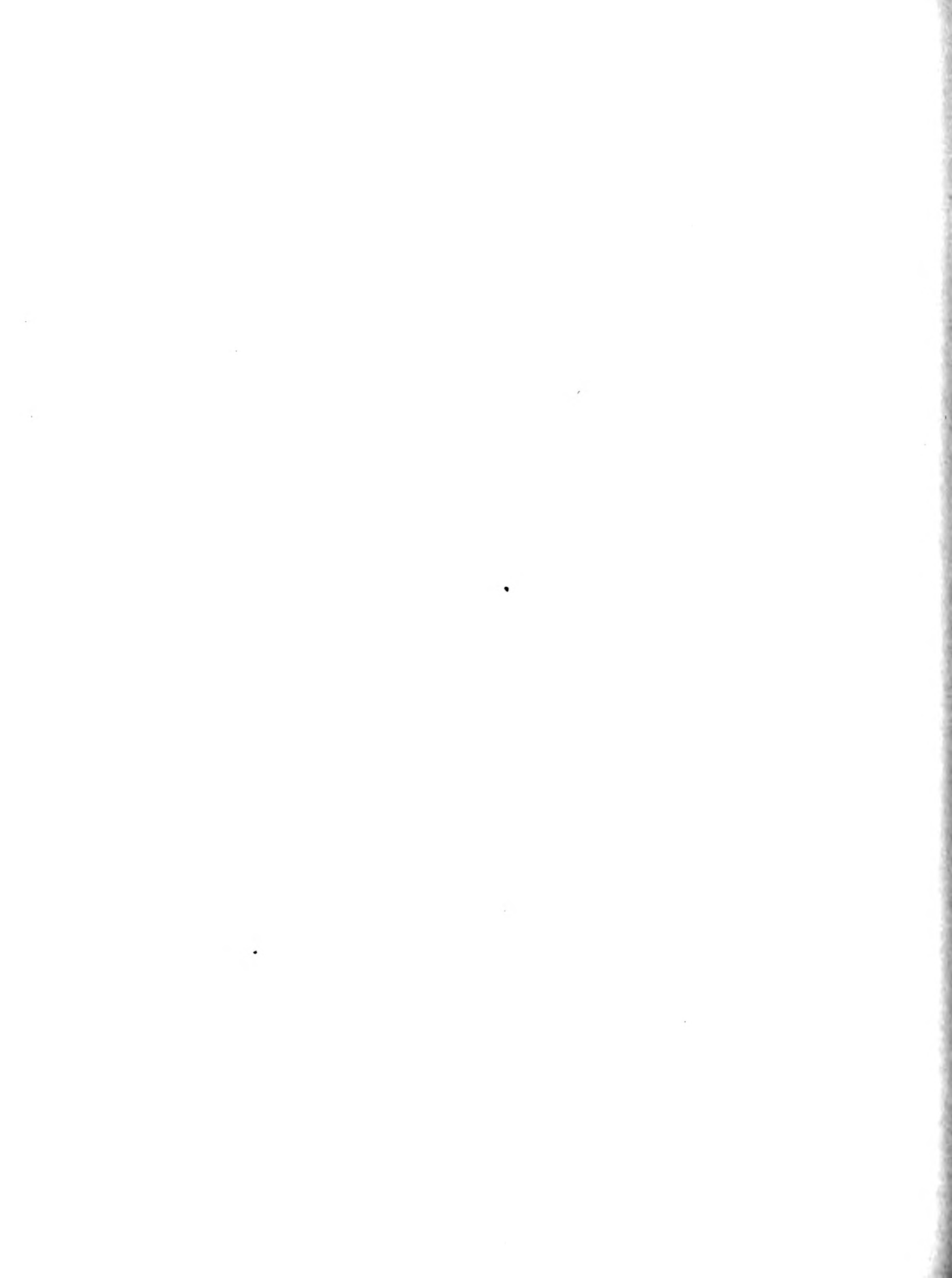
BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

vicinity that could be imagined. The cause of it I give in his own words. He said " he heard me call out that we were about to find, and at the same moment Smike, followed at some distance by a single hound, came running down the side of the stream, evidently on a drag directly towards him." About fifty yards from where he stood, and about four or five paces from the edge of the water, in a swampy spot in the meadow, was a small mass of tangled reeds, briars and bushes, perhaps twenty yards in circumference, or not so much. Right into this little thicket Smike's drag took him, and, to my groom's amazement, out on the grass rolled three otters and Smike all fighting, Smike yelling with fury and pain at the treatment he met with, and the young or three-parts grown otter, whom he had fixed on, screaming in concert, to all of which Newman added his view-halloo and whoop. The row had not lasted a second when hand over hand raced up the old hound, and with a rush knocked Smike and the three otters into the water, but seizing and assisting to kill the one Smike maintained his hold on. Having worried the first otter, I took up the chase of the other two, finding them both, and changing from one to the other occasionally, but at last settling to the old bitch otter. Than the work she cut out for us, I never saw anything more beautiful. About the water meadows there are several streams or rather one stream divided into several; one of these, a very swift but shallow one, ran by the side of a bank, on which was a " plashed " and double-laid blackthorn hedge, and up this stream the otter took her course, with scarce water enough at times to hide her. When the water shoaled too much she crept into the hedge, in which alone the terriers could follow her, and then it was perfect to see the hounds splashing up the water as, gazing into the hedge, they endeavoured to head and nick in upon the otter. When the hounds dashed on to the top of the blackthorns down the otter went again into the stream, and so on till other streams and deeper water were for a time regained. The chase with this old otter, hard at it, lasted an hour and three-quarters, in as

Otter-hunting :
Hounds Marking at a Holt







OTTER-HUNTING

hot and sunny a day in summer as needs be ; and when the pack fairly hunted her down, forced her out of the water, and caught and killed her in a thick hedge, I was nearly run to a stand-still.'

In the 'sixties the propriety of using the spear under any circumstances was challenged, with the result that it was discarded altogether. There are not now hunting many men who have seen a spear used. Few sports have gained so much in popularity as otter-hunting during recent years. In 1892 there were fifteen packs in existence : there are now twenty-three ; and perhaps it is safe to assert that where ten followed otter-hounds twenty years ago, thirty follow now. There was a time, not so long gone, when an intending follower of otter-hounds, anxious to be correctly turned out, received in reply to his inquiry, 'What is the uniform of your hunt?' the eloquent postcard 'Rags' from the M.O.H. Nowadays each hunt has its distinctive uniform, neat and workmanlike.

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING

SHOOTING, as we understand it, dates from Queen Anne's time. In the year 1700 J. Sprint, of his practical knowledge, had given the world a very small book entitled the *Experienc'd Fowler*, from whose pages we obtain a lucid idea of the methods in his day. As Mr. Sprint and his contemporaries used a flint-lock gun, 'with a barrel of five foot and a half, cleverly made taper,' it perhaps goes without saying that a rest was necessary for its efficient use, and shooting birds on the wing was a business demanding some adjustment. Mr. Sprint was not wedded to a five-foot six-inch barrel: he readily accords permission to his readers to use a gun with one six feet long, if any might think it possible to obtain better results therewith. And it is evident that the more ambitious, or muscular, among the brethren were not quite satisfied with that: 'Six foot,' says Mr. Sprint, 'is a sufficient length for the barrel of any piece; all above are unmanageable and tiresome.' One wonders how he would have regarded sportsmen who have an idea that a gun should fit the user, come well up to the shoulder, and who measure its weight in ounces.

With such 'pieces' our seventeenth-century ancestors took the field in pairs in search of wild-fowl: and game being desiered, he who was to take the flying shot planted his rest and levelled his gun 'three yards from the ground, a little inclining to the way you see their heads stand.' Your preparations completed, the other man fired at the birds sitting, and you loosed off 'as soon as ever he . . . has pulled his tricker and flashes in the pan, or at least if you are very near as soon as you hear the report of his piece.' A shoulder shot

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING

might be taken if you could meet the birds 'in the face the way they fly': in which case the sportsman took 'the undermost and shot slaunt-wise through them.'

A century before Mr. Sprint's time the law¹ had enacted that partridges, pheasants, grouse, and hares might not be killed with a gun at all. Discriminating legislators realised that marksman and matchlock made a combination too deadly where sitting game was the mark, and forbade shooting altogether, whether with gun, crossbow, or other weapon.

The 'setting dog' and hawk, the stalking horse or the setting dog and net formed the proper means of taking game, and these methods remained in favour long after men began to shoot flying. With hawking we do not here deal: as regards netting Nicolas Cox² gives instructions how to set about the business. First you had to ascertain where a covey might be found: as a preliminary the sportsman mastered the call of the bird:—

'Being perfect herein, either Mornings or Evenings (all other times being improper) go to their Haunts, and having conveyed yourself into some secret place where you may see and not be seen, listen a while if you can hear the *Partridges* call; if you can answer them again in the Same Note, and as they change or double their Notes, so must you in like manner; thus continue doing until they draw nearer and nearer unto you. Having them in your view, lay your self on your back, and lie as if you were dead without motion, by which means you may count their whole number.

'Having attained to the knowledge of discovering them where they lie, the next thing will be a ready way how to catch them.'

Cox held 'the Driving of Partridges' more delightful than any other method. This involved the use of an engine made in form and fashion of a horse cut out of canvas and stuffed with straw or similar material. Equipped with this artificial horse and his nets the sportsman sought partridges where, by

¹ 1 Jac., c. 27, § 2 (1603-4).

² *The Gentleman's Recreation*, 1636.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

calling, he had ascertained a covey to lie, and pitched his nets down-wind of them. This done, under the cover of the stalking horse, and his face covered with something green or dark blue, the sportsman stalked the partridges carefully lest they took wing, and drove them slowly 'running naturally' to the net.

Possession of a setting dog relieved the sportsman of the necessity for learning to call. Let Cox describe the sport in his own words :—

' Having a Dog thus qualified by Art and Nature, take him with you where *Partridges* do haunt, there call off your Dog, and by some word of encouragement that he is acquainted with, engage him to range, but never too far from you ; and see that he beat his ground justly and even, without casting about, or flying now here, now there, which the mettle of some will do if not corrected and reprov'd. And therefore when you perceive this fault, you must presently call him in with a Hem, and so check him that he dare not do the like again for that day. So will he range afterwards with more temperance, ever and anon looking in his Master's face, as if he would gather from thence whether he did well or ill. If in your Dog's ranging you perceive him to stop on the sudden, or stand still, you must then make in to him, (for without doubt he hath set the *Partridge*) and as soon as you come to him, command him to go nearer ; but if he goes not, but either lies still or stands shaking of his Tail, as who would say, Here they are under my nose, and withal now and then look back ; then cease from urging him further, and take your circumference, walking fast with a careless eye, looking straight before the nose of the Dog, and thereby see how the Covey lie, whether close or straggling.

' Then commanding the Dog to lie still draw forth your net, and prick one end to the ground, and spread your Net all open, and so cover as many of the *Partridges* as you can ; which done make in with a noise, and spring up the *Partridges* ; which shall no sooner rise than they will be entangled in the Net.'

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING

The net afforded facilities for choosing your birds when you had got them. 'If,' says our authority, tactfully combining appeal to our nobler feelings with reminder of material interests, 'you shall let go the old Cock and Hen, it will not only be an act like a Gentleman, but a means to increase your Pastime.'

Shooting on the wing made progress in the early years of the eighteenth century. By the year 1718 the long barrels of a few years earlier had been discarded except for wild-fowl. 'A Piece,' says Giles Jacob,¹ 'of about three foot and a half long in the Barrel, by a more perfect mixture of the Metal and skilful Boring will do more execution in the pursuit of Land fowl than your long guns : and no body is unsensible but it is less Labour and Fatigue to the Bearer.' So far as we can gather from Jacob—a somewhat unsafe guide, as certain passages in his book bear suspicious likeness to passages in Sprint's—the sportsman had not yet acquired the habit of picking his bird : but this improvement was not long to be delayed. Nine years later Mr. Markland produced his poetic discourse on shooting :² his Preface contains evidence that picking one's bird was then quite a new idea in England : also that the practice was not productive of satisfactory results. Having discussed the curious moral effect of a first miss on the whole day's performances (it seems, he says thoughtfully, to result in 'a Disorder of the Animal Spirits occasioned by the Original Disappointment'), he proceeds :—

'I have often wondered why the French, of all Mankind, should alone be so expert at the Gun, I had almost said infallible. It's as rare for a profess'd Marksman of that Nation to miss a Bird as for one of Ours to kill. But, as I have been since informed, they owe this Excellence to their Education. They are train'd up to it so very young, that they are no more surpriz'd or alarm'd with a Pheasant than with a Rattle-Mouse [bat]. The best Field-Philosophers living : for they are always there Masters of their Temper.'

¹ *The Compleat Sportsman*, 1718.

² *Pteryphlegia or the Art of Shooting Flying*, 1727.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

Overcoming the temptation to speculate on the frequency with which marksmen of the day lost their temper under trying circumstances, we proceed to Mr. Markland's poem. An early start was then the rule :—

‘My Friend and I, with hopeful Prospect rose,
And scorn'd the longer Scandal of Repose :
No dull Repast allow'd : our Tackle all
O'er Night prepared, the cheerful Dogs we call :
In a close Pocket snuggs the cordial Dram,
Youth to the Old, and Crutches to the Lame.’

One cannot resist the reflection that the sportsmen would have done more wisely to breakfast before they set out : the cordial dram is not generally considered to improve shooting, particularly if taken under such circumstances. But let that pass. The author's reference to the heels of Frenchmen's boots is scarcely in harmony with his prefatory remarks on the excellence of French marksmanship :—

‘Low—leathern—heeled our lacquer'd Boots are made,
Mounted on tott'ring Stilts raw Frenchmen tread :
Firm Footing an unshaken Level lends ;
But modish Heels are still the *Woodcock's* Friends.
Our Shot of several sorts, half round the Waste,
In Ticking semicircularly plac'd,
Embrac'd and poiz'd us well.

‘No flapping Sleeves our ready Arms controul :
Short Cuffs alone prove fatal to the Fowl.
Nor, arm'd in warm Surtout, we vainly fear
The Sky's inclemency, or Jove severe :
Active and free our Limbs and Muscles are,
Whilst Exercise does glowing warmth prepare.’

A few useful hints follow : the reader is advised not to load his gun overnight, or ‘in the Morn the prime will hiss,’ *i.e.* a miss-fire may result. When priming you were not to put too much powder in the pan, or the gun would hang fire : you were to carry a partridge wing, the feathers serving to clean out the touch-hole. The tow stuffing of an old saddle had uses

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING

for the sportsman: 'No wadding lies so close or drives so fierce.'

Markland does not mention the device suggested by Sprint to 'make even cartridges in moulds like serpents, but with a very thin paper casing,' which prevented the powder getting damp while loading in wet weather: nor does he follow the earlier author in recommending shot cartridges fashioned to make the pellets 'come out closer and more level.'

Censorious critics may take exception to Markland's conception of rhythm, rhyme and metre, but he throws interesting light on the ideas accepted in his time:—

'There sprung a Single Partridge—ha! She's gone!
Oh! Sir, you'd Time enough, you shot too soon;
Scarce twenty yards in open Sight!—for Shame!
Y' had shatter'd Her to Pieces with right Aim!
Full forty yards permit the Bird to go,
The spreading Gun will surer Mischief sow:
But, when too near the flying Object is,
You certainly will mangle it, or miss;
And if too far, you may so slightly wound,
To kill the Bird, and yet not bring to Ground.

'There, if the Goodness of the Piece be prov'd,
Pursue not the fair mark till far remov'd:
Raise the mouth gently from below the Game,
And readily let fly at the first Aim.
But, without Aim admit no Random Shoot:
'Tis just to judge before you execute.'

Markland, it will be observed, took deliberate and careful aim at his bird. 'Bird,' mark it, for shooting men had now arrived at the stage when they chose one of the covey, and held it unsportsmanlike to do otherwise:—

'See, *Jewell* stands a Point:—A Covey!—Stay,
And take this sober caution by the way:
When in a Cloud the scatt'ring Birds arise,
And various Marks distract the Choosing Eyes,
That Choice confine to One Particular:
Most who confide in fooling Fortune, err.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

Young greedy Novices, who often hope
By random Fate to pick a Number up,
Amaz'd, behold none bounding on the Ground,
Whilst many a Bird drags off her mortal Wound,
Experienc'd Sportsmen will of one make sure,
Rest honestly content of one secure.'

From the preface we have learned that the gunner missed that One Particular more often than not : so it is all the more to Markland's credit that he should preach this doctrine so resolutely.

'Jewell,' we may take it, was a setter. Pointers were introduced from Spain early in the eighteenth century, but a setter of some kind had been used in England for at least two centuries.

These lines illustrate an interesting point in the shooting ethics of the period :—

· Halloo—Halloo—See, see from yonder Furze
The Lurchers have alarm'd and started Puss !
Hold ! What d'ye do ? Sure you don't mean to Fire !
Constrain that base, ungenerous Desire,
And let the Courser and the Huntsman share
Their just and proper Title to the Hare.
Let the poor Creature pass and have fair Play
And fight the Prize of Life out her own way.
The tracing Hound by Nature was design'd
Both for the Use and Pleasure of Mankind ;
Form'd for the Hare, the Hare too for the Hound :
In Enmity each to each other bound ;
Then he who dares by different means destroy
Than Nature meant, offends 'gainst *Nature's Law*.'

That shooting hares was illegal was a detail of which Markland was apparently unconscious. The protecting clause in James I.'s Act, by the way, was only repealed in 1807.¹ The statute had long fallen into abeyance, and in the early years of the nineteenth century huge bags of hares were made.

¹ 48 Geo. II. c. 9 §1.

Old-Time Partridge Shooting





PARTRIDGE SHOOTING

In 1804 Lord Craven killed 1600 during a few days in Ashdown Park, Berks. In 1807 upwards of 6000 were shot on Sir Thomas Goode's lands in Suffolk. This seems to have been done in the farmers' interest. Arthur Young, writing of a visit to Suffolk in 1784,¹ says that Mr. Grose had been accustomed to cultivate carrots on his farm at Capel St. Andrews, but his crops were so pillaged by the enormous number of hares that he was 'determined to sow no more.' Preservation of the hares 'nursed up a breed of rabbits which add to the evil.'

Partridge shooting continued very much as it had been in Markland's time till within living memory. No doubt the marksmanship gradually improved, but as nobody thought it worth while to leave for posterity a diary showing how many shots he fired and how many birds he killed during each of a series of seasons, we can only take improvement for granted. Aspiring game shots did not suffer from lack of printed assistance: various books on Shooting Flying were published during the eighteenth century, and at least one after, the latest I have seen being Thomas's *Guide* (1809), which included Instruction to Attain the Art. Practice at swallows was recommended by some. Thomas considered a course of sparrow shooting better preparation for the field.

A 14-bore gun was generally used. At a later period sportsmen had taken advantage of the reduction in length of barrel to try larger bores, for Mr. Lemon, 'the most able Park and Gamekeeper,' who wrote an undated tract on shooting during the later years of the century, tells us that there is 'not the utility in a wide bore some sportsmen use,' and it should not exceed 'the size called fifteens,' the barrel not more than thirty-eight inches long.

Particulars of bags made in the days of long stubbles, tall hats and Joe Mantons—for a long period Joe Manton and game gun were almost interchangeable terms—may be of interest. The *Sporting Magazine* of 1803, among the 'returns

¹ *Annals of Agriculture*, vol. ii.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

of the best gentlemen shots on the first day of September, gives the following :—

‘ Mr. Coke bagged with his own gun 22 brace of partridges at Holkham : General Lennox brought home 14 brace at Goodwood. Lord Fitzharris, on a visit to the Earl of Pembroke at Wilton in Wiltshire, brought down 13 brace before breakfast, and going out again in the course of the day he made up the number to 20½ brace.’ The best bag recorded for that ‘ First ’ was the Hon. Thomas Coventry’s 28½ brace in Gloucestershire. On 1st September 1810 Lord Kingston shot 41½ brace to his own gun at Heydon, having undertaken to kill 40 brace.

Single-barrelled guns appear to have been almost universally used at this time. Colonel Thornton, when on his tour in Scotland¹ used a double-barrelled gun, but his opinion of it was not a high one. On 15th September ‘ I gave up my double-barrel gun for the season : and here I must remark that I look upon all double barrels as trifles rather nick nacks than useful.’² When such a gun was used the fact was deemed worthy of remark, if we may judge from this paragraph in the *Sporting Magazine* of 1803 :—

‘ On the 5th of September Mr. John Walton, gamekeeper to Henry Blundell, Esq., of Ince, went out with a double-barrelled gun, attended by one dog, and in the course of the day killed 22½ brace of partridges.’

A few years later a ‘ thoughtless Propensity to kill *all the game* possible ’ seemed ‘ to mark a new era in shooting.’ ‘ This Rage for Destruction presents itself in the Shape of a Struggle for exhibiting the largest number of certain *Animals* to be extirpated within a *few Hours*.’ The bag made by Lord Rendlesham and party during the last week of the season in 1807 is cited as an example : it comprised 3775 head.

The standard by which bags were tried in those days was

¹ *A Sporting Tour*, 1804. Daniel (*Rural Sports*, vol. ii. p. 270) mentions 1784 as the year in which the expedition was made.

² Double-barrelled guns had been made in Charles II.’s time, *vide* Duke of Portland’s MSS. (*Hist. MSS. Comm.*), vol. ii. p. 299.

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING

a very modest one by comparison with modern times. In 1811 at Holkham, 'when Earl Moira and several other Shots of Distinction were down on a visit to Mr. Coke . . . *six days* produced the following Enormous list of Slaughter, viz. Pheasants 264, Partridges 314, Woodcocks 29, Snipes 46, Hares 283, Rabbits 371. Total Killed 1307' (Daniel).

The 'enormous list of slaughter' would no doubt have been larger, had it not been that 'a Royal Duke was one of the destructive Corps.' And His Royal Highness was an indifferent shot. 'His return, or rather the return made for him, was of a *different* kind, viz. :—

Killed of game,	0	
Wounded in the legs,	1	<i>Foot-marker</i> slightly.
Wounded in the face,	1	<i>Groom</i> severely.
Wounded on the head of a Friend,	1	<i>Hat</i> .
Ditto on the left Rump,	1	<i>Horse</i> .

As regards proportion of kills to shots fired in the earlier decades of the century, the remarkable shooting journal kept by Lord Malmesbury for forty seasons, 1798 to 1840, throws light on this point. Lord Malmesbury during this period killed 38,475 head, having fired 54,987 shots. His bag included 10,744 partridges, 6320 pheasants, 4694 snipe, 1080 'cock, 5211 hares, 17,417 rabbits. The Hon. George Grantley Berkeley estimates that Lord Malmesbury walked 36,200 miles during the forty seasons : and adds that he fired away about 750 lbs. of powder and 4 tons of shot.

On 9th December 1811 the Gamekeepers of Suffolk held their annual meeting at Bury to present a large silver powder-flask 'to the keeper who should produce the certificates for the greatest quantity of Hares, Pheasants, and Rabbits *shot at* as well as *killed* during any six Days from the 8th October to the 8th December.' Richard Sharnton won the prize : his list averaged three guns and his extent of preserve 4000 acres :—

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

	Killed	Missed
Cock Pheasants,	378	199
Hen „	51	33
Partridges,	506	301
Hares,	177	94

This same Sharnton also produced an account of the vermin he had destroyed during the preceding twelve months. It included 22 foxes(!), 446 stoats, and 167 'hawks of all kinds': he also killed 7 'Wild cats,' but we may take leave to doubt whether these were not domestic strays from the path of virtue.

In 1811 Mr. G. Clark of Worlingham, Suffolk, backed himself to kill 47 birds in fifty shots: he killed 59 in sixty shots, having missed the forty-ninth bird.

Forsyth's percussion system was invented in 1808, and a percussion gun was successfully tested against a flint-lock; but we were ever slow to adopt novelties, and percussion guns only began to come into general use during the 'twenties, copper caps having been invented about 1825.¹ Some old hands remained faithful to the flint-lock long after it had been discarded by the majority. Sir Richard Sutton was one of these conservative sportsmen: his fidelity, however, to the old style of gun was, says the late Mr. Corrance, 'a mere freak.'

The introduction of the percussion gun made no difference in the size of bags. It was regarded as unbecoming to sell game² in those days, and what the sportsman did not want for his own house was given away. Large bags were made on occasion, but such were usually the outcome of wagers. One of the most notable of these was the match, in October 1823, between Lord Kennedy shooting at Monreith in Wigtownshire against Mr. William Coke shooting at Holkham, who should make the largest bag in two days. Lord Kennedy got between

¹ Messrs. Eley made waterproof caps in 1837.

² The London market, says Daniel (*Rural Sports*, supp. vol., 1813), was principally supplied by poachers; the prices given were so high that poaching was very profitable, and the encounters between these men and the gamekeepers only too frequently had fatal results.

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING

40 and 50 brace and Mr. Coke 93 brace on the first day : on the second their bags were $93\frac{1}{2}$ and 96 brace respectively, an attempt having been made by Lord Kennedy to kill 100 brace. Sir William Maxwell says that his father, over whose land Lord Kennedy shot, declared nothing would induce him to allow another match on his ground : it was 'strewn with cripples' for days after. The usual sportsmanlike rule, strictly observed in these times, never to let a wounded bird escape, was evidently set aside for this match.

Mr. Tharp, owner of Chippenham Park, made a bag of 99 birds one day in October 1826. He began at 8 A.M., using one dog and one gun : he was so knocked up at three o'clock that he could not go on and complete his 50 brace.

The best partridge shooting in the days of William IV. was in the turnips. The swede had been introduced, and swedes sown broadcast provided much better cover than the roots sown by drill at a later day. In the later 'fifties reaping machines came into use and steadily ousted scythe and reaping-hook, till long stubbles became a thing of the past. The invention of the loading-rod was a great improvement, enabling the muzzle-loader to be recharged much more rapidly than of old. Colonel J. E. Goodall has been kind enough to give me a description of this implement which has now, apparently, been almost forgotten. It was made of stout Malacca cane, was two or three inches longer than the gun-barrel and two-thirds the diameter of the bore : flat at one end and carrying a round or flattened ball at the other. Its superiority over the ramrod lay in its greater strength and convenience. When the ramrod was used, the shooter after each discharge had to stop and reload, resting the butt on his boot-toe or on the ground, and restore the ramrod to its place : in wet or snow, moreover, the dirt on the heel-plate was transferred to the shoulder. The 'loading-rod' or 'shooting-stick' was much stronger than the ramrod, which was liable to break if not carefully handled, and when it was used the shooter held his gun firmly in his left hand while he rammed home the wads with his right, without

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

stopping to rest the butt on the ground. The rod was carried in a leather socket fastened by a lug to a button sewn at a convenient height on the coat.

This innovation brought a change in the style of partridge shooting. In ramrod days dogs dropped to the shot, and nobody thought of advancing till the gun had been recharged. Soon after the loading-rod came into use, the second gun carried by a loader was introduced, and the pause to recharge after a shot was abandoned, the advance being continuous.

Pointer and setter held their own until the appearance of the breech-loader: guns on this principle had been made for twenty years before they reached a stage of perfection that gave them claim on the shooting man's notice. The *Field* trials in 1858-1859 demonstrated the superiority of the breech-loader (pin-fire) in all respects save penetration, wherein the muzzle-loader had about five per cent. the advantage. Central-fire guns came into use in the 'sixties.

Driving came into fashion about 1860. The system was fiercely denounced by the old school, but it steadily gained in popularity. The earliest detailed bag obtained by driving I can find is that on General Hall's shooting Weston Colville, near Newmarket. The party consisted of nine guns; and five days' driving, 8th to 12th January 1858 inclusive, produced a bag of 2155 birds. The first day's total was the smallest, 327 birds, but it was blowing a hurricane: the last was the heaviest, 724, shot in a high wind. In January 1868 General Hall had another shoot of four days, which produced a bag relatively heavier, namely 1940 birds, killed by nine guns. The largest individual bag on one day was 51½ brace killed by Lord Huntingfield on the 28th. Lord Huntingfield had also the largest total for the four days, 162 brace.¹

An extraordinary bag was made by the late Maharajah Duleep Singh at Elveden in September 1876. Shooting on nine days between the 1st and 15th inclusive, he killed to his

¹ *Field*, 1863.

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING

own gun 1265 brace of partridges, his heaviest bag being made on the 8th, when he killed 780 birds on Hall Farm, Eriswell: these were hand-reared birds; shot walking and driving. The Maharajah—one of the quickest shots in England—used a little over 1000 cartridges to make this bag of 390 brace.

At Elveden in 1885 three guns, shooting on fifteen days in September, killed 6509 birds ($3254\frac{1}{2}$ brace): the 23rd yielded the heaviest bag, 428 brace. Some very heavy bags have been made on Mr. Arthur Blyth's Essex shootings in the parishes of Elmdon, Heydon, and Chrishall: in one day, season 1898-1899, 1076 birds (seven guns), the record for that season in England. This was nearly equalled in the following season, when a day's driving (seven guns) produced 1021 birds. Some very heavy bags have been made at The Grange, Alresford, Hants, one of the finest shootings, owned by one of the finest shots, in England. In 1877 the bag was 11,015 partridges: in 1897 it was 9102. A wonderful bag was made one day in November of the year last named, when $730\frac{1}{2}$ brace were killed.

No man has better described the modern partridge drive than Mr. Stuart Wortley from his shooting stool:—

' . . . Again your thoughts fly off; to the tropical marsh and the snorting rush of the wounded rhino through the reeds; to your shares in the new drifts in Mashonaland, and their possible value; to the horse that failed by a short head to land the "1000 to 30, twice" that might have saved you; to the dire confusion following, and your flight by reason of this to Afric's coral strand; to the cares and complications, the duns and dilemmas of London life. And as these almost bring you back to consciousness, a fresher gust of breeze sweeps down the fence, and—"Hold up those birds there, on the left; hold 'em up, hold 'em up!" The clear voice of Marlowe, prince of partridge-drivers, ringing out from the down-wind side, the crack of his whip, and the rattle of his horse's feet tell you that he is already round and into the

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

turnips, and with a sharp whirring rattle, like the flutter of a moth's wing in a cardboard box, three birds are over the fence on your left, and almost on you before you see them. Up and round you swing, killing one stone dead, but the second was too far, and they are gone. Involuntarily you look at your neighbour, a man there is no deceiving, for you know you were caught napping, and ought to have killed one of those in front of you, and the little half-sarcastic glance out of the corner of his right eye, though he never moves his head, tells you he saw it all.

' "Over, gentlemen—over the right!" is now the cry, and with a whirr that is almost a roar, a big lot breaks all over the fence to your right and in front. Now thoroughly awake, you kill three neatly, quickly followed by a smart right and left—one in front and one behind—at a brace that come straight at you, immediately followed by misses with both barrels at one hanging along the fence and inclined to go back over the beaters. You strike him underneath with the second, he winces, rises a little, and just as he seems to turn is crumpled up dead by the professor on your left, a beautiful long cross shot, and you are fain to touch your hat and acknowledge a clean wipe. But now they come thick, and being just angry enough, you settle into form; for though your left arm feels like iron, and your grip on the fore-end like a vice, yet your actions are getting the looseness and your style the freedom that good form, confidence, and lots of shooting inspire, and you begin to "play the hose upon them" properly. Here and there a miss, sometimes two running, generally poking shots at birds which have passed close by while you were changing guns, and which somehow baffle you against the rising stubble behind. Why, you don't know, but you miss three or four in the same place and in the same way, though otherwise you are "all right."

' A great big lot, three or four coveys packed together, pours out at the upper end over the left hand, and, swinging round in the wind, heads straight down the line of guns.

Grouse Driving



PARTRIDGE SHOOTING

Here they come, streaming high and fast, getting a broadside from each of the men on your left. "One—two" with your first gun, "three—four" with your second—the last a beauty, and as they come clattering down like cricket balls about the head of your right-hand neighbour, you feel you have done your duty.

'A hare leaps through a run in the fence bottom, sits foolishly with ears laid back for a second, and then dashes for it past you. Let her go, she will do to breathe the farmer's greyhounds in February; "here's metal more attractive," for birds are still coming. But the whimpering of your retriever at the close view of the forbidden fur, and the consequent objurgations of the keeper behind, sufficiently distract you to make you snap at and miss an easy bird in front with your first, and turn and fiercely drive it into him much too close with your second.

"D—n the hare," you mutter aloud as you change your gun; but the men are getting near, you hear the whish and rustle of the flags, a few more desultory lots come screaming over, and pretty it is, looking down the line, to see them drop out as they pass, for the performers on either side of you are picked from the best in England. A few more "singletons" to each gun, all killed but one, at which four barrels are fired, and which towers far away back.

"Anything to pick up this side, gentlemen?" sings out Marlowe; in another minute he and his horse come crashing through the gap, the white smocks and flags are peeping through unforeseen holes in the fence, all the dogs are loose and ranging far and wide, the guns and loaders scattered, picking up in all directions, and the drive of the season is over.

'Seventy-five brace in the single drive, of which forty birds you can honestly claim, having laid their corpses in a fair row ere they are hurled by the old pensioner into his sack, and you find yourself shouted, whistled, nay, sworn at, to get on to the next drive.'

The red-leg was first introduced into this country by

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

Charles II., who turned out several pair near Windsor. It is said that the experiment failed, though some of the birds, or their descendants, were seen for a few years afterwards.

Daniel says: 'The late Duke of Northumberland preserved many, in hopes of their increasing upon his manors: but the late Earl of Rochford and Marquis of Hertford have been at the most expense and trouble to establish them in this country: both these noblemen had not only numbers of the birds sent over from France, but also imported many thousands of their eggs, which were hatched under *Hens* and set at liberty at a proper age: by this means there are now plenty of the *red* birds upon the latter nobleman's estate near Orford in Suffolk.'

Lord Rochford's experiment was less successful: they increased, but did not remain upon his property—St. Osyth, coveys having been found some miles therefrom, presumably having wandered in search of more congenial soil. Daniel, in 1777, found a covey of fourteen within two miles of Colchester, and he remarks that for half an hour they baffled the exertions of a brace of good pointers to make them rise from the thick turnips. He also remarks upon their propensity for going to ground in rabbit burrows when wounded.

The red-leg nowhere gained much favour during the first half of the century: the belief that it drove away the English bird, added to its pedestrian habit, made it unpopular. On some manors the eggs were destroyed whenever found until driving became fairly established: then its merits began to receive recognition again. 'Of late,' says a writer in 1861, 'it has been a practice among some manorial proprietors to encourage the French or red-legged partridge in our island . . . it is found to thrive well.'

PARTRIDGE SHOOTING

THE FIRST OF SEPTEMBER

Loiterer, arise! the morn hath kept
For thee her orient pearls unwept;
Haste, and take them, while the light
Hangs on the dew-locks of the night.
See! Aurora throws her fair
Fresh tinted colours through the air:
Come forth! come forth! 'tis very sin
And profanation to keep in!
There 's joy and gladness in the skies,
Loiterer, from thy couch arise!

Our life is short, our moments run
Swift as the coursers of the Sun;
And, like the vapour or the rain,
Once lost, can ne'er be traced again:
Each flower hath wept, and eastward bow'd:
The skylark, far above the cloud
To hymn his song of praise is fled,
And all the birds their matins said;
There 's joy and gladness in the skies,
Loiterer, from thy couch arise!

Haste, ere the sun hath drunk the dews
Boon Nature to her banquet woos;
Around the smiling field no more
Are waving with their yellow store.
Homeward bears the loaded wain
The golden glories of the plain!
And nut-brown partridges are seen
Gliding among the stubble screen:
There 's joy and gladness in the skies,
Loiterer, from thy couch arise!

J. W. C., *Sporting Magazine*, 1834.

GROUSE SHOOTING

‘SHOOTING Grouse after Red Deer,’ says Christopher North, ‘is for a while, at first, felt to be like writing an anagram in a lady’s album after having given the finishing touch to a tragedy or epic poem.’

The genial Professor of Moral Philosophy included grouse shooting among his *Recreations*, but in his old age he took a hint from Daniel, who says : ‘ Upon the hills where a *horse* can travel this is a noble diversion : to be undertaken otherwise demands constant and hard labour, for the shooter is, during the course of the day, *ascending*, that is, if he finds a *brood* on the top of one eminence they will sweep over the valley, until they reach the summit of another, up which the sportsman has to climb : in pursuing these birds when the Dog stands, should the Grouse erect their heads and run it is a sign, either from wet or some other cause, that they will not lie well that day, and the Sportsman has small chance of getting a shot, but by running and heading them.’

‘ Grouse ’ shooting conducted on the principles indicated in the last words would partake somewhat of the nature of hard labour.

I can find no description of grouse shooting earlier than that given by Colonel Thornton, which refers to 1784.¹ The Colonel enjoyed his sport on terms very different from those which grew up during the nineteenth century. He camped out where he listed, flew his hawks, shot and fished where and when it seemed good to him, without let or hindrance. If he asked leave he does not mention the formality : for formality it was

¹ *A Sporting Tour.*

GROUSE SHOOTING

in those days when Southron visitors to the North were so rare.

Thus the Colonel on his sport at Raits on 14th September :—

‘ We rose early, took our breakfast and, having some letters to write, I detained Mr. Drighorn, whom I hoped to have persuaded that all business, at the distance of two hundred miles, should give way to the casting over fresh moors, and plenty of game : for I submit to sportsmen, whether there is not as much pleasure in trying fresh moors as in any other amusement.’

Again :—

‘ Of game I found an immense quantity, and I am convinced could have killed any number : indeed I never shot better nor killed so many, all our nets and my ammunition pocket being crammed full. At last I drove in the broods among some large junipers, certainly the most capital and luxurious of all shooting ; this tempted me to take a double shot and I killed both. Humanity then cried stop, would you destroy the whole race ? No. I slung my gun and contemplating found Crosly, who was looking again for the goshawk. I had thrown her out a wounded old moorgame cock which she had not seen : I then threw her out a strong poult which to my surprise she raked with ease and carried it into the junipers.’

Contrary to his custom, Colonel Thornton omits to say what his bag totalled on this day. He and his friends were usually content with five or six brace per gun per day, a few more being killed by the falcons.

Bags which would be considered good measured by modern standards were occasionally made a century ago : ‘ To show the *abundance*,’ says Daniel, ‘ rather than the *exploit* itself (which by a sportsman, must be hoped never will be repeated), the Earl of Strathmore’s Gamekeeper was matched for a considerable sum to shoot *forty brace* of moor game in the course of the 12th of August, upon his Lordship’s moors in Yorkshire : he performed it with great ease, shooting by two o’clock *forty-three brace* : at eight o’clock in the morning owing to a thick

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

fog, he had only killed three birds, and the odds ran much against him : however the day cleared up by eleven, and the work of slaughter went on rapidly.'

Robert Lascelles in *Angling, Shooting and Coursing* (1815) gives this bag as $42\frac{1}{2}$ brace, and adds that the keeper, James Crondace by name, used three brace of pointers and six double guns, 'which he fired in almost continuous succession.'

'In 1801 a Gentleman in Invernesshire shot *fifty-two* brace of moor game in one day, never killing a bird sitting or more than one bird at a time.'

Bowes Moor, the property of Lord Strathmore referred to, was let at a later date. From the following letter addressed by Squire Osbaldeston to Mr. Budd, it would appear that any man could purchase the right to shoot over the moor, in common with others, for £20 for the season. Having conceived the 'fancy to see the fun at Bowes,' the Squire prevailed upon two friends, Messrs. Inman and Wilson, to join him ; and thus he describes that 'Twelfth' : the date is believed to be 1828 :—

'I walked up to the public-house where I was to sleep. This was about ten o'clock, but I found such a noise and smoking, that I did not go to bed until half-past eleven, and rose again at one o'clock as we had nine miles to ride to Bowes-moor. I never slept a wink, rose at one and started at two. We arrived at our post at half-past three, but could not see to shoot. There were several parties lying near us watching for the light, and we nearly all started together. It put me in mind of what one reads of a storming party springing from the trenches. Owing to Wood's delay (in the night I may call it) we were obliged to leave him behind and shoot with any of the dogs that would follow. Inman and I and Wood contrived so badly that neither he nor Wilson found us till six o'clock, and would have lost us altogether, if we had not beaten back on the same line we began. I thought at first we should kill nothing, but I ended the day with bagging 22 brace ; no other man that I could hear of killing above $12\frac{1}{2}$ brace. I hardly

GROUSE SHOOTING

ever shot so well—I killed seven or eight quite out of all distance. It was quite a scramble ; birds flying all directions, men swearing and dogs howling from the whip. I walked from half-past three until six at night, when we gave up—not a bird to be found. The birds were as big as old ones and very wild. The day also was wild—wind and showers. The birds got up at sixty to one hundred yards off at times.’

But let us return to Scotland and trace the rise of grouse shooting as a fashion before we go farther. ‘When I first trod the heather, gun in hand,’ wrote Captain Horatio Ross in 1862,¹ ‘letting shootings in the Highlands was almost unknown. I think the first shooting quarter ever let was Glen Dye in Kincardineshire (extent about 36,000 acres) : for this the late Lord Panmure, then the Hon. William Maule, gave £150 a year. This gentleman was the proprietor of immense moors in Forfarshire which marched with Glen Dye, but so great was his kindness and so extended his hospitality, that his own 200,000 or 300,000 acres did not suffice for all the friends to whom, to the last hour of his life (some eight or nine years since) he *gratuitously* gave sport, and he for several years rented Glen Dye that he might still further oblige his friends.’

Captain Ross refers to the ‘forty-eight consecutive seasons that I have shot on the moors of Scotland’ ; his first season, therefore, would have been 1813.

Mr. Barclay of Ury, famed as a pedestrian, took some 60,000 acres in Inverness-shire soon after Lord Panmure took Glen Dye ; and for these he paid, Captain Ross thought, only £50 a year. Mr. Barclay was followed as tenant by the Duke of Bedford, who paid £300 ; and Captain Ross, who succeeded the Duke, held the shooting for five years at £400 a year. In 1862 the shooting was rented at £1000, ‘but a deer forest has been formed, the grazings of which are worth about £300. The actual shooting rent has, however, risen in my memory from £50 to £700.’ The cause of this rise in rents is easily explained : in the earlier decades of the nineteenth century

¹ Letter to the *Field*.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

travelling was slow and expensive, and the Highlands were, comparatively speaking, little known. For a long time after the first shootings were rented, moreover, the Highland land-owner considered it *infra dig.* to let a moor.

Here is a characteristic passage from Christopher North, an unconventional votary of what had at this time, 1842, become a fashionable sport :—

‘ . . . But let us inspect Brown Bess. Till sixty, we used a single barrel. At seventy we took to a double ;¹ —but dang detonators—we stick to the flint. “ Flint,” says Colonel Hawker, “ shoots strongest into the bird.” A percussion-gun is quicker, but flint is fast enough ; and it does, indeed, argue rather a confusion than a rapidity of ideas, to find fault with lightning for being too slow. With respect to the flash in the pan, it is but a fair warning to ducks, for example, to dive if they can, and get out of the way of mischief. It is giving birds a chance for their lives, and is it not ungenerous to grudge it ? When our gun goes to our shoulder, that chance is but small ; for with double-barrel Brown Bess, it is but a word and a blow,—the blow first, and long before you could say Jack Robinson, the garcock plays thud on the heather. But we beg leave to set the question at rest for ever by one single clencher. We have killed fifty birds—grouse—at fifty successive shots—one bird only to the shot. And mind, not mere pouts—cheepers—for we are no chicken-butchers—but all thumpers—cocks and hens as big as their parents, and the parents themselves likewise ; not one of which fell *out of bounds* (to borrow a phrase from the somewhat silly though skilful pastime of pigeon-shooting), except one that suddenly soared halfway up to the moon, and then

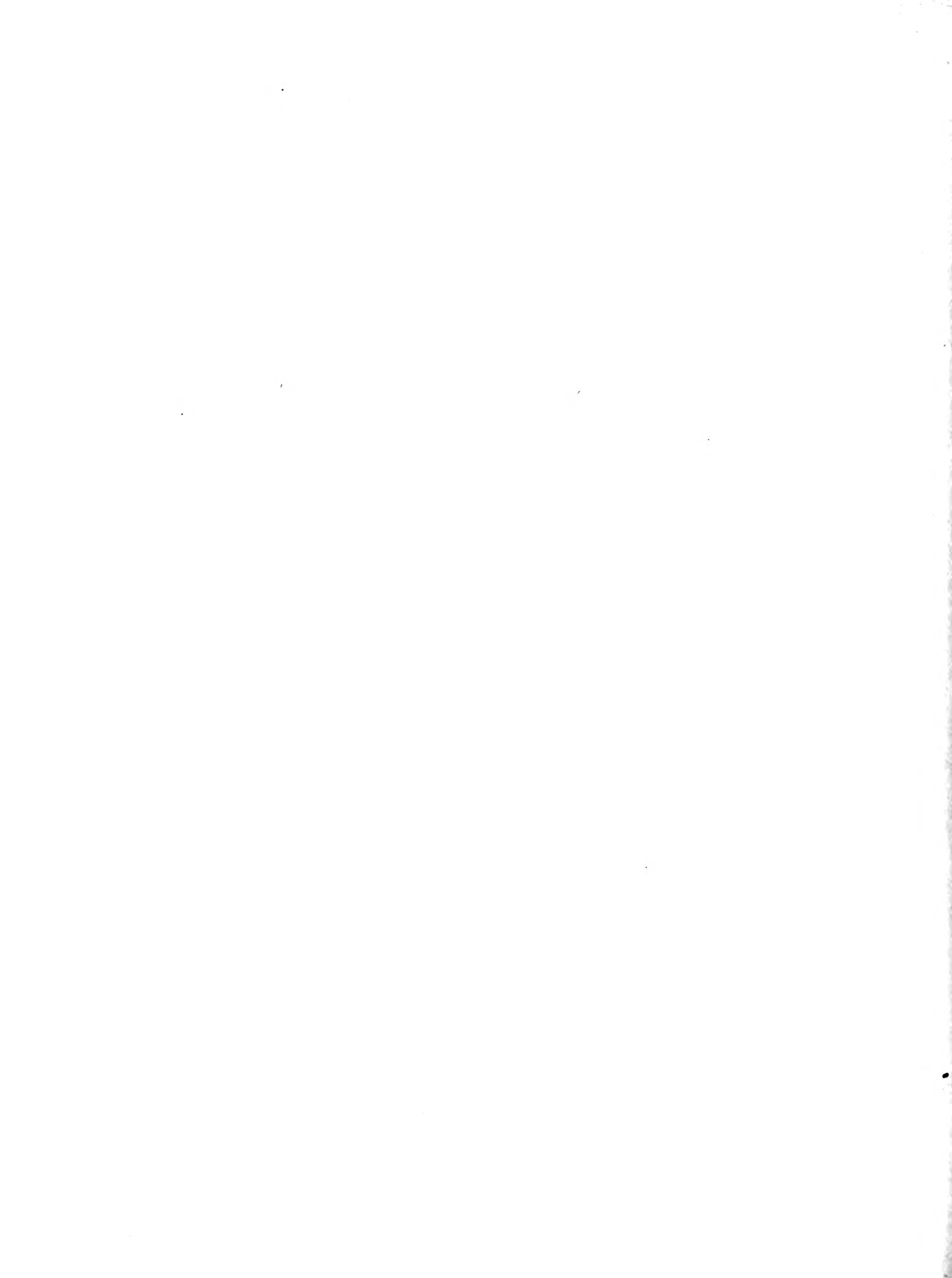
‘ Into such strange vagaries fell
As he would dance,’

and tumbled down stone-dead into a loch. Now, what more

¹ Professor John Wilson was born in 1785 ; he was therefore about fifty-seven years old when this was written. He died in 1854.—(*Dict. of Nat. Biography.*)

Grouse over Dogs





GROUSE SHOOTING

could have done a detonator in the hands of the devil himself? . . .

‘But let us off to the Moor! Piro! Ponto! Basta! to your paws, and O’Bronte, unfurl your tail to heaven. Pointers! ye are a noble trio. White, O Ponto! art thou as the foam of the sea. Piro! thou tan of all tans! red art thou as the dun-deer’s hide, and fleet as he while thou rangest the mountain brow, now hid in heather, and now re-appearing over the rocks. Waur hawk, Basta!—for finest scented though be thy scarlet nostrils, one bad trick alone hast thou; and whenever that grey wing glances from some pillar-stone in the wilderness, headlong goest thou, O lawless negro! But behave thyself to-day, Basta! and let the kestrel unheeded sail or sun herself on the cliff. As for thee, O’Bronte! the sable dog with the star-bright breast, keep thou like a serf at our heels, and when our course lies over the fens and marshes, thou mayest sweep like a hairy hurricane among the flappers, and haply, to-day, grip the old drake himself, and with thy fan-like tail proudly spread in the wind, deposit at thy master’s feet, with a smile, the monstrous mallard.

‘But in what direction shall we go, callants—towards what airt shall we turn our faces? Over yonder cliffs shall we ascend, and descend into Glen-Creran, where the stony regions that the ptarmigan love melt away into miles of the grousey heather, which, ere we near the salmon-haunted Loch so beautiful, loses itself in woods that mellow all the heights of Glen Ure and Fasnacloigh with silvan shades, wherein the cushat coos, and the roe glides through the secret covert? Or shall we away up by Kinloch-Etive, and Melnatorran, and Mealgayre, into the Solitude of Streams, that from all their lofty sources down to the far distant Loch have never yet brooked, nor will they ever brook, the bondage of bridges, save of some huge stone flung across some chasm, or trunk of a tree—none but trunks of trees there, and all dead for centuries—that had sunk down where it grew, and spanned the flood that eddies round it with a louder music? Wild region! yet

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

not barren ; for there are cattle on a thousand hills, that, wild as the very red-deer, toss their heads as they snuff the feet of rarest stranger, and form round him in a half-alarmed and half-threatening crescent. . . .

‘ . . . All these are splendid schemes—but what say you, Hamish, to one less ambitious, and better adapted to Old Kit ? Let us beat all the best bits down by Armaddy—the Forge—Glenco, and Inveraw. We may do that well in some six or seven hours—and then let us try that famous salmon-cast nearest the mansion—(you have the rods?)—and if time permit, an hour’s trolling in Loch Awe, below the pass of the Brander, for one of these giants that have immortalized the name of a Maule, a Goldie, and a Wilson. Mercy on us, Shelty, what a beard ! You cannot have been shaved since Whitsunday—and never saw we such lengthy love locks as those dangling at your heels. But let us mount old Surefoot—mulish in naught but an inveterate aversion to all stumbling. And now for the heather ! But are you sure, gents, *that we are on ?*

‘ And has it come to this ! Where is the grandson of the desert-born ? Thirty years ago, and thou, Filho da Puta, wert a flyer ! A fencer beyond compare ! Dost thou remember how, for a cool five hundred, thou clearedst yon canal in a style that rivalled that of the red-deer across the chasms of Cairngorm ? All we had to do was to hold hard and not ride over the hounds, when running breast-high on the rear of Reynard the savage pack wakened the welkin with the tumultuous hubbub of their death-cry. . . . You are sure *we are on*, Hamish ? and that he will not run away ? Come, come, Surefoot, none of your funking ! A better mane for holding on by we could not imagine. Pure Shelty, you say, Hamish ? From his ears we should have suspected his grandfather of having been at least a Zebra. . . .

‘ . . . COMMA—semicolon—colon—full point ! All three scent-struck into attitude steady as stones. That is beautiful. Ponto straight as a rod—Piro in a slight curve—and Basta a

GROUSE SHOOTING

perfect semicircle. O'Bronte ! down on your marrow-bones. But there is no need, Hamish, either for hurry or haste. On such ground, and on such a day, the birds will lie as if they were asleep. Hamish, the flask ! not the powder-flask, you dotterel—but the Glenlivet. 'Tis thus we always love to steady our hand for the first shot. It gives a fine feeling to the forefinger.

' Ho ! the heads of the old cock and hen, like snakes above the heather—motionless, but with glancing eyes—and preparing for the spring. Whurr—whirr—whirr—bang—bang—tapsilleery—tapsalteery—thud—thud—thud ! Old cock and hen both down, Hamish. No mean omen, no awkward augury, of the day's sport. Now for the orphan family—marked ye them round

“The swelling instep of the mountain's foot.”

' . . . Up to the time of our grand climacteric we loved a wide range and thought nothing of describing and discussing a circle of ten miles diameter in a day, up to our hips in heather. But for these dozen or twenty past, we have preferred a narrow beat, snugly seated on a shelty, and pad the hoof on the hill no more. Yonder is the kind of ground we love—for why should an old man make a toil of a pleasure ? 'Tis one of the many small coves belonging to Glen Etive and looks down from no very great elevation upon the Loch. Its bottom and side nearly half way up, are green pastures, sheep-nibbled as smooth as a lawn—and a rill, dropping in diamonds from the cliffs at its upper end, betrays itself, where the water is invisible, by a line of still livelier verdure. An old dilapidated sheepfold is the only building, and seems to make the scene still more solitary. Above the green pastures are the richest beds and bosoms of heather ever bees murmured on—and above them nothing but bare cliffs. A stiff breeze is now blowing into this cove from the sea loch : and we shall slaughter the orphan family at our leisure. 'Tis probable they have dropped—single bird after single bird—or in twos and threes—

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

all along the first line of heather that met their flight : and if so we shall pop them like partridges in turnips. Three points in the game ! Each dog, it is manifest, stands to a different lot of feathers : and we shall slaughter them, without dismounting, *seriatim*. No, Hamish—we must dismount—give us your shoulder—that will do. The Crutch—now we are on our pins. Take a lesson. Whirr ! Bang ! Bag number one, Hamish. Ay, that is right, Ponto—back Basta. Ditto, ditto. Now Ponto and Basta both back Piro—right and left this time—and not one of the brood will be left to cheep of Christopher. Be ready—attend us with the other double barrel. Whirr ! Bang—bang—bang—bang ! What think you of that, you son of the mist ? There is a shower of feathers ! They are all at sixes and sevens upon the greensward at the edge of the heather. Seven birds at four shots ! The whole family is now disposed of—father, mother and eleven children. If such fire be in the dry wood what must it have been in green ? Let us lie down in the sheltered shade of the mossy walls of the sheepfold—take a drop of Glenlivet—and philosophise.’

Captain Ross said (1862) that he had never tried to make a great bag in one day : he thought 65 brace was his heaviest, ‘but that is nothing : 200 brace have since been shot in a day by one man easily on 12th August.’

The Hon. A. E. Gathorne Hardy, in his delightful *Autumns in Argyleshire with Rod and Gun*, observes that in his county forty brace over dogs is, and always has been, a great day. Let him speak for himself :—

‘ . . . The road here degenerates into a mere farm track, very steep in places ; but we have not much further to go, for here is Stroneska farm, where dogs and keepers are waiting for us. Altogether there are eight dogs—six pointers and two setters ; but two of the pointers are only young ones in their first season, brought out more for the benefit of their education than to help the sport. In addition to the head-keeper and the one to whose beat the ground belongs, there are two gillies, one of whom bears on his back an enormous pannier,

GROUSE SHOOTING

capable of holding some thirty brace of grouse, and no light weight, if, as occasionally happens, it is filled at the close of the day. It is the theory of the laird that ponies cannot be taken over the ground, and there is no doubt that there are many excessively boggy hollows and awkward dykes ; but I confess to being sceptical as to the alleged impossibility, having seen much of the instinctive capacity of a well-trained Highland pony for finding its way across difficult country. However, the gillies do not have a hard time of it. Their duty is to keep out of sight of us, but within sound of a whistle, in case fresh dogs or cartridges are wanted, and most of their time is spent in lounging about until the end of the day's sport, when the hamper has to be taken down to the dog-cart. Then it is a sight to see how a tall Highlander can step out in spite of the weight on his shoulders ; but your West Coast man is better at an energetic spurt than at prolonged exertion.

‘ The first part of our beat is up a low hill, mainly grass and rushes, with only a few patches of heather ; still, it is worth while to hunt it, as it is on the way, and there is nothing so tiresome as a long walk to the ground. The principal inhabitants are the ubiquitous rabbits, which here and now are a nuisance, and nothing but it. When you see the side of a hill literally alive with them in the late evenings, it is hard to believe that men still living remember the first artificial introduction of the rabbit into Argyleshire, and the prophecies that they would never do in such a wet climate.

‘ “ Let Rake go ! ” and off gallops a strong well-proportioned setter, delighted to have the first turn—a distinction he owes rather to his defects than to his merits, as it is now impossible to spoil him. “ Is that a very young dog ? ” says my companion, rather new to the sport and misled by the frantic activity of the *débutant*. “ He is as old as a man, ” is the reply of the keeper,—a slight exaggeration, but bordering on the truth, for I can remember Rake almost as an institution. What a hot day that was at Achoish, when, we having toiled all morning and found no birds, Rake caught the sheep by the

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

leg ! He never was known to do such a thing before or since, and I firmly believe he thought that we ought to have some flesh meat to take home, and that, as it appeared to be hopeless to find grouse, mutton should serve our turn for the nonce. But see—to-day he has turned to stone about a hundred and fifty yards off, and my companion cocks his gun and quickens his pace. I warn him not to hurry, that it is always better to go slow up to a point—a counsel of perfection which he hears but does not obey ; and while my judgment condemns, my heart rather approves, for is he not young—lucky fellow ! and this the first point of the season ? I have a pretty good notion what Rake has found in that rushy bit, and if I am right there is no hurry.

‘ We get close up to the dog before anything moves, and have to force him forward, so near is he to the game ; then there is a whirr of wings, and, just as the warning “ ’Ware hen ” breaks from my lips, there is a report and a fall, and the laws of the country and of sport are outraged by the destruction of a well-grown young greyhen. Alas for the beginning of the season ! Yet, let those who have never committed a similar mistake first cast a stone at my companion, who is profuse in his apologies, and sees the old hen and seven other young birds fly off almost in succession, presenting the most tantalising marks. Next, two or three snipe rise one after another, and a couple of them fall victims, while Rake—alas ! that I should say it—more than once points at a rabbit, but in a constrained attitude and with glaring eyes, which gives me a pretty good idea of what he is after. We do not fire at the rabbits, not merely for fear of spoiling the dog, but also because if we killed all we saw the bag would be difficult to carry, and we are after nobler game.

‘ We are now coming to the heather, and we might safely hunt the younger dogs, but I cannot find it in my heart to take Rake up until he has had a chance, which comes quickly enough. A capital point, and a nice rise of a good covey of nine ; this time there is no mistake made, and two brace are neatly killed

GROUSE SHOOTING

—one by each gun—the young birds well grown and feathered. Then we whistle up the reserve dogs, and Rake is taken up for the present—a pair of white and tan pointers, Juno and Diomedes, quartering the ground in front of them with clock-work regularity.

‘ So the morning goes on with varying fortune : the sun is rather hot, the scent not first-rate, and sometimes we go half-an-hour without a shot ; but when we reach the wire fence by the march of Craig-an-terrive we find that another sportsman has been on the ground. We pick up two freshly killed grouse, and from the condition of their heads it is easy to see that the murder has been the work of a peregrine. Here the keeper casts a reproachful glance at me, as I never fire my gun at the magnificent birds, and rejoice at the laird’s orders that they should not be trapped. Inveterate poachers they are, no doubt—but what a beautiful thing is the swoop of a wild peregrine ! Perhaps I shall see my friend himself later on.

‘ By one o’clock we stop at a lovely little spring, coming straight out of the side of the hill, and stretch our limbs and inspect the bag while our luncheon is being unpacked. There are eleven brace of grouse—counting the greyhen, which must masquerade under that title, and an old blackcock—whose illegal slaughter must, I fear, be attributed not to accident, but design—four snipe and a hare. Altogether a fair morning’s work ; for I usually calculate on the afternoon bag doubling that of the morning—the birds are easier to find, and the evening is the best time for shooting. There let them cool while we discuss our lunch and the best pipe of the day.

‘ Half-an-hour—or perhaps three-quarters ! sees us once more on the move, and here we are on some of our best ground, just above Loch Leachan—a fair-sized loch, with a curious little stone island near its middle. It is very calm just now, and although it is some distance off, we can see a flock of duck near the reeds, and the circles made by the rising trout. Here we pick up a good many birds, and spare one or two coveys of squeakers—second broods, to all appearance ; and here we

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

fall in with our poacher of the morning. As we round the corner of a knoll, three curlews come flying towards us, and contrary to the custom of these shy birds, keep going round us in circles, close to the ground and almost within gunshot ; and, sure enough, behind them is the falcon, who sheers off when he observes us, but does not go far off, if I know anything of his habits. When, later, the curlews fly off in the direction of Loch Crinan, there is a rush of wings, and we see one of the finest bits of wild hawking it was ever my privilege to witness. I have seen the falcon after terns, ducks, and grouse, but I never saw anything to equal that rapid flight after the curlew—one of which, alas ! succumbed at last, but at such a distance that I could only just note that the two joined and fell together.

‘ We now turn in the same direction as the falcon flew, for, like the curlew, our home is by the sea ; and at half-past six Duncan and his panniers are despatched by a straight path to Roodel Glen, where the keeper’s cart is waiting. He carries nearly thirty brace on his back ; and we have added two or three more to the bag, as well as a couple and a half of ducks, by the time we reach the glen at seven o’clock.’

Mr. Gathorne Hardy says he thinks he has been colder grouse driving than when pursuing any other form of sport ; and he pleads extenuating circumstances for the chilly M.P. who lighted a fire in his butt and went to sleep over it, what time the birds were streaming over him.

Driving, much less in vogue north of Tweed than on Yorkshire moors, was practised in a rough and ready way, says Mr. Spencer Stanhope, at Cannon Hall, Barnsley, about 1805.¹ Regular drives without butts were arranged in 1836, when three brace per gun per drive was held a large bag. Lord Walsingham adopted the modern system of grouse-driving on Blubberhouse Moor in the ’sixties.

The year 1872 was a wonderful grouse year and saw two remarkable bags made. On 20th August six guns on Wemmergill Moor (under 12,000 acres) killed 2070 birds : to which

¹ *The Grouse. Fur, Feather, and Fin Series.*

*Pheasant Shooting:
Old Style*



GROUSE SHOOTING

total the late Sir Frederick Milbank contributed 728 in the eight drives : he was using three guns and had two loaders. These bags were eclipsed in 1893 by Mr. R. H. Rimington Wilson and his party, nine guns, on Broomhead moor near Sheffield, on 20th August 1893, when 2648 birds were shot : and this total was beaten by Mr. Rimington Wilson and his party, nine guns, on 24th August 1894, when the bag totalled 2748 grouse. On 28th August 1872, Lord Walsingham, shooting alone on Blubberhouse Moor, killed 842 birds in sixteen drives, using four guns (two breech and two muzzle loaders). The total bag for the season on Wemmergill Moor was 17,074 grouse killed in 41 days' shooting, the average number of guns per day being about five.

The largest bag of driven grouse ever made by one gun was that by Lord Walsingham on 30th August 1888. Shooting with four guns and two loaders on Blubberhouse Moor (2221 acres), he killed 1070 birds in twenty drives.

THE GROUSE-SHOOTER'S CALL

Come, where the heather bell,
Child of the Highland dell,
Breathes its coy fragrance o'er moorland and lea :
Gaily the fountain sheen
Leaps from the mountain green—
Come to our Highland home, blithesome and free !

See ! through the gloaming
The young Morn is coming,
Like a bridal veil round her the silver mist curl'd,
Deep as the ruby's rays,
Bright as the sapphire's blaze,
The banner of day in the East is unfurl'd.

The red grouse is scattering
Dews from his golden wing
Gemm'd with the radiance that heralds the day :

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

Peace in our Highland vales,
Health on our mountain gales—
Who would not hie to the Moorlands away!

Far from the haunts of man
Mark the grey Ptarmigan,
Seek the lone Moorcock, the pride of our dells.
Birds of the wilderness!
Here is their resting place,
Mid the brown heath where the mountain-roe dwells.

Come then! the heathier bloom
Woos with its wild perfume,
Fragrant and blithesome they welcome shall be;
Gaily the fountain sheen
Leaps from the mountain green—
Come to our home of the moorland and lea!

J. W. C., *Sporting Magazine*, 1834.

PHEASANT SHOOTING

IT is impossible to say at what date the modern system of pheasant shooting in its simplest form came into vogue. Daniel may have had in mind some elementary kind of 'battue' (has any one ever heard that word spoken?) when he wrote the declamation against the 'thoughtless propensity to kill all the game possible' quoted in the last chapter; and having regard to the fact that at this time (1813) in any given bag partridges formed the very large majority, it is possible that the pheasants included in these two were hand-reared (of which more anon) and were driven over the guns:—

'On 28th January 1812 John Moseley, Esq., of Tofts, Norfolk, accompanied by *eight* friends, within *five Hours* shot 8 Partridges, 12 Hares, 1 Woodcock, 28 Rabbits, 275 Pheasants. Total 325, notwithstanding nearly *six hundred* Pheasants had before been bagged on that manor only.'

'The following is a List of Game, etc., shot *this season* (1812) upon the Manor of Riddlesworth in Norfolk, the residence of Thomas Thornhill, Esq. Hares 574: Partridges 725: Pheasants 701: Rabbits 492: Snipes 49: Woodcocks 6: Total, 2548. About 3000 Rabbits have also been killed by the keepers with Nets, etc.'

A century ago the accepted method of shooting pheasants was over spaniels. The principal requirement in the dog was that he should be steady from hares: a spaniel which had 'any taint of the *Hound* in his pedigree, although generations back, will be sure to hunt *Hare* in preference to winged game, and the stock may be crossed everlastingly, may attain *beauty*,

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

strength, symmetry, yet the latent spark of the *Harrier* will never be extinguished, and they will always show their predilection for Hare whenever they have opportunity.'

The breed most celebrated was that of the Duke of Newcastle, known as the Clumber, after the ducal seat. The progenitors of the breed had been given to the reigning Duke by the Duc de Noailles about the middle of the eighteenth century: these Clumbers, 'springing spaniels' or 'springers,' were famed for their steadiness, and judging from the frequency with which portraits of such dogs were painted during the latter portion of the century, they were highly prized. Mr. Hoare had a breed of spaniels of which it was said they would find a hare, but follow no further than they saw it: they would 'no more run hares than they would sheep,' but they possessed noses so fine that 'neither woodcock nor pheasant could escape their search.' Daniel says that he himself possessed spaniels so excellent that after refusing one hundred and fifty guineas for six brace and a half, he was asked to put his own price on them. Daniel must have stocked a veritable cemetery before he got dogs up to his standard, for he tells us that he 'purchased at various times, at least four score spaniels, all with the *best* of characters, but which, with the exception of *four brace*, were regularly consigned to the *halter* for incorrigible *Hare hunting*.' The dogs which eventually brought him so much credit were bred from Mr. Hoare's: he purchased them on that gentleman's decease. Pointers with bells on their collars were sometimes used in the coverts, but they did not answer. Colonel Hawker preferred to spaniels a 'very high couraged old pointer that would keep near (his master) and would, on being told, break his point and dash in and put the pheasants to flight before they could run out of shot,' and he was not alone. A writer in the *Sporting Magazine* of 1815-1816 (vol. iv.) says that well-bred spaniels have been neglected of late years in favour of pointers, which answer all purposes in light coverts throughout the season.

Colonel Hawker, by the way, in his *Instructions to Young*

PHEASANT SHOOTING

Sportsmen makes an observation which may contain a hint at the germ of the modern system :—

‘ . . . Although to explore and beat several hundred acres of coppice it becomes necessary to have a *party* with *spaniels*, yet on such expeditions we rarely hear of *any one* getting much game to his own share, except some sly old fellow who has shirked from his companions to the *end of the wood*, where the pheasants, and particularly the *cock* birds, on hearing the approach of a rabble *are all running*, like a retreating army, and perhaps flying in his face faster than he can load and fire.’

The example of the sly old fellow would be followed by others less astute : and what more probable than that in course of time all the guns, as a matter of course, took up their station at the end of the wood and left it to beaters to drive the birds over them ?

However this may be, the modern system, in the rough, had come into favour by the year 1829. Hear Colonel Cook, M.F.H.¹ on the subject : the gallant colonel’s antipathy to ‘ *grandes batues* ’ apparently did not extend to the refreshments provided :—

‘ . . . The great mania for game, and the useless quantity of it with which we find most coverts glutted, is a great misfortune to Fox-hunting. For some time (may I be allowed to say) there has been a war between the Pheasant and the Fox ; during which period (what may seem a little extraordinary, and I state it with regret) the former has generally been victorious. Still, I am no enemy to shooting, particularly to Partridge-shooting, because it is an active amusement and a healthy exercise, without both of which, to my mind, no sport can exist. I never could make up my mind to go to any of their *Batues*. I won’t say that the danger attending them has kept me away, though it is by no means trifling, for the accidents we read of far exceed in number those which occur in Fox-hunting ; and surely a fall from a horse is better than being shot by a friend.

¹ *Observations on Fox-hunting.*

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

‘The *feeds* given on these occasions are generally capital, though to a real sportsman there is but little amusement. Happening to be on a journey in a mail coach one Christmas, as we were changing horses in a small market town in the lower part of Hampshire, I saw an immense quantity of game lying at the coach office to be forwarded to its destination. I inquired from whence it came; and was informed a *grande batue* had taken place not far distant. Knowing some of the party, I naturally inquired of the landlord of the inn *who* had bagged the most game: “I know nothing about that, Sir,” said he, “but *the men who beat for the Gentlemen killed one hundred and twenty head*”; now if the foxes had only taken one tenth of what the beaters knocked on the head, it would have made a great noise in the country, although a single fox would have shewn a hundred neighbouring gentlemen a day’s sport. It would be no very difficult matter to have pheasants driven up so as to shoot them from your drawing-room window, and thus treat Mamma and the children with a *partie de Chasse*; they may then have ocular demonstration what a good shot Papa is!’

High preservation was not universal at this time, whatever the case in the districts known to Colonel Cook. On the contrary, it is clear from Colonel Hawker’s advice on the subject of pheasant shooting that the landless man could get a good deal on unpreserved ground:—

‘When staying in a *town* take care not to let every one know where you shoot by pompously riding through it with a display of guns and dogs; but either send on the latter in the dark, or take them closely shut up in your dog-cart. If driving, cover your shooting dress with a box coat; if on horseback, ride out of the town on some road diametrically *opposite* to where your sport lies, and then double back again on other roads or by crossing the country. If you return by daylight, enter the town again by this means, otherwise you will soon have your beat (if on a neutral place) worked by every townsman who can muster a dog and a gun.’

PHEASANT SHOOTING

Mr. H. A. Bryden (*Victoria County History of Sussex*) says there is authentic record of two Horsham sportsmen who, having business at Chichester, shot their way thither across country, two days' journey, and home again after transacting their affairs. On the other hand, there were properties in the county where the game was carefully preserved and visitors were kept in strict order. This is from the *Sporting Magazine* of 1805 :—

‘As a piece of necessary information for sportsmen, the following rules are hung up in the breakfast-room of a shooting-lodge in Sussex :—

Killing a hen pheasant,	£1 1 0
Shooting at ditto,	0 10 6
Shooting at a pheasant on the ground or in a tree,	1 1 0
Shooting at ditto at more than 40 yards unless wounded,	0 5 0
Shooting two or more partridges at one shot,	0 10 6
Shooting at ditto on the ground,	1 1 0
Shooting at ditto at more than 45 yards if not before wounded,	0 5 0
Shooting a hare in her form,	0 5 0

‘Half the above fines go to the poor of the parish, the other half to the keepers.’

This document is illuminating in more ways than one : it indicates that there still remained inept beings who had not fully mastered the Art of Shooting Flying and were not to be trusted within range of a sitting bird or hare.

It was in the same year (1805) that the ‘principal noblemen, gentlemen, and land owners of Kent, to the number of sixty-three, very commendably signed and published a resolution not to shoot partridges, on account of the backwardness of the harvest, till the fourteenth of September.’ From which it would seem that sportsmen who might try to shoot their way across country in Kent would have found obstacles.

Now let us make a cast forward to the period when the

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

' battue ' was producing huge bags of game before a mingling of muzzle and breech-loaders, and being more fiercely anathematised by those who held it unsportsmanlike than ever it was in the days of Daniel. This bag made at Bradgate Park, Leicestershire, by Lord Stamford and Warrington and his party in 1864, was said to be the ' most extraordinary kill of game on record ' :—

	Part.	Pheas.	'Cock.	Snipe.	Hares.	Rabbits.	Various.
Jan. 4, . . .	1	690	26	...	328	812	5
„ 5,	1822	24	...	258	225	6
„ 6, . . .	2	338	2	1	220	2534	5
„ 7, . . .	1	1195	7	1	54	331	12
	<u>4</u>	<u>4045</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>860</u>	<u>3902</u>	<u>28</u>

Grand total, 8900 head. Thirteen guns on three days, fourteen on the 5th, when the largest number of pheasants was killed : Lord Huntingfield and General Hall, both crack shots, were of the party.

The bag made at Croxteth in November 1883 may be added :—

	Partridges.	Pheasants.	Hares.	Rabbits.
Nov. 20, . . .	9	1444	310	10
„ 21, . . .	20	2373	319	123
„ 22, . . .	31	1415	175	70
„ 23, . . .	33	804	255	22
	<u>93</u>	<u>6036</u>	<u>1359</u>	<u>225</u>

Woodcock, wild duck, and snipe swelled the total. Six guns shot on three days and seven on the 22nd.

There is, however, no particular object to be gained by enumerating heavy bags of pheasants. They are merely matters of rearing, organisation, and marksmanship ; for whatever its detractors may find to say against the modern system, none denies that a ' tall ' pheasant, coming down with a bias to right or left, is the most difficult shot any bird can give. Here is a picture of covert shooting in the 'sixties¹ :—

¹ *Cornhill Magazine*, 1865.

Modern Pheasant Shooting





PHEASANT SHOOTING

‘ Our readers will hardly require to be told that to kill five hundred pheasants in the season admits of nothing like regular battue shooting, at which nearly four times that number have been ere now killed in a day. But they will give a man ten or a dozen days of good sport, and, combined with running game, will afford as much shooting as a reasonable man can desire. A party of four guns, killing their thirty brace of pheasants, forty or fifty couple of rabbits, half as many hares, and two or three woodcocks, will have had more than fifty shots apiece. If they began at eleven and left off at four, deducting an hour for luncheon, they will have fired thirteen shots an hour, or more than one every five minutes ; so that something very much less than this would be fairly entitled to be called an excellent day’s sport. Twenty brace of pheasants, with hares and rabbits in proportion, is, considering the shortness of a winter’s day, ample for any four men who do not differ as much from a true sportsman as a glutton differs from an epicure.

‘ To one who cares for natural scenery, the best time of the year for covert shooting is November, when the foliage is thinned sufficiently to give you a fair chance at the pheasants, while the woods have not yet doffed their rich autumnal robes of gold and purple and crimson. A more utilitarian reason for the same preference exists likewise in the fact, that the weather in November is still tolerably warm, and that you are able to stand still without such a coldness arising upon the part of your toes and your fingers, that you seem to have lost all acquaintance with them. Moreover, in many parts of England, November is the best month for woodcocks. But if your only object is to make as good a bag as possible, it is better to wait till the leaves are quite off the trees ; when the pheasants loom large and black between the bare poles athwart the dead December sky.

‘ A certain knack is required in shooting pheasants, as in shooting everything else, which until a man has mastered, he will go on missing what seem to both himself and lookers-on the easiest shots imaginable. There ought certainly to be no

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

difficulty in hitting a pheasant. He does not dodge and twist like a snipe or a woodcock. To shoot as one does at partridges in the open when our bird is fifty yards away, is folly in covert, and what none but a novice would think of. Pheasants do not rise in covies and bother us in that way. They make a great noise, no doubt, about launching themselves before the public : but that is just a bit of bounce to which one soon gets used, and, after a time, ceases to impress one at all, except perhaps by lending additional gusto to the act of stopping them. We believe the chief reason why men miss a pheasant is, in the first place, that he flies a great deal quicker than he seems to fly ; and, in the second place, that they do not always wait till he has done rising, which is generally possible to do without letting him get out of shot, and then firing just as he steadies himself for a straight flight. To kill pheasants, or indeed any birds coming over your head, is an art by itself. If you wait till they are perpendicular, you must give the gun a little swing backwards as you pull ; but it is better to breast them if you must shoot, for the shots are unlikely to enter the breast, and probably take fatal effects in the head, neck, or belly.

‘ To shoot a covert properly, the men and beaters should all walk in a line, gunner and beater alternately. We are here, of course, speaking of coverts where that is possible. Many are so thick that it is quite impossible to shoot inside them ; and in that case the guns are stationed outside. But the other plan is ten times the more pleasant one, as admits of a little sociability, seasoned with a few bets, and streaked with a vein of mild chaff. There is no trouble at all in *finding* pheasants and rabbits, if you know they are there. In the coverts they must be, or else, the latter, at least, in the hedgerows. So you beat out the coverts before lunch, and the hedges afterwards, unless upon a day especially set apart for the slaughter of pheasants in all the coverts on the ground.

‘ A party of four or five intimate friends for a day of this kind is uncommonly jolly. By the time the winter shooting

PHEASANT SHOOTING

has arrived, men have had the first keen edge of their desire taken off; and, though they enjoy the sport as much as ever, they are not so nervously anxious about it as on the first of September. The consequence is that there is generally more *fun* going on with a party of this kind than in partridge shooting; also, it is not made quite so much a toil of. You start after a good—perhaps late—breakfast, and a lounge over the fire afterwards, discussing anything but the subject on hand, and giving no one to suppose, as you infallibly do in September, that in your opinion the world was created for the sake of shooting. There is no particular skill required in choosing your coverts or beating your ground. The nearest is the best to begin with.

‘Here you are at the side of a nice ash spinney, intersected with ditches, and sloping down to a brook in the middle. Will you go inside or out? Inside. Very well. Away goes the stump of your cigar. Your shot-pouch is hitched round a little; or, if you use a breech-loader, the belt receives a final tug. Here’s the place to get over. Now, then, are you all right? Very well. Let the dogs go; and the day has begun. The men knock at the stems of the ash-trees, and thrash the bushes with their sticks, and probe every tuft of grass with their nailed toes. The keeper roars venomously to some over-zealous spaniel; all together emit a mixture of sounds familiar enough to shooters, but wholly indescribable in words, which are considered calculated to invite, terrify, or deceive into showing themselves, the birds and beasts who lurk beneath the thick covert. Some unwary rabbit is usually the first victim. But that one shot is always the signal, somehow or other, for the commencement of a fusilade which is to last till sunset. Hares and rabbits cross and recross, are killed and missed by dozens, till at last you approach a rather thicker spot, or perhaps a corner of the plantation. Then, from under your feet, comes a sudden roar, as if a tiger had been sprung—so at least it seems to you. A cock pheasant, finding further progress impeded by the thorns, and uncomfortably pressed

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

by men and dogs in his rear, has determined on a bold dash for it. The well-known whirr of his wings sets half-a-dozen more in motion. The pheasants are rising all round you. "Don't leg 'em," bellows some one. "Well missed," cries another. "Come on, sir," says the keeper; "better have this bit out again—there 's a lot gone back."

' Perhaps, three or four times in the course of the day, the monotonous chant of the beaters will be varied by unearthly shrieks of excitement, out of which is gradually evolved the great fact of "cock—forward"—the simple meaning being that a woodcock has been marked down in front of us. Not a man of the party but would cheerfully pay down a sovereign to bag him. Whereabouts was it, asks every man with a gun, of every man with a stick, in an undertone, hoping that he himself may obtain some exclusive information. "Oh, he beant far off, sir!" is the usual answer on such occasions. "Just where us be now, a little bit further on, I thinks, sir." At that moment, very likely, the bird gets up half-a-dozen yards behind the whole party, dodges sharply between two trees, wheels out of the covert, and is brought down, a long shot, with a broken wing, by one of the outsiders. Just your luck, you think.'

This from Daniel (1813) is interesting:—

' There is a beautiful variety of the Pheasant with a white ring round the neck; of these the Earl of Berkeley has a considerable quantity at Cranford Bridge: except the white neck feathers they appear in size, and the rest of their plumage, exactly to resemble the common.'

P. colchicus has almost reached the status of a 'beautiful variety' in our day!

P. torquatus must be, on the average, a good deal heavier than the old English bird of a century ago. Daniel in the supplementary volume of *Rural Sports* (1813) says: 'An uncommon sized *Pheasant* was shot in January 1810, in the Plantations belonging to E. L. Irton, Esq., near Whitehaven, which weighed *fifty-six ounces*, and measured, from the Bill

PHEASANT SHOOTING

to the Extremity of the Tail, *one Yard five inches!*' A former owner of my copy has added to this a marginal note to the effect that he, J. T. L., had killed one of 54 oz. A bird of $3\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. or $3\frac{3}{4}$ lbs. is now considered one of normal weight. In 1859 the *Field* mentioned a bird which weighed $5\frac{3}{4}$ lbs.; the heaviest pheasant known (*Field*, 14th August 1875) weighed one ounce under 6 lbs. Maize-fed birds attain to a greater weight than others. The increase in size has followed development of the hand-rearing system.

The connection of the hand-reared pheasant with sport is rather misty until the nineteenth century. In old days the birds were bred as poultry. Palladius, whose work on Husbandry is assigned to about 1420, gives directions for their management: you were to take none of more than one year old, as birds above that age were 'infecunde': you were to allot one cock to every two hens and require each hen to sit on 20 eggs: 'common hens' might be used for hatching: one such should be given 15 pheasants' eggs. The chicks were fed for the first fifteen days on boiled barley sprinkled with wine: after that, bruised wheat, locusts and ants' eggs. We can trace the bird in its domestic character for about three hundred years from the time of Palladius, but there is at least room for the supposition that it was sometimes turned out for sport. In the sixteenth century there was a royal game preserve round London, which extended from Westminster to St. Giles in the Fields and thence to Islington, Hampstead, Highgate and Hornsey Park, and Henry VIII. maintained at Westminster a 'frenche Preste the fesaunt breder.'¹ Henry, as we know, was a true sportsman, and it is only reasonable to think that he flew his hawks at the 'fesants' so raised.

If his Majesty hawked hand-reared pheasants, no doubt his subjects did the same; but whether for falconry or merely to have their necks wrung for the table, pheasants continued to be kept in captivity. The act of 1603-1604 already mentioned (1 Jac. I., c. 27, § 4) forbade the sale or purchase to

¹ Privy Purse Expenses of Henry VIII., 22nd December 1532.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

sell again of any deer, hare, partridge, or pheasant ; but it made an exception in favour of birds 'reared and brought up in house or houses or brought from beyond sea.' There is among the old accounts of Hatfield House (*Victoria County History of Herts*) mention of the purchase in 1629 of 'hens to set on pheasants' eggs,' the foster-mothers costing 1s. each. In 1727 we find Richard Bradley, in his *General Treatise of Husbandry and Gardening*, combating the idea that pheasant-rearing was difficult and expensive : he had found by experience that where pinioned birds were allowed due liberty, and not more than one cock was put with seven hens, they 'brought their young to perfection for a trifling expense.'

The pheasant-rearing business, however, was not much practised thirty years later ; for the edition of Bradley's work published in 1757 contains no reference to it, and the omission seems to be explained by the editor's remark that they had found it possible to leave out a good deal which was not important. J. Mortimer in 1761 (*Whole Art of Husbandry*) says that by reason of the trouble and expense few people reared pheasants except near London. In the neighbourhood of the capital the business was followed by men who sold the birds to gentlemen as 'rarities : especially those that have the white breed and such as are very fine coloured.' In 1826, at Chippenham Park, Cambridgeshire, Mr. Tharpe and his party made a bag of 630 pheasants, of which 300 were either white or pied : the white and pied birds were then much admired as a rare variety. A writer in the *Annals of Agriculture* (vol. xxxix., 1800) remarks that pheasants may be reared in almost any quantity 'by importing the eggs from France and setting them under common hens. It has been practised with great success by some noblemen and others desirous of stocking their woods and plantations.'

Daniel bred pheasants from pinioned birds which ran with his poultry : 'some, hatched under hens, remained in or about the garden until the spring following, and then probably bred at no great distance.'

PHEASANT SHOOTING

Raising pheasants with the assistance of hens has always been practised, but the system of keeping birds pinioned or in captivity for breeding purposes would seem to have fallen into disuse for many years. At all events the *Field* of January 1857 contains a description of the methods whereby a gentleman, resident in the north, had succeeded in breeding from captive birds ; and his communication is welcomed as indicating means whereby the too prevalent offence of game-egg stealing might be checked. The egg-stealing industry in those days was widespread, the system of hatching out pheasants' eggs under hens providing a ready and profitable market.

WILD FOWLING

‘**T**HIS sport ’ says George Edie in his *Treatise on English Shooting* (1772) ‘ though very good when wild fowl are plenty is very little practised by Gentlemen owing to the several disagreeable circumstances attending it.’

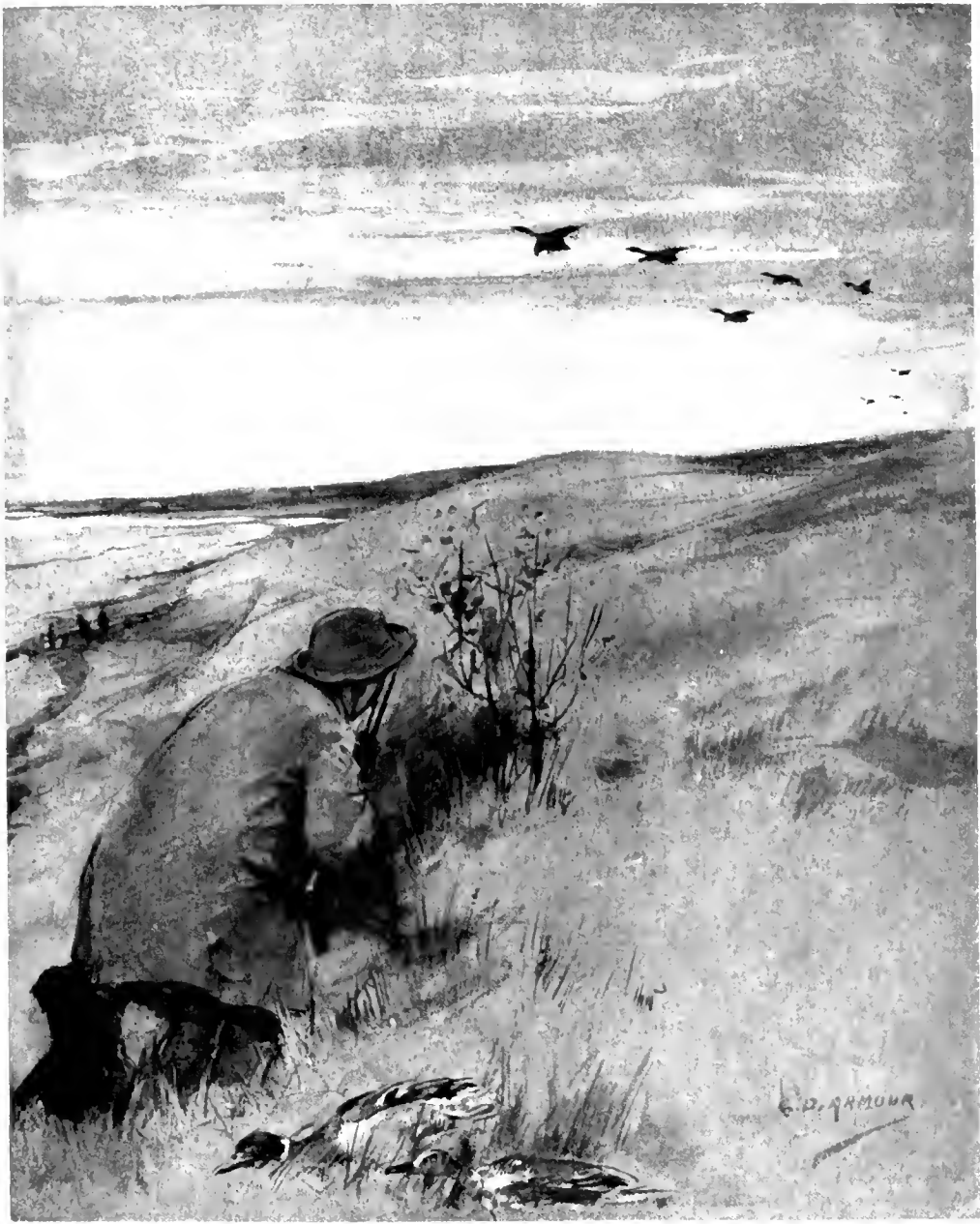
It must be admitted that the account of wild fowling as pursued on the Hampshire coast, given by the Rev. William Gilpin,¹ suggests keenness as the first essential.

‘ Fowling and fishing are indeed on this coast commonly the employments of the same person. He who in summer with his line or net plies the shores when they are overflowed by the tide, in winter with his gun, as evening draws on, runs up in his boat among the little creeks which the tide leaves in the mud—lands and lies in patient expectation of his prey.

‘ Sea fowl usually feed by night, when in all their multitudes they come down to graze on the Savannahs of the shore. As the sonorous cloud advances (for their noise in the air resembles a pack of hounds in full cry) the attentive fowler listens which way they bend their course : perhaps he has the mortification to hear them alight at too great a distance for his gun (though of the longest barrel) to reach them : and if he cannot edge his boat round some winding creek, which it is not always in his power to do, he despairs of success that night : perhaps however he is more fortunate, and has the satisfaction to hear the airy noise approach nearer, till at length the host settles in some plain upon the edge of which his boat is moored : he now, as silently as possible, primes both the pieces anew (for he is generally double-armed) and listens with all his atten-

¹ *Remarks on Forest Scenery and other Woodland Views*, written 1781, published 1791.

Wild Fowling :
Flying





WILD FOWLING

tion : it is so dark that he can take no aim, for if he could discern the birds they would also see him ; and being extremely timorous would seek some other pasture : though they march with noise they feed in silence : some indistinct noises, however, issue from so vast a concourse : he directs his piece therefore towards the sound, fires at a venture, and instantly catching up his other gun, discharges it where he supposes the flock to rise on the wing : his gains for the night are now decided and he has only to gather his harvest : he immediately puts on his mud pattens (flat square pieces of board, which the Fowler ties to his feet, that he may not sink in the ooze) ignorant yet of his success, and goes groping about in the dark in quest of his booty, picking up sometimes many, and perhaps not one : so hardly does the poor fowler earn a few shillings, exposed in an open boat, during a solitary winter night to weather as it comes, rain, hail, or snow, on a bleak coast, a league probably from the beach, and often liable, without great care, to be fixed in the mud where he would become an inevitable prey to the returning tide. I have heard one of these poor fellows say he never takes a dog with him in these expeditions, because no dog could bear the cold which he is obliged to suffer : and after all, others frequently enjoy more from his labours than himself, for the tide often throws next day, on different parts of the shore, many of the birds which he had killed, but could not find in the night.'

The pursuit of the 'Punt Shooters' says Daniel, is hazardous, especially when there is much ice as the craft may be nipped in the floes. The punt shooter's gun 'carried as much as a little cannon' and was used in the same way as the stanchion-gun invented a few years later by Colonel Peter Hawker ; the fowler lying in the bottom of the craft with the gun pointed over the bow ready to pull trigger as soon as he came near enough to, 'rattle with his feet on the bottom of his punt,' whereby having sprung the fowl, he fired and 'cut a lane through their ranks.'

Colonel Peter Hawker had condemned the Hampshire

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

punts as unsafe, and his opinion having been confirmed by fatalities, 'these regular western channel gunners' adopted an entirely new mode of getting at the birds:—

'They start off, generally in the afternoon (provided the tide serves, so as to be low enough at the proper time), keeping as close as possible to the shore, and going before the wind, till they arrive at the leeward end of their beat; the whole track of which, for one night's work, may be about five or six miles. They go ashore, and either get into a pot-house, if they have a sixpence to spend (which is not always the case), or lounge about the shore till day-light disappears, and the birds begin to fly; having first put all "*in order*"; that is, to draw out their mould shot, which they generally have in, for the chance of a goose "going down along"; put in smaller shot; and regulate their gun so that it will bear about eighty yards, when the punt is on dry mud. No sooner are the widgeon pitched than off they set, in tarpaulin dresses; and looking more like chimney-sweepers than gunners, crawling on their knees, and shoving this punt before them on the mud. No matter whether light or dark, few birds or many, *bang!* goes the gun;—and no sooner have they picked up what few birds are readily to be found, or missed the fowl, which they very frequently do, as the punt, by even a few periwinkles, might be thrown off the line of aim, they proceed again; thus travelling all night (by "launching" over the mud, and rowing across the creeks) in a direct line, similar to the march of an *army of coots*. I should not omit to mention, that, as the birds will seldom allow them to get into the punt to fire, some of them draw the trigger with a string at the end of the ram-rod, and others creep up on one side, and pull it off with the finger. This is perhaps the most laborious, and the most filthy work in all the department of wildfowl shooting; and not only that, but it so ruins the country, that in a very short time it entirely "breaks the haunt of the birds," without having yielded any material advantage to those who adopt the system. As some corroboration of this, I need only

WILD FOWLING

observe, that a family, who were the leaders in this way, and who are by far the best launchers in Hampshire, have of late been reduced to absolute distress for a livelihood.' . . .

Mr. A. E. Knox in his *Game Birds and Wild Fowl* (1850) has given a capital description of the expert punt gunner at work :—

' . . . Not far from the narrow entrance to the harbour I found a coastguard-man perched on the summit of a mud wall, and attentively reconnoitring some distant object through his spyglass. From this position he commanded an extensive view of the haven which—as it was now about full tide—spread like a great lake into the interior. The absence of large vessels, and indeed of almost all kinds of sailing craft, from this secluded spot, would at first strike a stranger with surprise, but at low water the mystery would be cleared up: the scene would then be entirely changed: a great extent of flat mud would be left by the receding waters, in the middle of which the shallow and devious channel might be perceived winding like a silver thread on its way to the sea.

' At this moment, however, the tide was at the highest, and a glance into the distance was sufficient to show me the object which had attracted the man's observation. Several flocks of wild fowl, apparently brent geese, widgeon, scaup ducks, pochards, and tufted ducks, were swimming near the further side of the estuary, while in the midst of these, like a naval squadron among a fleet of fishing boats, sailed a noble herd of wild swans. I soon perceived that they were too far from the shore to admit of my getting a shot at them, and had therefore no choice but either to wait patiently in expectation of some of the party separating from the main body and wandering up one of the narrow creeks on the opposite side of the harbour, where by taking a circuitous route, and availing myself of any intervening object that might project above the flat banks of the swamp, I might perhaps succeed in stalking them, or else to proceed in search of a less noble quarry. I at once chose the former alternative. As I

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

swept the shores of the estuary with the spy-glass, I had the satisfaction of observing that my sport was not likely to be anticipated by any wandering gunner, who might have perceived the birds already, and perhaps venture on a random shot before I could commence operations, or even decide on the best mode of carrying them into effect. There was not a human being within sight, nor could I discover a single boat on the surface of the water. I had hardly congratulated myself on this fortunate circumstance, when a distant object arrested my attention. It looked at first like a plank of wood, or the trunk of a dead tree, as it floated down a narrow creek, and seemed to be carried here and there at the mercy of the current; still there was something suspicious about it which prevented me from looking at anything else, and I continued to watch its movements with increasing anxiety.

‘ On reaching the open water it turned round, apparently in an eddy of the tide, and gave me an opportunity of examining its outline as the broadside was turned towards me for an instant. There was nothing, however, in this hasty glimpse calculated to increase my alarm; on the contrary, I now felt more than ever convinced that I was looking at an inanimate log, and my only fear at this moment was that it might be drifted by the tide—which would begin to ebb—or by the irregular course of the channel, to that part of the harbour where the hoopers were still sailing in apparent security, and alarm them prematurely. On a sudden, however, it seemed to alter its course and to move slowly under the shadow of the bank, or, as the sailors term it, to “hug the shore”: it was apparently propelled by some hidden power, for it no longer wheeled about, but advanced steadily with one end foremost, and as I watched its movements while it crept cautiously along, I fancied every now and then that I could distinguish the slight splash of a paddle, and my heart sank within me. It was evidently the gun-boat of a wild-fowl shooter, and of one who was no novice in the craft; but when the first feeling of disappointment had passed away, I easily

WILD FOWLING

persuaded myself that I should derive more pleasure from witnessing his operations than in spoiling his sport—which would have been the result of a premature movement on my part, for he was yet half a mile from the objects of his pursuit—but it occurred to me at the same moment, that I might even manage to convert him into an unconscious but important ally in contributing to my—the jackal's—share of it. Taking, therefore, a hasty survey of the harbour and its shores, I saw that if I could contrive to conceal myself at a certain point on a long and narrow belt of shingle at some distance, over which the swans would probably fly when returning to the sea, I might perhaps have the good luck to intercept them. I lost no time in carrying out this plan: The coastguardman ferried me across the mouth of the estuary, after which, by taking a wide circuit and availing myself of the nature of the ground where it was possible to mask my advance, I succeeded at last in reaching the desired point, and having scraped a hole in the loose shingle sufficiently large to conceal myself and my dog in a crouching attitude, I placed my guns on either side of me, and now directed all my attention to the exciting scene in the harbour. The hoopers were still there, surrounded by several flocks of wild ducks, some five hundred yards from the position which I occupied, and about half that distance beyond them was the gun-boat, as harmless a looking object as could well be imagined, lying low in the water, and never for a moment attracting the attention of any of the devoted birds, who appeared to be perfectly at their ease and in the full enjoyment of repose and plenty after their long and stormy voyage. The brent geese and the widgeons were preening their feathers, while the scaup and tufted ducks were continually diving, or flapping their wings on their return to the surface before they again plunged to the bottom. The swans were also feeding, but in a different manner: with their long necks they explored the surface of the mud beneath, where, to judge from their perseverance and the number of tails that appeared at the same moment directed upwards, they must have dis-

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

covered something well suited to their palates. I could also distinguish some of the less common species of *anatidae*, among which the males of the smew and the golden-eye were conspicuous in their pied plumage. The sooty scoter too was there, but foraging by himself apart from the main body. All this time their concealed enemy was gradually lessening the distance between them and himself. Slowly and stealthily did he advance, nearer and nearer, until at last I expected every instant to hear the roar of the stanchion-gun, and fancied that he must be excessively dilatory or over-cautious, as minute after minute elapsed without the report reaching my ears. At last a bird rose from the crowd and flew directly towards me. I saw that it would pass tolerably near, and when in a few seconds afterwards I perceived that it was a male golden-eye within thirty yards of me, I almost forgot the important—though as yet passive—part I was enacting in the scene, and as I instinctively grasped my double gun and raised the hammer, I felt tempted to pull the trigger. Prudence, however, prevailed, and I followed the example of my sagacious dog, who lay crouched at my side without moving a muscle of his limbs. He had seen the bird as well as myself, and his quick eye had detected my hasty movement, but his attention was again directed to the main body of water-fowl, several of which had at length taken alarm and were rising, one by one, from the water. It was an anxious moment. The swans were still there, but they had ceased to feed; their heads were turned towards me, and I soon perceived that the entire flotilla had gradually approached nearer to me. Now or never, thought I. I glanced rapidly at the advancing gun-boat—almost at the same instant a small puff of smoke issued from its further extremity, succeeded by a pigmy report, and up rose the entire host of water-fowl—swans and all—the snow-white plumage of the hoopers standing out in bold relief against the murky sky. Then a huge volume of smoke and a bright flame burst from the prow, followed by the thunder of the great gun itself—off at last!—and as it cleared a passage through

WILD FOWLING

the winged mass between us, several of the motley crowd fell to rise no more: almost at the same instant the head and shoulders of a man were protruded from a covering of seaweed, under which he had hitherto been concealed, and the next moment he was vigourously plying his paddles in all the excitement of a regular cripple chase. My turn had at length arrived: restraining the ardour of my dog, who only waited for a word to take an active share in the pursuit, I turned my attention to a detachment of swans, about five in number, which had apparently escaped unhurt, and after wheeling once or twice over the bodies of their dead companions, uttering all the time their trumpet-like notes, were now gradually ascending, and nearing my place of concealment. On they came, but suddenly their leader seemed to have discovered my position and veered round in an opposite direction, followed by all except one, who as he was passing overhead, fell a victim to my long gun. A brent goose almost at the same instant passed on the other side, and afforded an easy mark for the first barrel of my heavy double, while the second was discharged at a venture, but ineffectually, at a party of pochards—the last detachment of the fugitives, as they hurried back once more to the tempestuous but less treacherous waters of the channel. . . .’

For light on the sport in our own day we naturally turn to Sir Ralph Payne Gallwey, from whose *Letters to young Shooters*¹ the following is taken:—

‘ In this letter I will treat of Wildfowl-shooting as it exists in unprotected places, such as the great stretches of sea shore that are still free in many parts of our islands, and, I trust, may ever remain at the disposal of the humble fowler. Here we have a vastly different style of gunning: there is no certainty of sport in *this* case, you may depend upon it.

‘ You will find neither Wild ducks nor Teal waiting to be shot at their owner’s fancy, after the fashion of a private preserve: nor will you discover a quiet refuge on land or water,

¹ Third Series; Wild Fowling.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

that you may visit with every confidence of filling your bag. No: in this case you will have to work with a will for your Ducks; you will have to exercise all your ingenuity to procure a couple or two; you will have to study their movements by day and night, and learn their natural haunts: and you will probably have to compete with a dozen other fowlers just as eager as yourself to obtain the birds!

‘Under these circumstances, small wonder the Ducks are shy and often inaccessible, and you are forced to be satisfied with a very few of them as your share. Yet it is a healthy and interesting pursuit, and one in which a little success gives much content: for the pleasures of fowling are in no degree relative to the numbers slain, as three or four Ducks killed, after a deal of thought and trouble, may easily give you greater satisfaction than, perhaps, thrice the number obtained without any difficulties.

‘The fact is Wild duck shooting by day on *unpreserved* ground or water *inland* is so uncertain that ’tis scarce worthy of mention: for in daylight the birds either avoid such a harassed neighbourhood, or select some safe retreat, as a large lake, to rest on. The fowler has then little hope of sport till the evening flight. It may be well worth his while though to visit at *daybreak*, if the weather is exceptionally stormy, any pools or marshes he has *previously* discovered the birds frequent at night to feed: for in gales and snow, Ducks will sometimes remain a half hour after daylight on their feeding grounds, hesitating it may be, to face the strong wind or pelting sleet that will beat against them as they fly back, perhaps several miles, to their usual haunts for the day. Along the shore of an estuary of the sea there is, however, always a chance of sport, and the wilder and colder the weather the better for the fowler.

‘On the tide there is, besides, a greater variety of birds to be seen, but few of which you are likely to shoot inland by day or night: you not only have the Wild duck and Teal but you may also, among others meet with Widgeon, Mergansers,

*The Stage Coach :
Old Times*





WILD FOWLING

Scoters, Scaup, Brent geese, the three large Sea divers and all kinds of shore birds, such as Godwits and Curlew and a medley of smaller Waders as well.

‘ You should lie in wait on that part of the shore *along* which the wind blows : for as the birds fly about, which they will continually do in boisterous weather, they are certain to *head* the wind, and from your position they are then likely to pass across you within shot. If you are posted with the wind blowing directly from the land to the sea, you will not make a bag, for no Ducks or shore birds will come within range except those that intend to fly inland, which will naturally not be many in the day time.

‘ If the wind blows *towards* the land the only birds that will offer you shots are those which head the wind as they fly from the land to the sea ; and these will be very few you may be sure. But if you can dig a hole, deep enough to hide you up to the shoulders, on some part of the shore near low-water mark (or are able to conceal yourself behind a natural or roughly made shelter), and it is a stormy day, with the wind blowing, as I have explained, you will certainly obtain shots and plenty of them, *if*, of course, fowl are in the vicinity.

‘ Your best chance of sport is when there is a gale at sea, and a hard frost : for the Ducks, Geese, and shore birds will then be constantly on wing in search of food, which is not in severe weather, either by day or night, so accessible to them as usual.

‘ A good position to ensconce yourself in is the extremity of a promontory that runs some little distance from the shore : for wild fowl of all kinds seem to make a landmark of a projecting point of rock or sand, and will fly over the end of it in their passages from one part of an estuary to another.

‘ Of all favourable places for this style of shooting, none equals the *last* piece of ooze-bank that is daily covered by the flowing tide, for it is there both Ducks and Waders will betake themselves when their other feeding and resting places are submerged.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

‘ I have enjoyed rare sport in this position : but you will, I need hardly explain, require a man and boat in attendance not far distant when the flood makes a longer stay impossible. Be sure the boat in waiting on you contains spare oars and thowl pins : I was once nearly lost through my boatman breaking an oar in his struggles, against wind and wave, to arrive in time to save me from a ducking, the tide having flowed more rapidly than usual over the small island of flat sand I had dug my shelter-pit in.

‘ It was indeed more exciting than amusing to watch the violent efforts of my rescuer in his endeavours to scull up to me with his one and only oar, the water meantime rising above my long boots, and nothing but the angry sea in view for a mile on every side.’

COACHING

THE many boons conferred by Mr. John Palmer upon his generation faded before the advance of the railways ; but he has deserved well of posterity, if only for that he altered the coach team from three horses to four. Until that enterprising man undertook to demonstrate that the coach could carry letters more rapidly and safely than could the post-boy, our ancestors had been content with the unicorn team ; but after Palmer had astonished the world by making the journey from Bath to London, in 1784, at a rate of nearly seven miles an hour, the team of four horses gradually but steadily supplanted that of three in the stages on almost every road in the country.

It is generally assumed that fast coaching only came into existence after the macadamisation of the roads ; but this is not quite the case. Under favourable conditions the speed attained in pre-Macadam days was nearly as great as it became later. The *Sporting Magazine* of June 1807 says : ‘ Lately one of the stage coaches on the North road ran from London to Stamford, a distance of 90 miles, in 9 hrs. 4 mins. The passengers, four in number, breakfasted and dined on the road, so it must have run at the rate of 12 miles an hour all the time it was travelling.’

The ‘ old heavies ’ discarded under Palmer’s drastic rule worked out their lives as ordinary stage coaches, and some of these remained on the road until well on in the nineteenth century.

Nimrod’s description of the old-time coachman is worth giving :—

‘ The old-fashioned coachman to a heavy coach—and they

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

were all heavy down to very recent times—bore some analogy with the prize-fighter, for he stood highest who could hit hardest. He was generally a man of large frame, made larger by indulgence, and of great bodily power—which was useful to him. To the button-hole of his coat were appended several whipcord points, which he was sure to have occasion for on the road, for his horses were whipped till whipping was as necessary to them as their harness. In fair play to him, however, he was not solely answerable for this: the spirit of his cattle was broken by the task they were called to perform—for in those days twenty-mile stages were in fashion—and what was the consequence? Why, the four-horse whip and the Nottingham whipcord were of no avail over the latter part of the ground, and something like a cat-o'-nine-tails was produced out of the boot, which was jocularly called “the apprentice”; and a shrewd apprentice it was to the art of torturing which was inflicted on the wheelers without stint or measure, but without which the coach might have been often left on the road. One circumstance alone saved these horses from destruction: this was the frequency of ale-houses on the road, not one of which could then be passed without a call.

‘ Still, our old-fashioned coachman was a scientific man in his calling—more so, perhaps, than by far the greater part of his brethren of the present day, inasmuch as his energies and skill were more frequently put to the test. He had heavy loads, bad roads, and weary horses to deal with, neither was any part of his harness to be depended on, upon a pinch. Then the box he sat upon was worse than Pandora’s, with all the evils it contained, for even hope appeared to have deserted it. It rested on the bed of the axletree, and shook the frame to atoms; but when prayers were put up to have it altered, the proprietors said, “No; the rascal will always be asleep if we place his box on the springs.” If among all these difficulties, then, he, by degrees, became a drunkard, who can wonder at his becoming so? But he was a *coachman*. He could fetch the last ounce out of a wheel-horse by the use of

COACHING

his double thong or his "apprentice," and the point of his lash told terribly upon his leaders. He likewise applied it scientifically ; it was directed under the bar to the flank, and after the third hit he brought it up to his hand by *the draw*, so that it never got entangled in the pole-chains, or in any part of the harness. He could untie a knot with his teeth and tie another with his tongue, as well as he could with his hands ; and if his thong broke off in the middle, he could splice it with dexterity and even with neatness as his coach was proceeding on its journey. In short, he could do what coachmen of the present day cannot do, because they have not been called upon to do it ; and he likewise could do what they never try to do—namely, he could drive when he was drunk nearly as well as when he was sober. He was very frequently a faithful servant to his employers ; considered trustworthy by bankers and others in the country through which he passed ; and as humane to his horses, perhaps, as the adverse circumstances he was placed in by his masters would admit.'

Time has dealt kindly with the reputation of the old stage coachman, and popular tradition holds him, as Nimrod portrayed him, a whip of unrivalled skill. That there were such men is perfectly true ;¹ but not every stage coachman was an expert : not all were skilful or even careful, and not all were civil : and if, as Nimrod says, they could drive as well when drunk as when sober, the cold light of contemporary record shows that there was ample room for improvement. Take the following :—On the 18th May 1808 the coachman of the Portsmouth coach to London was intoxicated, and " when he came to the foot of the hill on Wimbledon Common, instead of keeping straight on, turned to left, and found himself in Putney Lane, where, turning the corner of Mr. Kensington's wall in order to get again into the road at Wandsworth, the coach was overturned." He appears to have driven on to the bank by the roadside. The ten outside passengers were all more or less hurt, one dying from her injuries, and the coach-

¹ Robert Poynter drove the Lewes stage for thirty years without an accident.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

man himself had both legs broken. Accidents due to reckless driving and racing were very common, despite the law¹ of 1790 which made a coachman who, by furious driving or careless, overturned his coach, liable to a fine not over five pounds. The following is typical :—

‘ Last night occurred one of those dreadful catastrophes, the result of driving opposition coaches, which has so stunned the country with horror that sober people for a time will not hazard their lives in these vehicles of fury and madness.

‘ Two coaches that run daily from Hinckley to Leicester had set out together. The first having descended the hill leading to Leicester was obliged to stop to repair the harness. The other coachman saw the accident and seized the moment to give his antagonist the *go by*, flogging the horses into a gallop down the hill. The horses contrived to keep on their legs, but took fright at something on the road, and became so unmanageable in the hands of a drunken coachman, that in their sweep to avoid the object of their alarm, the driver could not recover them so as to clear the post of the turnpike gate at the bottom of the hill. The velocity was so great that the coach was split in two ; three persons were dashed to pieces and instantly killed, two others survived but a few hours in the greatest agony ; four were conveyed away for surgical aid with fractured limbs, and two in the dickey were thrown with that part of the coach to a considerable distance, and not much hurt as they fell on a hedge. The coachman fell a victim to his fury and madness. It is time the Magistrates put a stop to these outrageous proceedings that have existed too long in this part of the country’ (*St. James’s Chronicle*, 15th July 1815).

The frequency of upsets is suggested by a letter which appeared in the papers in 1785. The writer, who signs himself ‘ A Sufferer,’ begs coach proprietors to direct their servants, when the coach has been overturned, ‘ not to drag the passengers out at the window, but to replace the coach on its

¹ 30 Geo. III., c. 36.

COACHING

wheels first, provided it can be accomplished with the strength they have with them.'

After coaches began to carry the mails, accidents grew more numerous. We can trace many to the greater speed maintained, others to defective workmanship which resulted in broken axles or lost wheels, many to top-heaviness, and not a few to carelessness. The short stage drivers, on the whole, were the worst offenders. For sheer recklessness this would be hard to beat :—

' During the dense fog of Wednesday last, as a Woolwich coach full of inside and outside passengers was driving at a furious rate, just after it had passed the Six Bells on its way to town, the coachman ran against a heavy country cart. The stage was upset, and those on the roof were pitched violently against an empty coal waggon ; two of them fell on the shafts, one of whom had a shoulder badly dislocated ; the other had his jawbone broken, with the loss of his front teeth. A Greenwich pensioner, with a wooden leg, had an arm broken, and some contusions on the head ' (*Bell's Life*, 15th December 1822).

It would be easy to compile a list of accidents due to causes unforeseen, each one illustrating a different danger of the road. Here are a few :—

' Tuesday afternoon, as one of the Brighton stages was leaving London at a rapid pace, the pole broke in Lambeth, and the coach was upset. Several passengers had limbs broken and others were injured ' (*Bell's Life*, 25th August 1822).

' A fatal accident befel the Woolwich Tally Ho opposition stage on Tuesday. Coming down the hill from the Green Man the horses became restive, the coachman lost his command, and immediately the whole set off at full speed. In turning a corner the coach upset, being heavily laden outside. Out of sixteen persons only one escaped without a leg or arm broken, and four are not expected to survive. The coach was literally dashed to pieces. The inside passengers were more lacerated than those outside, owing to the coach being

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

shattered to pieces and their being dragged along the road for fifty yards. But little hopes are entertained of a Major M'Leod—a very fine young man ; not a vestige of his face is left except his eyes ' (*Bell's Life*, 22nd September 1822).

' A fatal accident happened to Gamble, coachman of the Yeovil mail, on Wednesday, caused by the leaders shying at an old oak tree. The coachman was killed on the spot, and the guard escaped with bruises. The horses started off and galloped into Andover at the rate of 20 miles an hour. The single inside passenger was not aware of anything amiss until two gentlemen, who saw the horses going at a furious rate without a driver, succeeded in stopping them just as they were turning into the George gateway ' (*Times*, 21st February 1838).

Coachmen and guards were apt to leave too much to the honour of the horses when stopping, and it was not at all uncommon for the team to start on its journey with nobody on the box. An old coachman told Lord Algernon St. Maur that on one night's drive he met two coaches without any driver ! In 1806 (46 Geo. III., c. 36) it was made an offence punishable by fine to leave the team without a proper person in charge while the coach stopped.

Organised races between public coaches were very popular : the coachmen did not spare the horses on these occasions. This race took place in 1808 :—

' On Sunday, August 7th, a coach called the " Patriot," belonging to the master of the " Bell," Leicester, drawn by four horses, started against another coach called the " Defiance," from Leicester to Nottingham, a distance of 26 miles, both coaches changing horses at Loughborough. Thousands of people from all parts assembled to witness the event, and bets to a considerable amount were depending. Both coaches started exactly at 8 o'clock, and after the severest contest ever remembered, the " Patriot " arrived at Nottingham first by two minutes only, performing the distance of 26 miles in 2 hrs. 10 mins., carrying twelve passengers.'

Mishaps were so frequent and productive of so many

*Mail Coaches Racing :
Something Wrong with the
Opposition Coach*



COACHING

fatalities, to say nothing of broken limbs, that at last general outcry arose for more stringent repressive measures : and in 1820 a law (1 Geo. iv., c. 4) was passed, making coachmen who might be guilty of ‘ wanton or furious driving or racing ’ liable to imprisonment as well as to fine, even though their proceedings were not brought to a close by overturning the coach. The new law did not make an end of accidents : on the whole there were fewer as the result of racing, but the records of the time bear ample witness to lack of ordinary caution.

For many years Macadam and Telford had been devoting their ingenuity to the task of solving the secret of road-making ; it was not until 1818 that the Macadam system was finally approved and adopted. Then the work of remaking the roads of the kingdom was taken in hand, and the new highways, when constructed, ushered in the brief ‘ golden age ’ of coaching—say 1825 to 1838, the mails having been transferred to the railways in the latter year.

Nimrod’s famous essay, written in 1835, shows in convincing fashion the difference between coaching in the olden days and at its best :—

‘ May we be permitted, since we have mentioned the *Arabian Nights*, to make a little demand on our readers’ fancy, and suppose it possible that a worthy old gentleman of this said year—1742—had fallen comfortably asleep *à la Dodswell*, and never awoke till Monday morning in Piccadilly ? “ What coach, your honour ? ” says a ruffianly-looking fellow, much like what he might have been had he lived a hundred years back. “ I wish to go home to Exeter,” replies the old gentleman mildly. “ Just in time, your honour, here she comes—them there grey horses ; where ’s your luggage ? ” “ Don’t be in a hurry,” observes the stranger ; “ that ’s a gentleman’s carriage.” “ It ain’t ! I tell you,” says the cad ; “ it ’s the Comet, and you must be as quick as lightning.” *Nolens volens*, the remonstrating old gentleman is shoved into the Comet, by a cad at each elbow, having been three times assured

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

his luggage is in the hind boot, and twice three times denied having ocular demonstration of the fact.

‘However, he is now seated; and “What *gentleman* is going to drive us?” is his first question to his fellow-passengers. “He is no gentleman, sir,” says a person who sits opposite to him, and who happens to be a proprietor of the coach. “He has been on the Comet ever since she started, and is a very steady young man.” “Pardon my ignorance,” replies the regenerated; “from the cleanliness of his person, the neatness of his apparel, and the language he made use of, I mistook him for some enthusiastic bachelor of arts, wishing to become a charioteer after the manner of the illustrious ancients.”¹ “You must have been long in foreign parts, sir,” observes the proprietor. In five minutes, or less, after this parley commenced, the wheels went round, and in another five the coach arrived at Hyde Park gate; but long before it got there, the worthy gentleman of 1742 (set down by his fellow-travellers for either a little cracked or an emigrant from the backwoods of America) exclaimed, “What! off the stones already?” “You have never been on the stones,” observes his neighbour on his right; “no stones in London now, sir.”²

‘In five minutes under the hour the Comet arrives at Hounslow, to the great delight of our friend, who by this time waxed hungry, not having broken his fast before starting. “Just fifty-five minutes and thirty-seven seconds,” says he, “from the time we left London!—wonderful travelling,

¹ The old gentleman’s conjecture was not far wrong. At this time, 1835, it is true fewer men of good birth occupied the box than had been the case a few years before—if we rightly interpret Nimrod’s own remarks on the point. When the box had been set on springs or made an integral part of the coach-body, when the roads had been made worthy of the name and fast work the rule, coach-driving became popular among men of social position. Some drove for pleasure, horsing the coaches themselves, others took up driving as a profession and made good incomes thereby. These gentlemen coachmen did much to raise the standard of conduct among the professionals of humble origin. Lord Algernon St. Maur (*Driving*, Badminton Library) says that Mr. Stevenson, who was driving the Brighton Age in 1830, was ‘the great reformer who set a good example as regards punctuality, neatness, and sobriety.’

² Until Macadam was adopted the streets in London were cobbled or paved.

COACHING

gentlemen, to be sure, but much too fast to be safe. However, thank Heaven, we are arrived at a good-looking house; and now, *waiter*, I hope you have got breakf——” Before the last syllable, however, of the word could be pronounced, the worthy old gentleman’s head struck the back of the coach by a jerk, which he could not account for (the fact was, three of the four fresh horses were bolters), and the waiter, the inn, and indeed Hounslow itself (*terraeque urbesque recedunt*) disappeared in the twinkling of an eye. Never did such a succession of doors, windows, and window-shutters pass so quickly in his review before—and he hoped they might never do so again. Recovering, however, a little from his surprise—“My dear sir,” said he, “you told me we were to change horses at Hounslow? Surely they are not so inhuman as to drive these poor animals another stage at this unmerciful rate!” “Change horses, sir!” says the proprietor; “why, we changed them whilst you were putting on your spectacles, and looking at your watch. Only one minute allowed for it at Hounslow, and it is often done in fifty seconds by those nimble-fingered horse-keepers.” “You astonish me—but really I do not like to go so fast.” “Oh, sir! we always spring them over these six miles. It is what we call *the hospital ground*.” This alarming phrase is presently interpreted: it intimates that horses whose “backs are getting down instead of up in their work”—some “that won’t hold an ounce down hill, or draw an ounce up”—others “that kick over the pole one day and over the bars the next”—in short, all the reprobates, styled in the road slang *bo-kickers*, are sent to work these six miles, because *here* they have nothing to do but gallop—not a pebble as big as a nutmeg on the road; and so even, that it would not disturb the equilibrium of a spirit-level.

‘The coach, however, goes faster and faster over the *hospital ground*, as the *bo-kickers* feel their legs, and the collars get warm to their shoulders; and having ten outsides, the luggage of the said ten, and a few extra packages besides on the roof, she rolls rather more than is pleasant, although the centre

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

of gravity is pretty well kept down by four not slender insides, two well-laden boots, and three huge trunks in the slide. The gentleman of the last century, however, becomes alarmed—is sure the horses are running away with the coach—declares he perceives by the shadow that there is nobody on the box, and can see the reins dangling about the horses' heels. He attempts to look out of the window, but his fellow-traveller dissuades him from doing so: "You may get a shot in your eye from the wheel. Keep your head in the coach, it's all right, depend on 't. We always spring 'em over this stage." Persuasion is useless; for the horses increase their speed, and the worthy old gentleman looks out. But what does he see? Death and destruction before his eyes? No: to his surprise he finds the coachman firm at his post, and in the act of taking a pinch of snuff from the gentleman who sits beside him on the *bench*, his horses going at the rate of a mile in three minutes at the time. "But suppose anything should break, or a linchpin should give way and let a wheel loose?" is the next appeal to the communicative but not very consoling proprietor. "Nothing *can* break, sir," is the reply; "all of the very best stuff; axletrees of the best K.Q. iron, faggotted edgeways, well bedded in the timbers; and as for linchpins, we have not one about the coach. We use the best patent boxes that are manufactured. In short, sir, you are as safe in it as if you were in your bed." "Bless me," exclaims the old man, "what improvements! And the roads!!!" "They are at perfection, sir," says the proprietor. "No horse walks a yard in this coach between London and Exeter—all trotting ground now." "A little *galloping* ground, I fear," whispers the senior to himself! "But who has effected all this improvement in your paving?" "An American of the name of Macadam,"¹ was the reply, "but coachmen call him the Colossus of Roads. Great things have likewise been done in

¹ John London Macadam was a Scotsman by birth. In 1770, when fourteen years old, he was sent to the care of an uncle in New York, whence he did not return till he was twenty-six years of age; hence the mistake in describing him as 'an American.'

COACHING

cutting through hills and altering the course of roads : and it is no uncommon thing now-a-days to see four horses trotting away merrily down hill on that very ground where they formerly were seen walking up hill."

' " And pray, my good sir, what sort of horses may you have over the next stage ? " " Oh, sir, no more bo-kickers. It is hilly and severe ground, and requires cattle strong and staid. You 'll see four as fine horses put to the coach at Staines as you ever saw in a nobleman's carriage in your life." " Then we shall have no more galloping—no more springing them, as you term it ? " " Not quite so fast over the next ground," replied the proprietor ; " but he will make good play over some part of it : for example, when he gets three parts down a hill he lets them loose, and cheats them out of half the one they have to ascend from the bottom of it. In short, they are halfway up it before a horse touches his collar ; and we *must* take every advantage with such a fast coach as this, and one that loads so well, or we should never keep our time. We are now to a minute ; in fact, the country people no longer look at the *sun* when they want to set their clocks—they look only to the *Comet*. But, depend upon it you are quite safe ; we have nothing but first-rate artists on this coach." " Artist ! artist ! " grumbles the old gentleman, " we had no such term as that."

' " I should like to see this *artist* change horses at the next stage," resumes our ancient ; " for at the last it had the appearance of magic—' Presto, Jack, and begone ! ' " " By all means ; you will be much gratified. It is done with a quickness and ease almost incredible to any one who has only read or heard of it ; not a buckle nor a rein is touched twice, and still all is made secure ; but use becomes second nature with us. Even in *my* younger days it was always half an hour's work—sometimes more. There was—' Now, ladies and gentlemen, what would you like to take ? There 's plenty of time, while the horses are changing, for tea, coffee, or supper ; and the coachman will wait for you—won't you, Mr. Smith ? '

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

Then Mr. Smith himself was in no hurry ; he had a lamb about his coach for one butcher in the town, and perhaps half a calf for another, a barrel of oysters for the lawyer, and a basket of game for the parson, *all on his own account*. In short, the best wheel of the coach was his, and he could not be otherwise than accommodating.”

‘The coach arrives at Staines, and the ancient gentleman puts his intentions into effect, though he was near being again too late ; for by the time he could extract his hat from the netting that suspended it over his head, the leaders had been taken from their bars, and were walking up the yard towards their stables. On perceiving a fine thorough-bred horse led towards the coach with a twitch fastened tightly to his nose, he exclaims, “Holloa, Mr. Horse-keeper ! You are going to put an unruly horse in the coach.” “What ! this here ’oss ?” growls the man ; “the quietest hanimal alive, sir !” as he shoves him to the near side of the pole. At this moment, however, the coachman is heard to say in somewhat of an undertone, “Mind what you are about, Bob ; don’t let him touch the roller-bolt.” In thirty seconds more they are off—“the staid and steady team,” so styled by the proprietor in the coach. “LET ’EM GO ! and take care of yourselves,” says the artist, so soon as he is firmly seated upon his box ; and this is the way they start. The near leader rears right on end ; and if the rein had not been yielded to him at the instant, he would have fallen backwards on the head of the pole. The moment the twitch was taken from the nose of the thorough-bred near-wheeler, he drew himself back to the extent of his pole-chain—his forelegs stretched out before him—and then, like a lion loosened from his toil, made a snatch at the coach that would have broken two pairs of traces of 1742. A steady and good-whipped horse, however, his partner, started the coach himself, with a gentle touch of the thong, and away they went off together. But the thorough-bred one was very far from being comfortable ; it was in vain that the coachman tried to soothe him with his voice, or stroked him with the crop

COACHING

of his whip. He drew three parts of the coach, and cantered for the first mile, and when he did settle down to his trot, his snorting could be heard by the passengers, being as much as to say, "I was not born to be a slave." In fact, as the proprietor now observed, "he had been a fair plate horse in his time, but his temper was always queer."

'After the first shock was over, the Conservative of the eighteenth century felt comfortable. The pace was considerably slower than it had been over the last stage, but he was unconscious of the reason for its being diminished. It was to accommodate the queer temper of the race-horse,¹ who, if he had not been humoured at starting, would never have settled down to his trot, but have ruffled all the rest of the team. He was also surprised, if not pleased, at the quick rate at which they were ascending hills which, in his time, he should have been asked by the coachman to have walked up—but his pleasure was short-lived; the third hill they descended produced a return of his agony. This was what is termed on the road a long fall of ground, and the coach rather pressed upon the horses. The temper of the race-horse became exhausted; breaking into a canter, he was of little use as a wheeler, and there was then nothing for it but a gallop. The leaders only wanted the signal; and the point of the thong being thrown lightly over their backs, they were off like an arrow out of a bow: but the rocking of the coach was awful, and more particularly so to the passengers on the roof. Nevertheless, she was not in danger: the master-hand of the artist kept her in a direct line; and meeting the opposing ground, she steadied, and all was right. The newly-awakened gentleman, however, begins to grumble again. "Pray, my good sir," says he anxiously, "do use your authority over your coachman, and *insist* upon his putting the drag-chain on the wheel when

¹ It was not unusual for retired race-horses to end their days 'on the road.' A notable instance is that of Mendoza by Javelin. Mendoza won eight races at Newmarket in his three seasons on the turf, 1791-2-3; then the Duke of Leeds bought him as a hunter; and after a few seasons with hounds he made one of a team in the Catterick and Greta Bridge mail-coach. Mendoza was still at work in 1807, but had become blind.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

descending the next hill." "I have no such authority," replies the proprietor. "It is true, we are now drawn by my horses, but I cannot interfere with the driving of them." "But is he not your servant?" "He is, sir; but I contract to work the coach so many miles in so many hours, and he engages to drive it, and each is subject to a fine if the time be not kept on the road. On so fast a coach as this every advantage must be taken; and if we were to drag down such hills as these, we should never reach Exeter to-day."

'Our friend, however, will have no more of it. He quits the coach at Bagshot, congratulating himself on the safety of his limbs. Yet he takes one more peep at the change, which is done with the same despatch as before; three greys and a pie-ball replacing three chestnuts and a bay—the harness beautifully clean, and the ornaments bright as the sun. Not a word is spoken by the passengers, who merely look their admiration; but the laconic address of the coachman is not lost on the bystanders. "Put the bay mare near wheel this evening, and the stallion *up to the cheek*," said he to his horse-keeper as he placed his right foot on the roller-bolt—*i.e.* the last step but one to the box. "How is Paddy's leg?" "It's all right, sir," replied the horse-keeper. "Let 'em go, then," quoth the *artist*, "and take care of yourselves."

'The worthy old gentleman is now shown into a room, and after warming his hands at the fire, rings the bell for the waiter. A well-dressed person appears, whom he of course takes for the landlord. "Pray, sir," says he, "have you any *slow* coach down this road to-day?" "Why, yes, sir," replies John; "we shall have the Regulator down in an hour." "Just right," said our friend; "it will enable me to break my fast, which I have not done to-day." "Oh, sir," observes John, "these here fast *drags* be the ruin of us. 'Tis all hurry scurry, and no gentleman has time to have nothing on the road. What will you take, sir? Mutton-chops, veal-cutlets, beef-steaks, or a fowl (to kill)?"

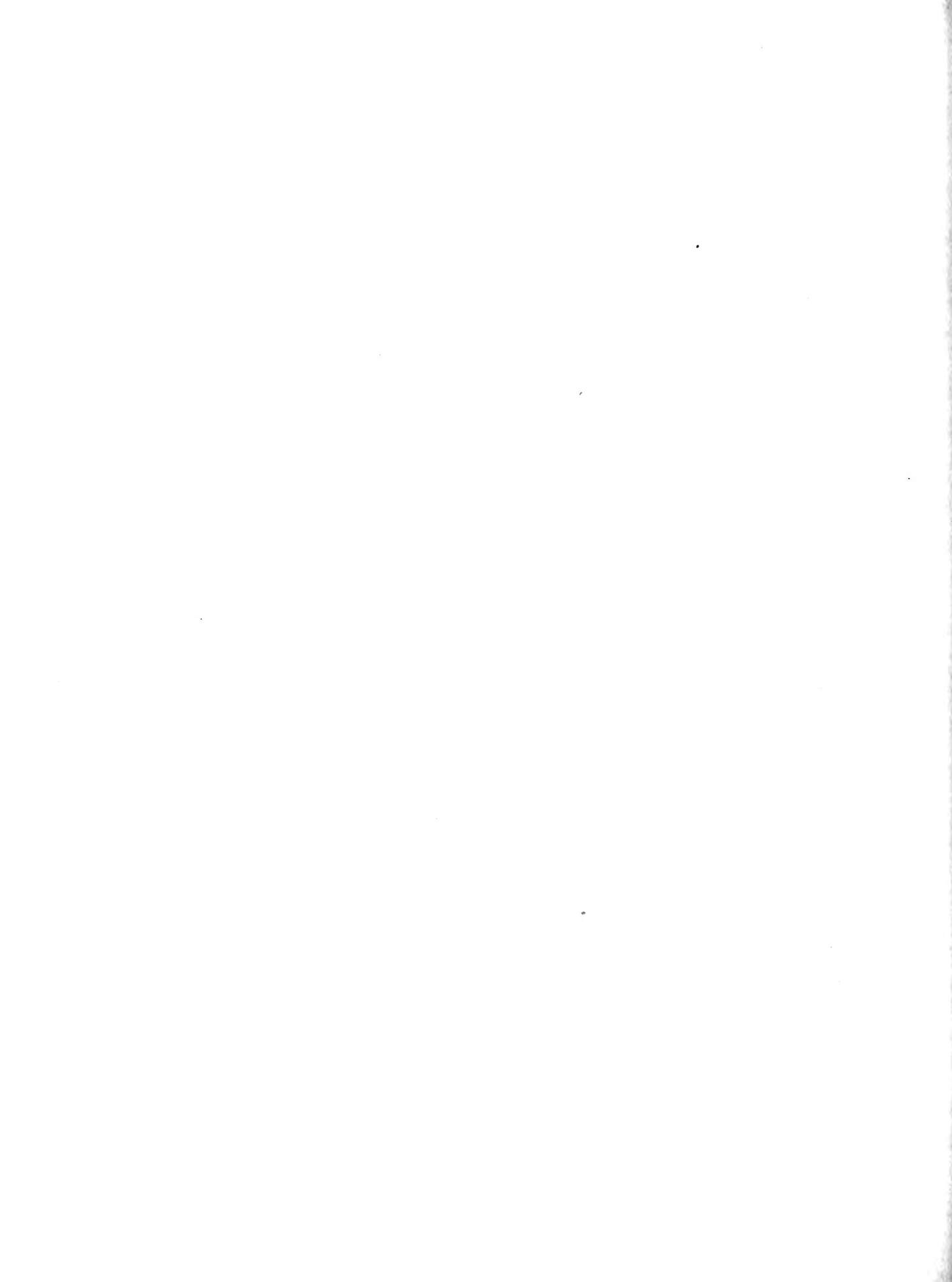
'At the appointed time, the Regulator appears at the door.

Coaching :

*An Amateur Driver in Days
of the 'Whip Club'*







COACHING

It is a strong, well-built drag, painted what is called chocolate colour, bedaubed all over with gilt letters—a bull's head on the doors, a Saracen's head on the hind boot, and drawn by four strapping horses ; but it wants the neatness of the other. The passengers may be, by a shade or two, of a lower order than those who had gone forward with the Comet ; nor, perhaps, is the coachman quite so refined as the one we have just taken leave of. He has not the neat white hat, the clean doeskin gloves, the well-cut trousers, and dapper frock ; but still his appearance is respectable, and perhaps, in the eyes of many, more in character with his calling. Neither has he the agility of the artist on the Comet, for he is nearly double his size ; but he is a strong powerful man, and might be called a pattern card of the heavy coachman of the present day—in other words, of a man who drives a coach which carries sixteen passengers instead of fourteen, and is rated at eight miles an hour instead of ten. “ What room in the Regulator ? ” says our friend to the waiter, as he comes to announce its arrival. “ Full inside, sir, and in front ; but you 'll have the gammon board all to yourself, and your luggage is in the hind boot.” “ Gammon board ! Pray, what 's that ? Do you not mean the basket ? ”¹ “ Oh no, sir,” says John, smiling ; “ no such thing on the road now. It is the hind-dickey, as some call it ; where you 'll be as comfortable as possible, and can sit with your back or your face to the coach, or *both*, if you like.” “ Ah, ah,” continues the old gentleman ; “ something new again, I presume.” However, the mystery is cleared up ; the ladder is reared to the hind wheel, and the gentleman safely seated on the gammon board.

‘ Before ascending to his place, our friend has cast his eye on the team that is about to convey him to Hartford Bridge, the next stage on the great western road, and he perceives it to be of a different stamp from that which he had seen taken from the coach at Bagshot. It consisted of four moderate-

¹ The early coaches were equipped with a huge basket slung over the hind axle wherein passengers were carried at lower fares.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

sized horses, full of power, and still fuller of condition, but with a fair sprinkling of blood ; in short, the eye of a judge would have discovered something about them not very unlike galloping. "All right!" cried the guard, taking his key-bugle¹ in his hand ; and they proceeded up the village, at a steady pace, to the tune of "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," and continued at that pace for the first five miles. "*I am landed,*" thinks our friend to himself. Unluckily, however, for the humane and cautious old gentleman, even the Regulator was about to show tricks. Although what now is called a slow coach, she is timed at eight miles in the hour through a great extent of country, and must, of course, make play where she can, being strongly opposed by hills lower down the country, trifling as these hills are, no doubt, to what they once were. The Regulator, moreover, loads well, not only with passengers, but with luggage ; and the last five miles of this stage, called the Bridge Flat, have the reputation of being the best five miles for a coach to be found at this time in England. The ground is firm ; the surface undulating, and therefore favourable to draught ; always dry, not a shrub being near it ; nor is there a stone upon it much larger than a marble. These advantages, then, are not lost to the Regulator, or made use of without sore discomposure to the solitary tenant of her gammon board.

'Any one that has looked into books will very readily account for the lateral motion, or rocking, as it is termed, of a coach, being greatest at the greatest distance from the horses (as the tail of a paper kite is in motion whilst the body remains at rest) ; and more especially when laden as this coach was—the greater part of the weight being forward. The situation of our friend, then, was once more deplorable. The Regulator takes but twenty-three minutes for these celebrated five miles, which cannot be done without "springing the cattle" now and then ; and it was in one of the very best of their gallops of that

¹ Only the mail-coach guard carried a horn ; stage-coach guards used the key-bugle, and some were very clever performers on it.

COACHING

day, that they were met by the coachman of the Comet, who was returning with his up-coach. When coming out of rival yards, coachmen never fail to cast an eye to the loading of their opponents on the road, and now that of the natty artist of the Comet experienced a high treat. He had a full view of his quondam passenger, and thus described his situation.

‘ He was seated with his back to the horses—his teeth set grim as death—his eyes cast down towards the ground, thinking the less he saw of his danger the better. There was what is called a top-heavy load—perhaps a ton of luggage on the roof, and, it may be, not *quite* in obedience to the Act of Parliament standard.¹ There were also two horses at wheel, whose strides were of rather unequal length, and this operated powerfully on the coach. In short, the lurches of the Regulator were awful at the moment of the Comet meeting her. A tyro in mechanics would have exclaimed, “The centre of gravity must be lost, the centrifugal force will have the better of it—*over she must go!*”

‘ The centre of gravity having been preserved, the coach arrived safe at Hartford Bridge; but the old gentleman has again had enough of it. “I will walk into Devonshire,” said he, as he descended from his perilous exaltation. “What did that rascally waiter mean by telling me this was a slow coach? and moreover, look at the luggage on the roof!” “Only regulation height, sir,” says the coachman; “we aren’t allowed to have it an inch higher; sorry we can’t please you, sir, but we will try and make room for you in front.” “*Fronti nulla fides,*” mutters the worthy to himself, as he walks tremblingly into the house—adding, “I shall not give this fellow a shilling; he is dangerous.”

‘ The Regulator being off, the waiter is again applied to. “What do you charge per mile posting?” “One and sixpence, sir.” “Bless me! just double! Let me see—two

¹ 50 Geo. III., c. 48 came into operation in 1810. This enacted that on a four-horse coach baggage might be piled to a height of 2 feet. To encourage low-hung coaches this law allowed baggage to be piled to a height of 10 ft. 9 in. *from the ground.*

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

hundred miles, at two shillings per mile, postboys, turnpikes, etc., £20. This will never do. Have you no coach that does not carry luggage on the top?" "Oh yes, sir," replies the waiter, "we shall have one to-night that is not allowed to carry a band-box on the roof."¹ "That's the coach for me; pray what do you call it?" "The Quicksilver mail, sir; one of the best out of London—Jack White and Tom Brown, picked coachmen, over this ground—Jack White down to-night." "Guarded and lighted?" "Both, sir; blunderbuss and pistols in the sword-case;² a lamp each side the coach, and one under the foot-board—see to pick up a pin the darkest night of the year." "Very fast?" "Oh no, sir, *just keeps time, and that's all.*" "That's the coach for me, then," repeats our hero; "and I am sure I shall feel at my ease in it. I suppose it is what used to be called the Old Mercury."

'Unfortunately, the Devonport (commonly called the Quicksilver) mail is half a mile in the hour faster than most in England, and is, indeed, one of the miracles of the road. Let us, then, picture to ourselves our anti-reformer snugly seated in this mail, on a pitch-dark night in November. It is true she has no luggage on the roof, nor much to incommode her elsewhere; but she is a mile in the hour faster than the Comet, at least three miles quicker than the Regulator; and she

¹ The conveyance of 'trunks, parcels, and other packages' on the roof of a mail-coach was prohibited in the Postmaster-General's circular to mail contractors of 29th June 1807. As the mails increased it became impossible to enforce this regulation, and the bags were carried wherever they could be stowed. 'The Druid' says of the Edinburgh mail-coach: 'The heaviest night as regards correspondence was when the American mail had come in. On those occasions the bags have been known to weigh above 16 cwt. They were contained in sacks seven feet long and were laid in three tiers across the top, so high that no guard unless he were a Chang in stature could look over them . . . and the waist (the seat behind the coachman) and the hind boot were filled as well.'

² It must be remembered that the old gentleman speaks by the light of his knowledge of nearly a century earlier, when highway robbery was very common, and it was not usual for coaches to run at night. At the period to which Nimrod refers highwaymen had not entirely disappeared from the roads (William Rea was hanged for this offence, 4th July 1828), and not every stage-coach carried a guard. Mail-coaches, all of which carried guards, were, of course, unknown to Nimrod's old gentleman.

COACHING

performs more than half her journey by lamplight. It is needless to say, then, our senior soon finds out his mistake; but there is no remedy at hand, for it is the dead of the night, and all the inns are shut up. He must proceed, or be left behind in a stable. The climax of his misfortunes then approaches.

‘Nature being exhausted, sleep comes to his aid, and he awakes on a stage which is called the fastest on the journey—four miles of ground, and twelve minutes the time! The old gentleman starts from his seat, having dreamed the horses were running away with the coach, and so, no doubt, they might be. He is determined to convince himself of the fact, though the passengers assure him “all ’s right.” “Don’t put your head out of the window,” says one of them, “you will lose your hat to a certainty”: but advice is seldom listened to by a terrified man, and next moment a stentorian voice is heard, crying, “Stop, coachman, stop—I have lost my hat and wig!” The coachman hears him not—and in another second the broad wheels of a road waggon have for ever demolished the lost head-gear.’

That was the Road at its best: the poetic side we have in mind when we speak of the good old days of coaching. The following passages refer equally to the ‘golden age’; their very baldness has an eloquence of its own. It is true that the winter of 1836-37 is conspicuous in history for the exceptionally heavy snowfall; but as Nimrod has shown coaching at its best, there is no injustice in presenting these glimpses of coach travel at its worst:—

‘Tabor, guard of the Devonport, who left London with the mail on Sunday and returned on Wednesday, reports that a mile and a half from Amesbury they got completely blocked. The leaders dropped down, but rose again; the near wheel-horse fell and could not be got up. The coachman procured a pair of post horses, but they could only get the wheel horse out of the snow; it was impossible to get him on his legs. Four more post horses and four waggon horses were requisi-

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

tioned, and with their assistance the mail was extricated by daylight. Then they travelled with the six post horses across the Downs. They were again blocked near Mere. About a hundred men were at this time employed a little distance off in digging out the Subscription and Defiance coaches. After being extricated by some labourers they resumed their progress from Mere with four fresh mail-horses and two posters. Between Ilchester and Ilminster the post horse leaders fell in a snow drift, and were run upon by the mail leaders' (*Bell's Life*, January 1837).

'The Estafette coach from Manchester on Sunday morning did not reach London until Tuesday night, having been dug out of the snow twelve times. It was the first coach from Manchester of the same day that arrived in town. The guard attributes his success to the exertions of four sailors, outside passengers, who lent a hand at every casualty.'

'A gentleman who left Sheffield by the Hope coach of Sunday week reports that the coach did not complete its journey until Saturday afternoon. Between Nottingham and Mansfield, close to the Forest, they came upon three coaches blocked in the snow, which was lying 9 feet deep. The Hope left Mansfield with eight horses and was driven into Nottingham with ten. They picked up a poor boy nearly perished with cold. The boy was got by a gentleman jumping down while the coach was in motion, for the coachman declared that if he came to dead stop he would not be able to get the wheels in motion again' (*Bell's Life*, 8th January 1837).

Highway robbery was still practised at this time, but the armed horseman with crape mask and pistols had gone out of fashion, and thefts were accomplished by craft.

'The Stirling mail has been robbed of notes to the value of £13,000 in the following manner,—A man took his seat at Stirling as an outside passenger. The mail was followed closely from Stirling by a gig containing two men. When the mail arrived at Kirkliston the guard stopped to take out the customary bags to leave there. The gig also stopped there.

COACHING

and the two men in it went into the house. The guard had left the mail box open, in which the parcels were, and the outside passenger easily abstracted the one containing the notes. He then left the coach. The gig with the two men took the Queensferry road. The parcels were not missed until the mail reached Edinburgh. On the Queensferry Road the two men were joined by their accomplice, the outside passenger. They left the gig and took a post chaise for Edinburgh. They discharged the chaise before entering the city and gave the post-boy £3' (*Bell's Life*, 2nd January 1825).

Great improvements in all matters connected with coaching were made during the first two decades of the nineteenth century : these were due to the rage for driving that prevailed about this time. The King was deeply interested in coaching, was himself no mean whip, and he set the fashion. It did not last very long. Nimrod, writing in 1835, remarks that about 1825 ' thirty to forty four-in-hand equipages were constantly to be seen about town : *one* is stared at now.'

The driving clubs held ' meets ' in George the Third's time much as they do at present, but the vehicles used were ' barouche landaus,' and the drive taken was much longer than that in vogue to-day. Bedfont beyond Hounslow, and Windsor were favourite places whither the coaches—' barouche landaus '—drove in procession to dine. Very particular attention was paid to dress. This was the costume in which members of the Whip Club, founded in 1808 as a rival to the Benson, mounted their boxes on 6th June 1808 in Park Lane, to drive to Harrow :—

' A light, drab-colour cloth coat made full, single breast with three tier of pockets, the skirt reaching to the ancles ; a mother of pearl button the size of a crown piece ; waistcoat blue and yellow stripe, each stripe an inch in depth ; small clothes corded silk plush made to button over the calf of the leg, with sixteen strings and rosettes to each knee. The boots very short and finished with very broad straps which hang over the tops and down to the ancle. A hat three inches and a half

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

deep in the crown only, and the same depth in the brim exactly. Each wore a large bouquet at the breast, thus resembling the coachmen of our nobility who, on His Majesty's birthday, appear in that respect so peculiarly distinguished.'¹

Grimaldi the clown, then at the zenith of his fame, burlesqued this get-up so mercilessly that a less conspicuous garb was adopted.

The fifteen barouche landaus which turned out on this occasion, driven by 'men of known skill in the science of charioteering,' were well calculated to set off the somewhat conspicuous attire of the members: they were 'Yellow-bodied carriages with whip springs and dickey boxes; cattle of a bright bay colour with silver plate ornaments on the harness and rosettes to the ears.'

The meets of the driving clubs appear to have roused a spirit of ribaldry in unregenerate youth. One day in March 1809 a young Etonian made his appearance in a low phaeton with a four-in-hand of donkeys, with which he brought up the rear of the procession as it drove round Grosvenor and Berkeley Squares.

The Driving Club was the *Benson*, which had been founded in 1807. Sir Henry Peyton was the last survivor of the 'noble, honourable, and respectable' drivers who composed it. Thackeray described him in the last of his papers on *The Four Georges* as he appeared driving the 'one solitary four-in-hand' to be seen in the London parks. He was then (1851) very old, and attracted attention as much by his dress, which was of the fashion of 1825, as by his then unique turn-out.

The *Benson Club* came to an end in 1853. The *Whip*

¹ This refers to the 'mail-coach parade,' which was first held in 1799 and for the last time in 1835. The coaches, to the number of about twenty-five, were either new or newly painted with the Royal Arms on the door, the stars of each of the four Orders of Knighthood on the upper panel, and the name of the town whither the coach ran on the small panel over each door. Coachmen and guards wore new uniforms and gentlemen used to lend their best teams—often also their coachmen, as appears from the passage quoted. A horseman rode behind each coach to make the procession longer. The 'meet' took place in Lincoln's Inn Fields and the coaches drove to St. James's, there turning to come back to the General Post-Office, then in Lombard Street.

*Modern Coaching:
In the Show Ring*





COACHING

Club, otherwise the Four Horse Club, came to an end in 1838. The Defiance Club, for members who had been 'lately permitted to retire' from the other two, was projected in 1809, but it does not appear to have come to anything. The Richmond Drag Club was founded in 1838, but it did not survive for many years; the members to the number of fifteen or sixteen used to meet at Lord Chesterfield's house. These were the principal clubs.

Some of the amateur whips of a century ago were addicted to coach matches. Here is the account of such a race from the *Sporting Magazine* of 1802 :—

'MAIL COACH MATCH.—On Thursday, May 20th, the London Mail, horsed by Mr. Laud, of the New London Inn, Exeter, with four beautiful grey horses, and driven by Mr. Cave Browne, of the Inniskilling Dragoons, started (at the sound of the bugle) from St. Sydwell's for a bet of Five Hundred Guineas against the Plymouth Mail, horsed by Mr. Phillipps, of the Hotel, with four capital blacks, and driven by Mr. Chichester of Arlington House, which got the Mail first to the Post Office in Honiton. The bet was won easy by Mr. Browne. A very great concourse of people assembled on this occasion.'

In 1811 Mr. George Seward undertook to drive a four-in-hand fifteen miles in fifty minutes. He selected the road from Hyde Park Corner to Staines, and started at six in the morning. He failed to accomplish his undertaking, but only by three minutes twenty seconds.

There was more originality about the competition arranged in May 1805 between Mr. Charles Buxton, inventor of the bit known by his name and one of the founders of the Whip Club, and a horse-dealer :—

'One of our most celebrated whips, Charles Buxton, Esq., has concluded a bet of 500 guineas with Mr. Thomas Hall, the dealer in horses. The object of the wager is to decide which of the two is the best driver of four unruly horses. The wager is to be decided by two friends of the parties, who are to pick

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

out eight horses from Spencer's, Marsden's, and White's. Lords Barrymore and Cranley are chosen as the umpires. The horses selected are only to be those which have not been broken in. The friend of each charioteer is to pick the horses alternately until the number agreed on is selected. The parties are then to mount the box and proceed to decide the wager. The bettings already are said to be considerable. Neither the scene of action nor the day when the contest is to take place are yet determined on. Mr. Buxton is said to be so certain of success that he has offered to double the bet.'

Though the law of 1820 made racing a criminal offence, the practice was one which could not be wholly put down, and on May-day the law was set at naught by popular consent, rival coaches on that day racing one another without disguise: the May-day race became an institution of the road, and seems to have been winked at by the authorities. Some wonderful records were made in these contests on the macadam. Thus, on 1st May 1830, the Independent Tally-ho ran from London to Birmingham, 109 miles, in 7 hours 39 minutes. It was not rare for a coach to perform its journey at a rate of fifteen miles an hour on May-day. We may compare this with the time made in the Leicester-Nottingham race of 1808 mentioned on p. 128.

It is seventy years since the carriage of the mails was transferred from coach to railway train, and there are yet living men who can remember the last journeys of the mail-coaches, some carrying little flags at half-mast, some displaying a miniature coffin, emblematic of the death of a great institution. Yet the mail-coach survived until a much later date in some districts, where the line was slow to penetrate. Mr. S. A. Kinglake, in *Baily's Magazine* of 1906, gave an account of the Oxford and Cheltenham coach, which only began to carry the mails in 1848, and made its last trip in 1862, when the opening of a new branch line ousted this lingerer on the roads.

The interregnum between the last of the old coaches and

COACHING

the modern era was not a very long one : indeed, taking the country as a whole, and accepting the coach as subsidiary to the railway, the old and the new overlap. Modern road coaching dates from the later 'sixties, when the late Duke of Beaufort, with some others, started the Brighton coach. This was the first of several private ventures of the same kind ; their primary object was to enable the owners to enjoy the pleasure of driving a team, and the financial side of the business was not much regarded. The subscription coach was a later development, with the same object in view, pleasure rather than money-making, and the large majority of the coaches which run from London to Brighton, St. Albans, Guildford, and other places within an easy day's journey are maintained by small syndicates of subscribers, who take turns on the box. American visitors patronise these vehicles extensively, and no doubt to their support may be traced Mr. Vanderbilt's venture on the Brighton road.

The modern coach travels quite as fast as its predecessor when required : as witness James Selby's famous performance on 13th July 1888. He left the White Horse Cellar at 10 A.M. ; arrived at the Old Ship, Brighton, 1.56 P.M. ; turned and reached town at 5.50 ; the journey out and home again being accomplished in 7 hours 50 minutes : part of the way between Earlswood and Horley he travelled at a rate of twenty miles an hour.

Nor are modern horse-keepers less 'nimble fingered' than those of whom Nimrod wrote. At the International Horse Show of 1908 Miss Brocklebank's grooms won the Hon. Adam Beck's prize for 'Best coach and appointments and quickest change of teams' : the change was accomplished in forty-eight seconds. During James Selby's Brighton drive horses were changed at Streatham in forty-seven seconds.

The road coachmen of the present day do not aim at lightning changes of team : the work is done in leisurely fashion, and passengers enjoy the opportunity afforded them to get down for a few minutes.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

The Four-in-Hand Club, founded in 1856, for many years used to meet in the Park at quarter to five in the afternoon, but the hour was changed to half-past twelve in order to avoid the inconvenience inseparable from meeting at the time when carriages are most numerous.

The Coaching Club was founded in 1870, and held its first meet at the Marble Arch in June the following year.

SONG OF THE B.D.C.¹

You ask me, Gents, to sing a
 song,
Don't think me too encroaching.
I won't detain you very long,
With one of mine on Coaching.
No rivalry we have to fear,
Nor jealous need we be, Sir,
We all are friends who muster here,
And in the B.D.C., Sir.

Horace declares the Greeks of old
Were once a driving nation;
But Shakespeare says 'The World's
 a Stage'—
A cutish observation.
The Stage he meant, good easy
 man,
Was drawn by nine old Muses;
But the Mews for me is the B.D.C.,
And that's the stage I chooses.

I call this Age the Iron Age
Of Railways and Pretension,
And coaching now is in a stage
Of horrible declension.
The day's gone by when on the
 Fly
We roll'd to Alma Mater,
And jovial took the reins in hand
Of the Times or Regulator.

Those were the days when Peyton's
 grays
To Bedfont led the way, Sir,
And Villebois followed with his bays
In beautiful array, Sir.
Then Spieer, too, came next in view
To join the gay procession.
Oh! the dust we made—the cavalcade
Was neat beyond expression.

No Turnpike saw a fancy team
More neat than Dolphin sported,
When o'er the stones with Charley
 Jones
To Bedfont they resorted.
Few graced the box so much as Cox;
But there were none, I ween, Sir,
Who held the reins 'twixt here and
 Staines
More slap up than the Dean, Sir.

Those are the men who foremost then
To Coaching gave a tone, Sir,
And hold they will to coaching still,
Tho' here they stand alone, Sir,—
Then drink to the Coach, the B.D.C.,
Sir Henry and his team, Sir,
And may all be *blowed* right off the
 road
Who wish to go by steam, Sir.

¹ Benson Driving Club.

TANDEM DRIVING

IT is said, but I must confess failure to trace authority for the statement, that tandem driving was invented as a convenient and sporting method of taking the hunter to the meet. History has not handed down to fame the name of the man who first hit upon the idea of driving tandem ; it was in vogue over a century ago, and at Cambridge ranked as a grave offence : witness the following edict dated 10th March 1807 :—

‘ WE, THE VICE-CHANCELLOR AND HEADS OF COLLEGES, DO HEREBY ORDER AND DECREE THAT IF ANY PERSON OR PERSONS *IN STATU PUPILLARI* SHALL BE FOUND DRIVING ANY TANDEM AND SHALL BE DULY CONVICTED THEREOF BEFORE THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, SUCH PERSON OR PERSONS SO OFFENDING SHALL FOR THE FIRST OFFENCE BE SUSPENDED FROM TAKING HIS DEGREE FOR ONE WHOLE YEAR, OR BE RUSTICATED, ACCORDING TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CASE ; AND FOR THE SECOND OFFENCE BE LIABLE TO SUCH FURTHER PUNISHMENT AS IT MAY APPEAR TO DESERVE, OR BE EXPELLED THE UNIVERSITY.’

Extravagantly high gigs were much in favour among the ‘ bloods ’ of the day, and these were often used for tandem driving, a purpose for which they were by no means unsuitable, always provided the road was fairly level.

As a matter of course, when tandems became numerous and drivers clever in handling them, races against time came into fashion. Matches on the road, whether trotting in saddle or driving, were usually ‘ against time ’ for obvious reasons. On 14th April 1819 the famous whip, Mr. Buxton, backed himself to drive tandem without letting his horses break their

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

trot, from Hounslow to Hare Hatch, distance twenty-four miles, in two hours. His horses, however, were not well matched, and 'broke' before they had gone six miles. As breaking involved the penalty of turning the equipage round and starting afresh, and breaks were frequent, Mr. Buxton occupied over an hour in going ten miles and gave up, forfeiting the hundred guineas he had staked on the task.

On 19th May 1824 a match was thus recorded in the *Sporting Magazine* :—

' Captain Swann undertook a tandem match from Ilford seven miles, over a part of Epping Forest. He engaged to drive 12 miles at a trot and to back his wheels if he broke into a gallop. This happened only once in the seventh mile, which he nevertheless completed in 33 minutes. On his return the pacing of the horses was a picture. The match was won fairly with two minutes and six seconds to spare.'

A Mr. Houlston in the same year drove his tandem twelve miles on the Winchester Road in one minute thirty-nine seconds under the hour allowed. By this time tandem drivers had come to the reasonable conclusion that the turning penalty (proper enough in trotting matches, whether in shafts or saddle) was excessive for their sport, and 'backing' had been substituted therefor. Any one who has had occasion to turn a tandem on the road without assistance will admit that the abolition was wise.

Long journeys against time were sometimes undertaken. In 1824

' Captain Bethel Ramsden undertook to drive tandem from Theale to London, 43 miles, in 3 hours and 40 minutes. The start took place at four o'clock in the morning, and in the first hour the captain did $12\frac{1}{2}$ miles to between Twyford and Hare Hatch. He did in the next hour 12 miles and upwards, and got the horses' mouths cleaned at Slough. He had $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles to do in the last forty minutes, and performed it easily with eleven minutes to spare.'

The cult of the trotting horse stood high in those days

TANDEM DRIVING

when so much travelling was done in the saddle : there are innumerable records of trotters doing their fifteen and sixteen miles on the road within the hour, sometimes under very heavy weights. Mr. Charles Herbert's horse, in 1791, trotted 17 miles in 58 minutes 40 seconds on the Highgate Road, starting from St. Giles' Church. The road is by no means a level one, and the only advantage the horse had was the hour selected—between six and seven in the morning, when the traffic was not heavy.

A famous whip of the 'thirties was Mr. Burke of Hereford—he was also an amateur pugilist of renown, but that does not concern us here. In June 1839 he made his thirty-fifth trotting match, whereby he undertook to drive tandem forty-five miles in three hours. The course was from the Staines end of Sinebury Common to the fifth milestone towards Hampton : he did it with four and a half minutes to spare. The horses used in this match were both extraordinary trotters : the wheeler, Tommy, had covered 20 miles in 1 hour 18 minutes two months earlier, and the leader, Gustavus, twenty-four years old, had done his 20 miles in 1 hour 14 minutes.

Though not a tandem performance in the strict sense of the term, Mr. Thanes' feat on 12th July 1819 is worth mention. He undertook 'to drive three horses in a gig, tandem fashion, eleven miles within the hour on the trot, and to turn if either horse broke.' Fortunately none of the three did break, and he did the eleven miles, on the road near Maidenhead, with three minutes to spare.

Tandem driving seems to have gone out of fashion to a certain extent about 1840, though some young men 'still delighted in it.' The re-establishment of the Tandem Club, soon after the close of the Crimean War, marked a revival which made itself felt at Cambridge ; for on 22nd February 1866 the Senate passed another edict, this time forbidding livery-stable-keepers to let out on hire tandems or four-in-hands to undergraduates. This was confirmed in 1870.

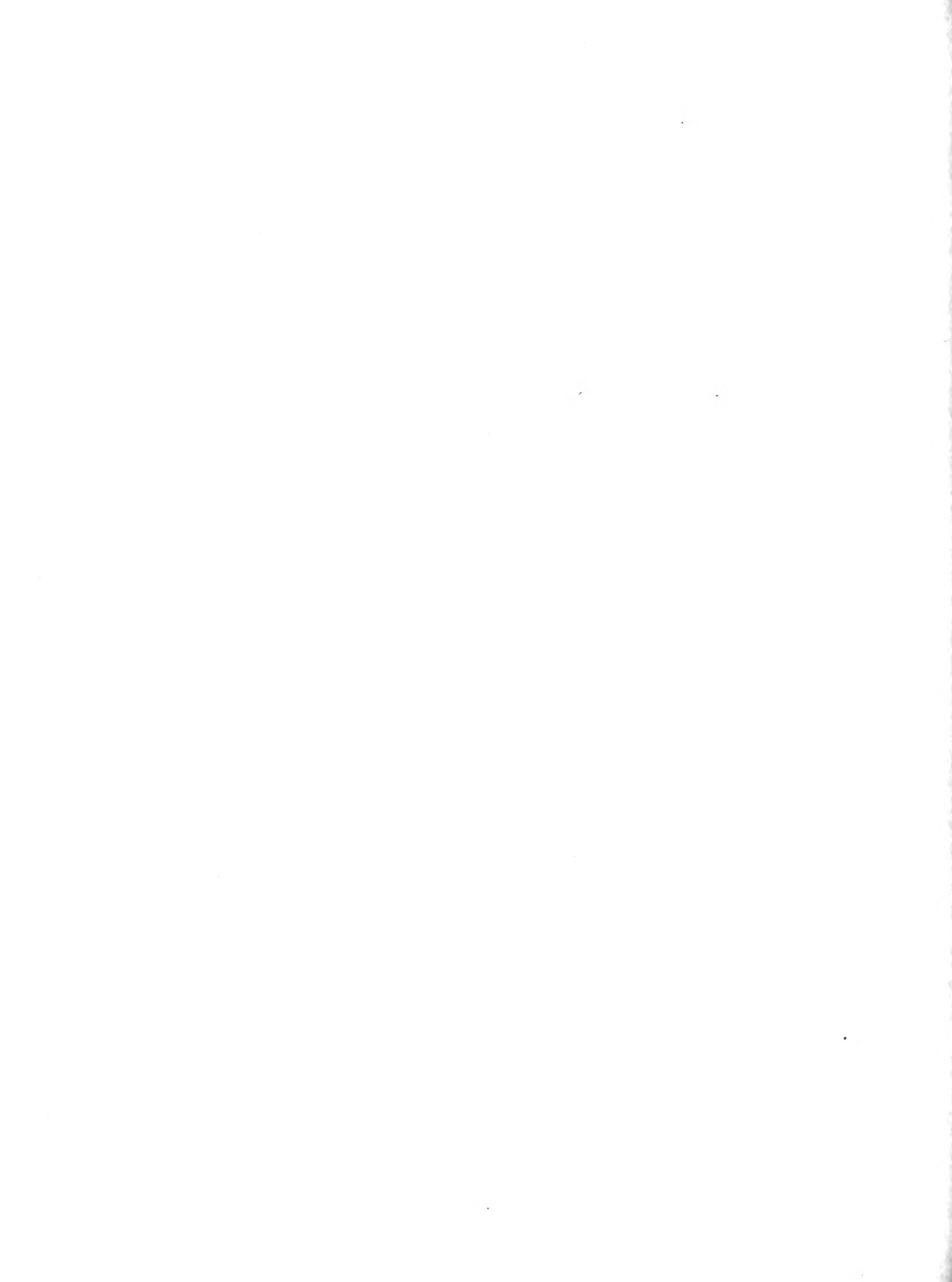
COURSING

LET us pass over the early history of coursing. We know that Arrian wrote of the sport in the second century, that King John accepted greyhounds in lieu of cash for renewing crown tenures in the thirteenth, that that all-round sportsman, Henry VIII., allowed twenty-four loaves a day for his greyhounds, and that Thomas, Duke of Norfolk, bestowed his approval on the first code of coursing laws in Elizabeth's time. It is also common knowledge that Thomas Goodlake assigns to Lord Orford (famed for his four-in-hand of red deer) credit for laying the foundation of modern coursing by his establishment of the Swaffham Club in 1776, which club's modern namesake courses over the same ground. Lord Orford is said to have crossed the greyhound of his day with the bulldog, and to have persevered with this somewhat unpromising experiment to the sixth or seventh generation when he confounded his opponents by producing the ancestor of the modern greyhound. 'The blood of the late Lord Orford's Dogs,' says Daniel, 'engrafted into those of Wiltshire and Yorkshire have turned out the best Greyhounds.' Czarina was one of Lord Orford's breed: she ran forty-seven courses without defeat: her son Claret was a famous dog, and Claret's son Snowball was 'supposed to be (taken for everything) the best Greyhound that ever was': this, despite the fact that his brother, Major, always beat him.

The literature of coursing is curiously scant, having regard to the antiquity of the sport. That is a picturesque account of it given by Christopher North (1842). 'Old Kit' held organised coursing of small account by comparison with that to be enjoyed on the moors:—

Tandem





COURSING

‘ . . . Away with your coursing on Marlborough Downs where huge hares are seen squatted from a distance, and the sleek dogs, disrobed of their gaudy trappings are let slip by a Tryer, running for cups and collars before lords and ladies, and squires of high and low degree—a pretty pastime enough, no doubt, in its way, and a splendid cavalcade. But will it for a moment compare with the sudden and all-unlooked-for start of the “auld witch” from the bunweed-covered lea, when the throat of every pedestrian is privileged to cry “halloo—halloo—halloo,” and whipcord-tailed greyhound and hairy lurcher, without any invidious distinction of birth or bearing, lay their deep breasts to the sward at the same moment, to the same instinct, and brattle over the brae after the disappearing Ears, laid flat at the first sight of her pursuers, as with retroverted eyes she turns her face to the mountain, and seeks the cairn only a little lower than the falcon’s nest.

‘ What signifies any sport in the open air, except in congenial scenery of earth and heaven? Go, thou gentle Cockney! and angle in the New River;—but, bold Englishman, come with us and try a salmon-cast in the old Tay. Go, thou gentle Cockney! and course a suburban hare in the purlieus of Blackheath;—but, bold Englishman, come with us and course an animal that never heard a city-bell, by day a hare, by night an old woman, that loves the dogs she dreads, and, hunt her as you will with a leash and a half of light-foots, still returns at dark to the same form in the turf-dike of the garden of the mountain cottage. The children, who love her as their own eyes—for she has been as a pet about the family, summer and winter, since that chubby-cheeked urchin, of some five years old, first began to swing in his self-rocking cradle—will scarcely care to see her started—nay, one or two of the wickedest among them will join in the halloo; for often, ere this “has she cheated the very jowlers, and lauched ower her shouther at the lang dowgs walloping ahint her, sair forfaquhen, up the benty brae—and it’s no the day that she’s gaun to be killed by Rough Robin, or Smooth Spring, or the red Bick, or the

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

hairy Lurcher—though a' fowr be let loose on her at ance, and ye surround her or she rise." What are your great, big, fat, lazy English hares, ten or twelve pounds and upwards, who have the food brought to their very mouth in preserves, and are out of breath with five minutes' scamper among themselves—to the middle-sized, hard-hipped, wiry-backed, steel-legged, long-winded mawkins of Scotland, that scorn to taste a leaf of a single cabbage in the wee moorland yardie that shelters them, but prey in distant fields, take a breathing every gloaming along the mountain-breast, untired as young eagles ringing the sky for pastime, and before the dogs seem not so much scouring for life as for pleasure, with such an air of freedom, liberty, and independence, as they fling up the moss and cock their fuds in the faces of their pursuers. Yet stanch are they to the spine—strong in bone and sound in bottom—see, see how Tickler clears that twenty-feet moss-hag at a single spang like a bird—tops that hedge that would turn any hunter that ever stabled in Melton Mowbray—and then, at full speed northward, moves as upon a pivot within his own length, and close upon his haunches, without losing a foot, off within a point of due South. A kennel! He never was and never will be in a kennel all his free joyful days. He has walked and run—and leaped and swam about—at his own will, ever since he was nine days old—and he would have done so sooner had he had any eyes. None of your stinking cracklets for him—he takes his meals with the family, sitting at the right hand of the Master's eldest son. He sleeps in any bed of the house he chooses, and, though no Methodist, he goes every third Sunday to church. That is the education of a Scottish greyhound—and the consequence is, that you may pardonably mistake him for a deer dog from Badenoch or Lochaber, and no doubt in the world that he would rejoice in a glimpse of the antlers on the weather gleam,

“Where the hunter of deer and the warrior trode,
To his hills that encircle the sea.”

COURSING

This may be called roughing it—slovenly—coarse—rude—artless—unscientific. But we say no—it is your only coursing. . . .

‘ But independently of spit, pot, and pan, what delight in even daundering about the home farm seeking for a hare ? It is quite an art or science. You must consult not only the wind and weather of to-day, but of the night before—and of every day and night back to last Sunday, when probably you were prevented by the rain from going to church. Then hares shift the sites of their country seats every season. This month they love the fallow field—that, the stubble ; this, you will see them, almost without looking for them, big and brown on the bare stony upland lea—that, you must have a hawk’s eye in your head to discern, discover, detect them, like birds in their nests, embowered below the bunweed or the bracken ; they choose to spend this week in a wood impervious to wet or wind—that, in a marsh too plashy for the plover ; now you may depend on finding Madam at home in the sulks within the very heart of a bramble-bush or dwarf black-thorn thicket, while the squire cocks his fud at you from the top of a knowe open to blasts from all the airts ; in short, he who knows at all times where to find a hare, even if he knew no one single thing else but the way to his mouth, cannot be called an ignorant man—is probably a better informed man in the long run than the friend on his right, discoursing about the Turks, the Greeks, the Portugals, and all that sort of thing, giving himself the lie on every arrival of his daily paper. We never yet knew an old courser (him of the Sporting Annals included) who was not a man both of abilities and virtues. But where were we ?—at the Trysting-Hill Farmhouse, jocularly called Hunger-them-Out.

‘ Line is formed, and with measured steps we march towards the hills—for we ourselves are the schoolboy, bold, bright, and blooming as the rose—fleet of foot almost as the very antelope—Oh ! now, alas ! dim and withered as a stalk from which winter has swept all the blossoms—slow as the

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

sloth along the ground—spindle-shanked as a lean and slippered pantaloon !

“O heaven ! that from our bright and shining years
Age would but take the things youth heeded not !”

An old shepherd meets us on the long sloping rushy ascent to the hills—and putting his brown withered finger to his gnostic nose, intimates that she is in her old form behind the dike—and the noble dumb animals, with pricked-up ears and brandished tail, are aware that her hour is come. Plash, plash, through the marsh, and then in the dry furze beyond you see her large dark-brown eyes—soho, soho, soho—halloo, halloo, halloo—for a moment the seemingly horned creature appears to dally with the danger, and to linger ere she lays her lugs on her shoulder, and away, like thoughts pursuing thoughts—away fly hare and hounds towards the mountain.

‘Stand all still for a minute—for not a bush the height of our knee to break our view—and is not that brattling burst up the brae “beautiful exceedingly,” and sufficient to chain in admiration the beatings of the rudest gazer’s heart ? Yes, of all beautiful sights—none more, none so much so, as the miraculous motion of a four-footed wild animal, changed at once, from a seeming inert sod or stone into flight fleet as that of the falcon’s wing ! Instinct against instinct, fear and ferocity in one flight ! Pursuers and pursued bound together in every turning and twisting of their career, by the operation of two head-long passions ! Now they are all three upon her—and she dies ! No ! glancing aside, like a bullet from a wall, she bounds almost at a right angle from her straight course—and, for a moment seems to have made good her escape. Shooting headlong one over the other, all three, with erected tails, suddenly bring themselves up—like racing barks when down goes the helm, and one after another, bowsprit and boom almost entangled, rounds the buoy and again bears up on the starboard tack upon a wind—and in a close line, heel to heel, so that you might cover them all with a sheet—again, all open-mouthed on her haunches, seem to drive, and go with her over

COURSING

the cliff. We are all on foot—and pray what horse could gallop through among all these quagmires, over all the hags in these peat-mosses, over all the water-cressy, and puddocky ditches, sinking soft on hither and thither side, even to the two-legged leaper's ankle or knee—up that hill on the perpendicular strewn with flint—shivers—down those loose hanging cliffs—through that brake of old stunted birches with stools hard as iron—over that mile of quaking muir where the plover breeds—and—finally—up, up, up, to where the dwarfed heather dies away among the cinders, and in winter you might mistake a flock of ptarmigan for a patch of snow. The thing is impossible—so we are all on foot—and the fleetest keeper that ever footed it in Scotland shall not in a run of three miles give us sixty yards. “Ha! Peter, the wild boy, how are you off for wind?”—we exultingly exclaim in giving Red-jacket the go-by on the bent. But see, see, they are bringing her back again down the Red Mount—glancing aside, she throws them all three out—yes, all three, and few enow too, though fair play be a jewel, and ere they can recover, she is ahead a hundred yards up the hill. There is a beautiful trial of bone and bottom! Now one, and then another, takes almost imperceptibly the lead; but she steals away from them inch by inch—beating them all blind—and suddenly disappearing, Heavens knows how, leaves them all in the lurch. With out-lolling tongues, hanging heads, panting sides, and drooping tails, they come one by one down the steep, looking somewhat sheepish, and then lie down together on their sides, as if indeed about to die in defeat. She has carried away her cocked fud unscathed for the third time, from Three of the Best in all broad Scotland—nor can there any longer be the smallest doubt in the world, in the minds of the most sceptical, that she is—what all the country side had long known her to be—a Witch. . . .’

One of the best coursing essays ever written is that wherein ‘The Druid’ describes Master M’Grath’s second Waterloo Cup in 1869.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

‘ The morning finds us at Lynn’s once more, and the cards of the day show that Master M’Grath has been drawn with *Borealis*. The latter has been winning a good stake at Lytham, but “ the talent ” have taken her measure well, as 25 to 1 can be got about her for the Cup, and it is only 6 to 1 against the black. All is life and activity among the coursers. They are buttoning on leggings, and lighting pipes, and driving bargains with hansoms and coaches, into which they mount, looking like very jolly Cromwellian pike-men, with their long mahogany-coloured leaping poles. The route lies principally by the dock side, and its dusky forest of masts, till we strike rather more inland at Formby, where the greyhound trainers keep their charges. Seven or eight miles bring us within sight of the Altcar plains at last. On the left are interminable sand banks, tenanted by coneys and vitriol works ; while ditches of all degrees, high mounds, and engine houses help to break the dreary Altcar dead level of grass and fallows, which look as if they had merely been pared. Be that as it may, they are full of “ fur,” and during one portion of the meeting, *Hard Lines*, Mr. J. Hole’s black dog, got among a wandering troop of nearly a hundred hares, and didn’t know what it meant. There are a few trees, and there is a conventicle-looking church in the distance, but even when the sun is out, it looks quite a joyless land, inhabited by the descendants of Mat o’ the Marsh.

‘ There is life enough at the North End Farm, where the carriages make their halt, and the official card-seller sets up his basket under the lee of a barn. He is wise in his generation, as if he once faced the open there would be a rush at him, and, like good card-sellers before him, he might be pressed into the ditch. The trainers are here in great force, each with his champion in hand, or snugly ensconced in a dog-van. Speculation (late *Red Robin*) occupies the front seat of a cab, and a large wisp of straw is spread artistically over the front window, for fear any minute draught may visit his honoured head too roughly. Alas ! it is of no avail, as *India Rubber* challenges him to the slips ere two hours more are over, and wins a good

COURSING

trial cleverly at his expense. Some of the dog carriages are drawn in great state by three donkeys, but many trainers discard them altogether. Light Cavalry is at the ditch side straining for the fray, and we also mark the dingy face of Bethell (by Boanerges from Mischief), own brother to Bab at the Bowster, and the grey features of Ewesdale, not a remarkable dog in his day, but now of good repute among greyhounds at the stud. The trainers are a motley lot as regards dress; but the real Altcar thing is supposed to be a sort of seal-skin cap, with lappets for the ears, and a green coat, with mother-of-pearl buttons about half the circumference of a cheese-plate. What Lancashire Witch can stand against that?

‘It is barely five minutes past ten, and up comes Mr. Warwick, the judge, in his scarlet coat and blue bird’s-eye, to judge for the ninth year in succession. Another bit of scarlet shows that Tom Raper, the slipper, has also stripped to his work. He looks very worn in the face with so hard a life, but the heart is as good and the legs are almost as nimble as ever. We look in vain for old Will Warner, but we are told that he has “turned it up.” The crowd thickens fast, and as far as the eye can reach towards Formby, they come steadily tramping on. The vehicles alone seem to stretch for more than half a mile in the line of march, and half of them are in the commissariat service, and laden with pies, and cheese, and liquors. Many visitors carry their own little polished drink barrel slung across their shoulders, and those who have the office look out, when luncheon time is nigh, for the hospitable red flag with the white star in the centre, which flies as a token at the top of a private omnibus from Lytham. Half the point of the meet of Northend was lost this year by the absence of the house party from Croxteth, and we might well long to see the four dark chestnuts dash up in the green drag as of yore, with the Earl of Sefton on the box. It seems but the other day that his father was riding off across country to Croxteth, to tell of his Sackcloth’s victory.

‘The march of the cracks round and round the farm pad-

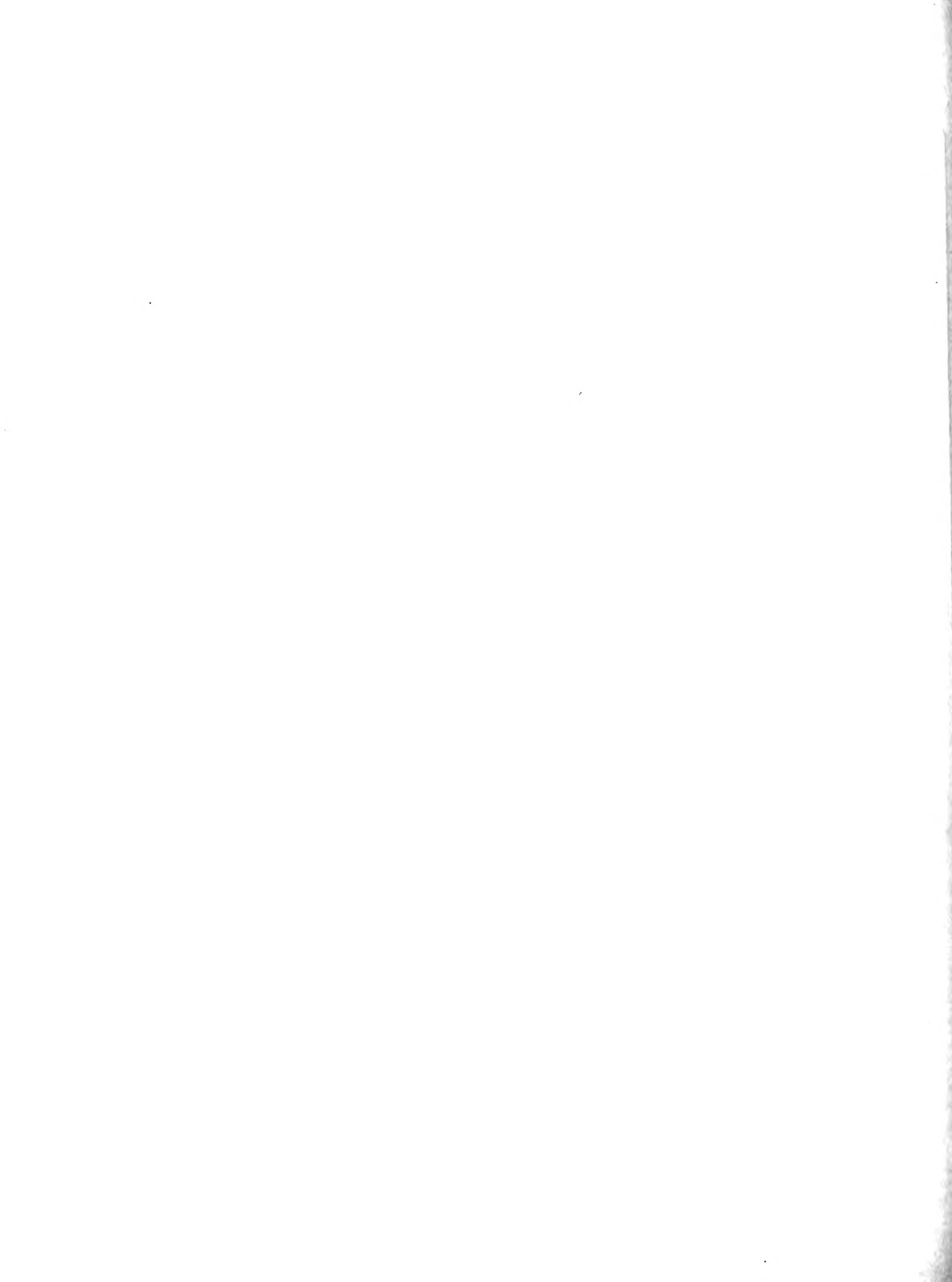
BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

dock is one of the most beautiful sights. We have noted there—before the first couple were called, and the hare-boys (looking like tortoises erect) started on their march—the shining bridle of Streamer, the dark black of the great bitch corps—Spider, old Belle of the Village, Rebe, and Reliance ; the blue of Goodareena ; the fawn of Sea Rock ; the red of Monarch and Sea Girl ; while the brindle on the tail deftly told the difference between the flying whites of Liverpool, Mr. Spinks's Sea Pink and Sea Foam.

' A quarter past ten, and there is no time to lose ; off comes Mr. Warwick's overcoat, and he mounts a good-looking grey. Requiem and Morning Dew are in the slips, but three hares get away before Raper gets a slip to his mind. It was a bad beginning, as both got unsighted before they had been long at it, and then Requiem went on with the hare by herself, and had such a severe singlehander, that the hearts of her backers die within them, and any hopes of pulling off 33 to 1 become a vanishing fraction. Then every eye is on Lobelia, as this rare granddaughter of Canaradzo comes out bright and beautiful, and not one mass of diachylon plaster as she was last year. She hung in the slips a little, and then she warmed up and raced past Exactly in the brilliant style of her Trovatore days, and made a masterly kill. The Lancashire men may well shout for her after such a performance, and wish her well through the Cup. Now the drain jumping begins, and sorely tests the limbs that are stiff with "age's frost." Some bound over them in their stride like antelopes, or use the comfortable pole ; others go at them with faces indicative of resignation and agony combined, and if a foot slips there is a roar like a salvo of artillery down the line. Occasionally a stout gentleman determines, rather than be left behind, to jump or perish in the attempt. He is gravely advised by some athlete to "pull himself together," whatever that process may be ; he balances his arms, rushes, regardless of family considerations, at his works, funks, towers, is deposited with a splash, and ignominiously crawls out up the opposite bank. What comfort is it

Coursing :
The Slipper





COURSING

to him to be told to "put on more powder" when all is over, and he is wet up to his middle? A policeman in a helmet has a most tremendous reception when he jumps short; but still there is not the fun there was when fewer people came, and poor John Jackson, in his lusty manhood, went striding and shouting, with his short stick in his hand, over the ditches, and when Jem Mace, or Joe Goss, were putting on condition after that fashion.

'And so the courses go on, and at last the crowd, some six or seven thousand strong, line the high embankment on both sides of a field where Patent ran one year. A sort of nervous thrill goes through them when a beautiful worked course has been run in full view between Jolly Green and Innkeeper. "One more bye, and then the crack comes out," is the key to it. They are so closely packed that it is difficult, as you stand, to see right along the bank. In a minute a roar is heard at the distance, and we know that the black, Master M'Grath, is coming. Nearer and nearer, and the shout is taken up all along the line, as when the St. Leger horses reach the Intake turn, and the last struggle begins. Mr. Warwick tears along at full gallop on the grey, almost level, and twenty yards to the right of the hare, in order to be handy at the finish; and then comes the black dog with the white breast and the white neck mark, going like a whirlwind twelve lengths ahead of Borealis. She looks, in fact, like a mere terrier scuffling after him, and when she did get up, the Irish dog had raced right into his hare, and flung it up half dead into the air. Raper said that he had never seen a greyhound go so fast, and the Cup seemed to be over. Then Woman in Black delights the Irish division once more, and Ask Mamma and Charming May ran as sweetly as ever. Except Lady Lyons, there was nothing more beautiful than "May" on the field. Ghillie Callum then gives the Scotchmen a good turn, and fastens on his hare, when he kills so savagely that they are obliged to bite his ear before he will resign it. Two other dogs cannot settle the knotty point, and so they dash away and jump a wide ditch, holding

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

the hare between them. Luncheon succeeds, and the coursers are found in carriages, or on the top of them, on the grass, or sitting on a rail "transacting business" with hampers and parcels which would have done Epsom no discredit. Even a horse and gig rolling in a ditch doesn't rouse them. They were a singularly quiet and well-behaved crowd, and though the stewards had left them pretty nearly to their own devices, in despair of handling so many, they encroached but a very few yards. It was a fine, genial day, and each man seemed bent on good-humoured enjoyment, and an oath or coarse word was almost unheard.

'Luncheon over, and we got into position for the last time that day, and all along the Engine-house Meadows. For some time it was hopeless to begin, as "fur" was too plentiful; but at last they came off the fallows by singles, and Master M'Grath was slipped once more. There was no enthusiasm over this course. On he sped raking lengths away from Hard Lines, but after turning his hare he tumbled and got shaken, as he put in no really good work afterwards, and Hard Lines killed. The crowd were quite still and disappointed, but there were some cheers as Lord Lurgan, who loves the sport dearly, and boasted a huge pair of leggings, walked up to him to pat him.

'Then arose the bronchitic strains of that comical old man who had gone about all day with Master M'Grath blazoned on his hat and selling sweetmeats: "*Master M'Grath 'Umbugs!*" followed by a list of the towns in which they were patronized, one of which seemed to have an especial ludicrous suggestion in it. We cannot say that "still his speech was song," but on it ran, "*Four a penny—I puts it in the sinking fund—my wife takes the money, and I niver see it noe moor.*"

'Malt Liquor, Ghillie Callum, and Randolph, a son of Romping Girl, went with immense fire, and some began to fancy Ghillie for the Cup. "*India Rubber 'Umbugs!*—*India Rubber 'Umbugs!*" from the old quarter, whose wares were re-christened as each good dog won, told of the victory of

COURSING

another son of Ewesdale, and we could not forbear leaving our post to see the beautiful blood-red Lady Lyons rubbed down after winning. But the twilight draws on, and at last the hare supply begins to fail.

'Not a beater can be seen, as they are far away, quietly stirring up the hares, and sending them stealing over the fallows, towards the big sough, which has been such a city of refuge to them time out of mind. We stand waiting for minutes while Raper has Bab and Sir William in the slips. "*Sporting Eagle* 'Umbugs—niver see it noe moor,'" indicate the last registered winner and break the reverential silence which falls on all good coursers, when such a *prima donna* as Bab is coming once more on to the stage. At last the word is passed that a hare is in sight; Bab is ready for her, and a beautiful course, ending with a rattling kill, carries the bonnie Scotch lassie through her second round.

'Such was the opening day, and the next night found the puppies all beaten off, and England and Ireland each with one, and Scotland with two champions. Ireland and Scotland fought it out at last, and Lord Lurgan's dog could only beat Bab about a length for speed, and get very little the best of the working. Perhaps two such flyers never met before, as the winner has never been beaten, and the loser, we believe, only once. Bonfires were lighted on Friday night on the hills near Belfast, to tell of the second Waterloo victory of their black dog. At Waterloo it created such enthusiasm in the bosom of one Celt, that having flung away his own hat, he rushed at Lord Lurgan, plucked off his lordship's wideawake, flung it wildly into the air, and kicked it when it came down again.'

We do not hear much of long courses nowadays. At the end of the eighteenth and early in the nineteenth century the Flixton meeting in Yorkshire was notable for the distances run. 'The *Flixton* Hares,' says Daniel, 'are so stout that the course is extended sometimes to the length of five and six miles: they are generally found on the side of a hill to the North, which they invariably ascend: at the top they have

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

flat Down for three or four miles, and then a steep descent, after which they ascend a Hill almost perpendicular : at the Top is a large *whin* cover into which then Hares beat many capital Greyhounds, and perhaps it is the only place in England where a Hare was ever seen to beat for *four miles over Turf* a brace of the best Greyhounds that could be produced.'

There is record of a course which took place in February 1798, when a pair of greyhounds belonging to Mr. James Courtall of Carlisle killed a hare after running her seven miles : the hare, which was given 200 yards' law, was one that had often been coursed and had always easily beaten the greyhounds : she proved to be a comparatively small one, weighing 8 lbs. 11 oz.

SALMON FISHING

‘**T**HE salmon,’ wrote Leonard Mascall in 1590, ‘is a gentle fish, but he is cumbrous to take. Commonly he is but in deepe places of great rivers and commonly in the midst of the river : he is in season from March unto Michaelmas and ye shall angle to him with a red worme from the beginning to the ending and with the bobbe worme that breedeth in the du[n]ghill : also there is a soveraigne baite that breedeth on the water docke ; the salmon biteth not at the ground but at the flote or above : ye may also take him with the dubbe worme (fly ?) at such time when he leapeth, but it hath seldom seen and ye shall take him in like manner as ye do take the Trout or Grayling or the Dace.’

It is hard to resist the conviction that Mascall, having angled to a salmon, achieved small success : the directness of that opening remark suggests the baffled angler laying his rod aside.

Nor do the writings of Walton indicate that he had much acquaintance with the sport. When he speaks of salmon tackle and salmon habit, his observations do not imply personal experience : ‘Note also that many use to fish for a salmon with a ring of wire on the top of their rod, through which the line may run to as great length as is needful when he is hooked. And to that end some use a wheel about the middle of their rod or near their hand which is to be observed better by seeing one of them than by large demonstration of words.’ Again ; the salmon ‘is seldom observed to bite at a minnow, yet sometimes he will, and not usually at a fly.’ In this last observation he is not at one with General Robert Venables, whose ‘Experienc’d Angler’ he so warmly approved, and with whom

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

he and Cotton subsequently collaborated in producing the fifth edition of the *Compleat Angler*. Venables is the most reliable authority on seventeenth-century salmon fishing. He killed salmon in Irish rivers and fished in various counties of England. Hear him on the subject :—

‘ The Salmon taketh the artificial flie very well : but you must use a Trowl (as for the pike) or he, being a strong Fish will hazard your Line except you give him length : his Flies must be much larger than you use for other Fish, the Wings very long (two or four) behind one another, with very long tails : his chiefest Ground bait a great garden or lob worm ; he spawneth about Michaelmas. When you strike him he usually falleth to plunge and leap but doth not ordinarily endeavour to run to the end of the Line as the Trout will ; young Salmons under a quarter of a yard long have tender mouths so as they are apt to break their hold, to obviate which inconvenience I have known some that use to fasten two hooks together in like manner as some double Pike hooks lately used in Trowling are made, not with the points opposite to one another but about a quarter of a circle from each other, and on them they make their Flie, that if one hook break hold the other may not fail.’

Though he found salmon took the fly very well, the General did not disdain other lures ; it is something of a shock indeed to find him recommend *ground-baiting* for ‘ Salmon, Trout, Umber, (Grayling), etc.,’ as though the King of sporting fish were a gudgeon ! He prescribes a paste made of fine clay, barley, malt ground, mixed with water, milk, or preferably, blood, the whole flavoured with one of the ‘ strong scented oyls, or Gum of Ivy.’ Odorous or malodorous compounds for anointing worms and pastes were much in favour among anglers of old time, and he who discovered anything particularly killing kept it a profound secret. Here is another hint from the General’s note-book : ‘ The eyes of those fishes you catch, if you pull them out and use them on the Hook, are an excellent Bait for most sort of fish.’

SALMON FISHING

Nicolas Cox includes in his *Gentleman's Recreation* some account of salmon fishing, but his remarks, with one exception, bear striking resemblance to those of General Venables (these old writers had a flagitious habit of copying without acknowledgement), and the exception relieves Mr. Cox from any suspicion of personal acquaintance with the subject. When he describes the salmon as making prodigious leaps with its tail in its mouth, we feel justified in declining his guidance.

If we may base an opinion on the degree of attention bestowed by the old authorities respectively upon salmon and pike-angling, far more fishermen devoted themselves to the latter sport than to the former ; though, it is hardly necessary to say, salmon were plentiful in rivers where they are now scarce, and also in rivers, as the Thames and Tyne, whence they have long disappeared altogether. It is at least permissible to suppose that Mascall voiced a feeling general among his contemporaries when he described the fish as 'cumbrous to take' : length for length, a pike is less than half the weight of a salmon.

The year 1821 saw the capture of the last Thames salmon : two, weighing together 31 lbs., were that year taken at Boulter's Lock. Twenty years before, the season's catch at this station was sixty-six fish, weighing 1124 lbs. : in 1780, more than fifty were caught by one fisherman in the reach opposite Clieveden Springs, and the men working other stations killed as many. Thames salmon always commanded a high price in the London market, no doubt because they were fresher than those brought from a greater distance in those days of slow transport : an 18-lb. fish was sold in 1808 for £7, 4s., or 8s. per lb.

It is not easy to choose a salmon-fishing story from the mass of material offered by angling literature, but perhaps Captain A. P. Gordon Cumming's letter of 20th June 1848, to the author of *Natural History and Sport in Moray*, recounts the triumph over difficulties as perplexing as any ever encountered by angler :—

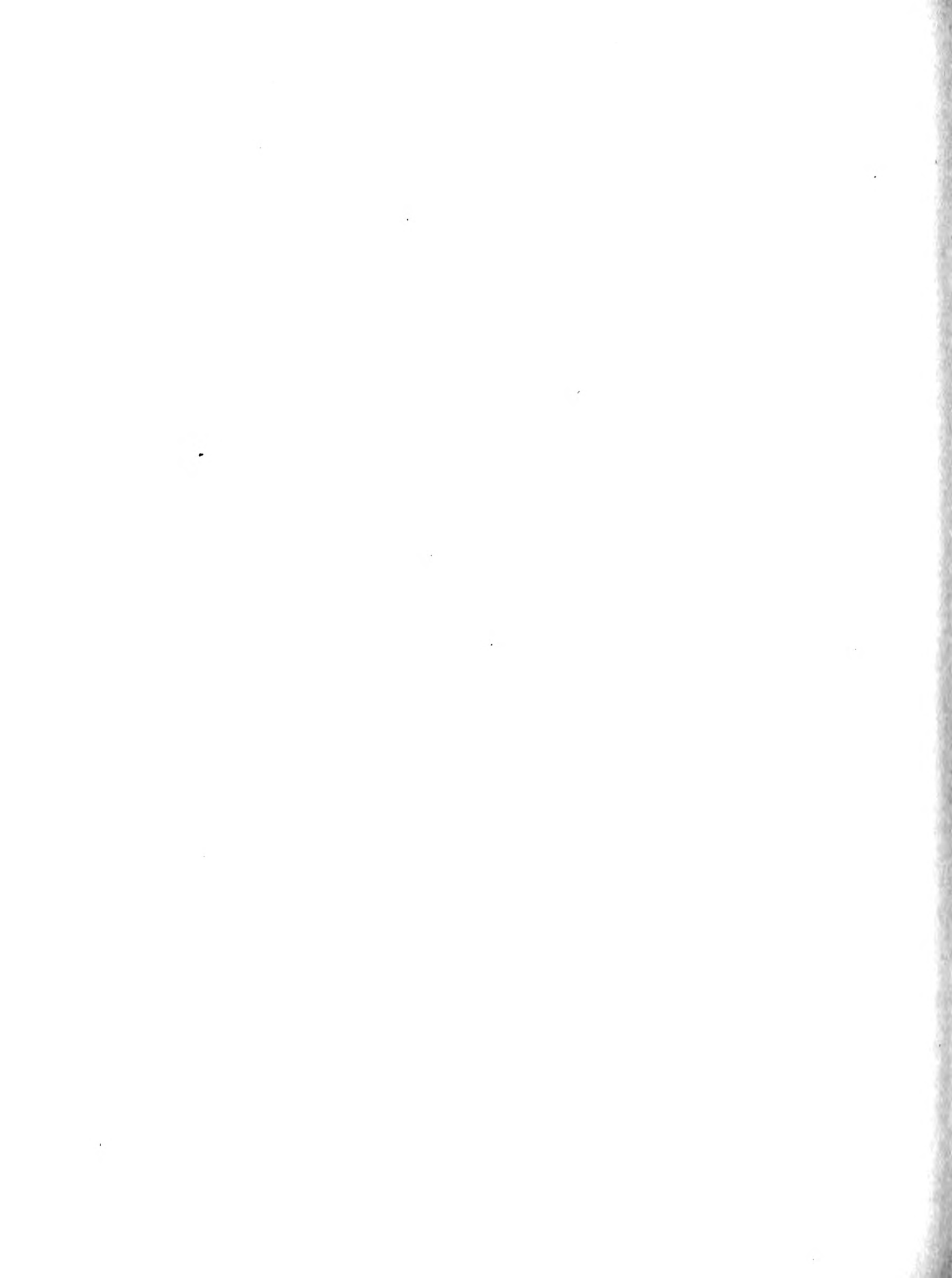
BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

‘MY DEAR ST. JOHN,—Do you remember saying a salmon was as good as lost if he went over the Ess on the Findhorn at Relugas? A strong and active fish played me a trick last week and contradicted your idea by taking me down from Rannoch over the Fall as far as the Pool above the Divie junction. The night had been stormy with heavy rain, and although I expected “she would grow” in the course of the day, I thought that by an early start I might get a few hours’ fishing before the water came down, especially as fish very often take greedily *just before* a grow. I was at the river by 4 A.M. and commenced at Rannoch (Randolph’s Leap). I found the water much as I left “her” the night before, small and clear, the only chance of fish being just in the white broken water at the throats of streams, or in the deep holes amongst the rocks. Rannoch is fishable only from one small ledge or bench, about two feet square, and 25 feet above the level of the water, to which bench you must scramble down the face of the rock, and from this spot you fish the whole pool beginning with the line as the fly comes off the bar of the reel, and letting out yard by yard till the fly is working in the “spoots” or narrow rapids, 80 to 90 feet down the stream. If you hook him you must play and kill him in the pool, *if* possible, your gillie clipping him on a small bed of gravel down below your feet, it being impossible to follow him if he takes down the water from the small two-foot square ledge, without first ascending to the footpath and redescending to the bed of the river; this you cannot manage with a fish on, owing to trees and projecting rocks. The pool is fished from the right bank.

‘Well, I rose him at my feet almost at the first throw, to a small fly about half an inch long; he came deep and shy three times and refused to take it or any other. I guessed him at about 17 lbs. Leaving him to his own reflections, after making an appointment with him for a later hour, I tried the pools above, hurrying along to the best spots in anticipation of the water rising. I worked till eight o’clock keeping on the same fly described before. I had more than average sport, killing

'Burning the Water'





SALMON FISHING

four good new run fish, viz., one of 12 lbs., one 10 lbs., and two of 9 lbs. At eight the water beginning to "grow," I reeled up and rushed down to Rannoch to show my early friend another fly : but the water having fairly commenced to grow, I put on a fly above two inches long, and the tippet being triple gut, I, by an interposition of Providence, put on a triple casting line. Having cautiously descended to my stand I showed it to him at once ; he made small bones of it this time, and rushing up like a bull-dog, or like one of your lovely Peregrines, took the fly greedily. I just let him feel I was at the other end of the gear, and knew instinctively that the good steel was well into something firm. At first he seemed not quite to realise the situation, and after a few sulky and dangerous shakes of the head took to sailing steadily up and down the pool, once or twice approaching the rapids below, but turning again by gentle persuasion. These tactics he continued for nearly an hour, my man waiting for him on the gravel below, and out of my sight. By this time the effect of the last night's rain had become fully apparent, the still dark pool below my feet had turned into a seething pot, without a quiet corner for the fish to rest in, and the water had risen nearly twenty-four inches above its size when I hooked him. The upshot was, he shot down the narrows, and went rolling heels over head down the foaming "Meux & Co.'s Entire" (this being the usual colour of our summer floods). To stop him was impossible ; I held on above the rapid till I thought my good Forrest rod would have gone at the hand, and certainly the fine single gut I had on earlier would have parted with half the strain.

' All I could do was to give him what line he required until he found a resting-place behind some rock ; this he did after rattling off fifty yards of line. Waiting some minutes till he seemed quiet, I threw off some ten yards more line, and turning the top of the rod up stream, I darted it down to my man on the gravel below, having cautioned him not to alarm the fish by letting the line get taut. To scramble up the rocks and down again to the gravel bed, to resume possession of my rod,

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

was two or three minutes' work, and just as I seized hold of it, the fish having ventured from his shelter, was, in spite of his efforts, hurried down at racing pace taking more line than I liked, while I followed, crawling and leaping along some impassable-looking country, such as I would not have faced in cold blood. By this time he had nearly reached the Ess or fall, and all seemed lost. I do not think he really intended going over, for when he felt himself within the influence of the strong smooth water he tried his best to return, but in vain ; over he went like a shot, and long ere I could get round some high rocks and down to the lower part of the fall, I had 80 or 90 yards of line out, and to follow him farther on this side of the water was not possible, owing to the steep rock rising beside the stream. To add to the embarrassment of my position I found on raising the point of my rod, that in going over the fall the fish had passed beneath some arch deep under water, thus making my case appear very hopeless. But, determined not to give it up yet, I sent my man up to the house of Relugas, where he found an old three-pronged dung-fork and a garden line, with which we managed to construct a grapnel, and at the second throw in, I got hold of the line below the sunken arch ; then fastening it to my right hand, I made my man throw the whole line off the reel and through the rings, and having drawn the remainder of the line through the sunken arch, and clear of the impediment, I formed a coil, and with my left hand pitched the end of it up to him, when he passed it through the rings again from the top of the rod, fixed it to the axle of the reel, and handed me down the rod to where I stood. From the long line out, and the heavy water, I could not tell whether the fish was on or not, but the line looked greatly chafed all along.

‘ I now tried the only plan to end the business ; leaving my man holding the rod, I went to a bridge some distance up the river, and having crossed to the other side and come down opposite him, he pitched the rod over to me ; I felt that, if he was still on, I was sure of him, and reeling steadily up the

SALMON FISHING

80 yards which were out, I followed down to the big round pool below, where, to my surprise, I became aware that he was still on. He made but a feeble resistance, and after a fight of two hours and forty minutes, we got the clips into as gallant a fish as ever left the sea—weight, $19\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. and new run. The last hour and a half was in a roaring white flood. The fly was, as you may imagine, well “chained up.”

Let us, forgoing a picture of salmon fishing to-day, glance at the long proscribed sport of Burning the Water as pictured by William Scrope. Should the well-ordered mind be shocked by this tale of carnage, be it remembered that the author lived in an age when thirty fish might be caught where one is killed now.

‘The boat in general use for burning at night is larger than the rod-fishing boats, as more room and steadiness is required. In the centre of it, close to the side on which the leisterers strike the fish, is a pole fixed vertically, with a frame at top of it formed of ribs of iron, to contain the combustibles. Three men are sufficient to man the boat ; one at the head, another at the stern, as boatmen and leisterers, and the third at the centre to kill the fish and trim the fire. But it will contain more men, if necessary.

‘The remainder of the day having been spent in making the arrangements, and the proper hour being now come, Harry Otter and Charlie Purdie went out from the Pavilion to meet the party, who were to assemble at eight o’clock about a mile and a half up the river. The night was most favourable, it being utterly dark, and not a sough of air stirring. With caution and with difficulty they felt their way step by step at the rocky base of the Scaur, where it dips into the river, till they descried the boat which was to take them across it at the Brig-end pool. The clanking of the chain as it was loosened and flung on the planks sounded harshly in the silence of night ; the oars dipped dully, and they were soon on the opposite side of the river, by which means they cut off a great sweep of the haugh, “a huge

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

half moon, a monstrous cantle out," and proceeded in a more direct line to their mark. They went on in darkness through the chilling dews, now and then stumbling into the patches of furze which were scattered over the haugh; soon they began to hear the rushing of the waters through the gorge of the Carrywheel; now it breaks full and loud upon the ear, for they are arrived at the base of the wooded brae that overhangs the cast.

'Two groups of men, but dimly seen, here await their arrival; one consists of spectators lying on the ground with their plaids thrown athwart their bodies, and the other of the heroes who were to figure in the grand operation: these latter were sitting on the boats, and on the masses of rock beside them on the water edge.

'All being now ready, a light was struck; and the spark being applied to rags steeped in pitch, and to fragments of tar-barrels, they blazed up at once amid the gloom, like the sudden flash from the crater of a volcano. The ruddy light glared on the rough features and dark dresses of the leisterers in cutting flames directly met by black shadows—an effect which those will best understand who in the Eternal City have seen the statues in the Vatican by torch-light. Extending itself, it reddened the shelving rocks above, and glanced upon the blasted arms of the trees, slowly perishing in their struggle for existence amongst the stony crevices; it glowed upon the hanging wood, on fir, birch, broom, and bracken, half veiled, or half revealed, as they were more or less prominent. The form of things remote from the concentrated light was dark and dubious; even the trees on the summit of the brae sank in obscurity.

'The principals now sprang into the boats. Harry Otter stood at the head, and Charlie Purdie at the stern. These men regulated the course of the craft with their leisters; the auxiliaries were stationed between them, and the light was in the centre by the boat side. The logs, steeped as they were in pitch, crackled and burned fiercely, sending up a column of

SALMON FISHING

black smoke. As the rude forms of the men rose up in their dark attire, wielding their long leisters, with the streaks of light that glared partially upon them, and surrounded as they were by the shades of night, you might almost have fancied yourself in the realms below, with Pluto and his grim associates, embarked on the Stygian lake. But as the sports began, and as the Scotch accent prevailed, the illusion passed away ; for no poet, that I am aware of, has made the above swarthy and mysterious personages express themselves in the language of Tweedside ; nor could one fancy salmon in the Styx, though they might well disport in the streams of the happy fields beyond.

“ Now, my lads,” says the master, “ take your places. Tom, stand you next to me ; Sandy, go on the other side of Tom ; and do you, Jamie, keep in the middle, and take tent to cap the boats well over the rapids. Rob, do you and Tom Purdie keep good lights and fell the fish. Halloo, Tom, you have smuggled a leister into the boat for your own use.”

“ Ay, ay, that have I, joust for mine ain diversion, ye ken.”

“ Well, well, you may just keep it, for you are a stout chiel, and it would be hard work to get it from you ; besides, no one can use it more dexterously than yourself. Now, then, we will push the boat up the cheek of the stream till we come to the head of it. That will do. Now shoot her across the gorge, and down she goes merrily, broadside foremost, according to rule. Cap, Charlie, cap, man ! we are drifting down like mad ; keep back your end of the boat.”

“ Aweel, aweel, she gangs cannily now ; look, uncle, a muckle fish before ye ; or ever ye kent, the maister’s leister gaed through him, and played auld dife. That side, that side, Jamie ;—he ’s rinnin up to get past. Od, ye have him ; and I hae anither, and anither. Keep a gude light, Tom. Now let us tak up the boat to the head of the stream, or ever we look the stanes, for there war a muckle fish gaed by that none o’ ye gomrells ever saw. There, we are high eneuch now ;

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

haud yer hand, and let her faw doon again : hey, but I see him the noo afore me ;—ou, what an awfu' beast !”

‘ So saying, Charlie drove his leister furiously at him ; but whether one of the prongs struck against the edge of the rock above him, which prevented its descent to the bottom, or from whatever other cause, the stroke was unsuccessful, and as he lifted the barren weapon out of the water, there arose a merry shout and guffaw from the spectators on the shore.

‘ “ Cap ! cap ! ” cried Charlie, “ now haud yer hand ; gie me up the boat ;—od, but I ’ll hae him yet ; he ’s gone amangst thae hiding stanes.”

‘ So saying, Charlie brought the head of the boat to the stream, pushed her higher up, and pulled her ashore ; he then landed, and seizing a brand out of the fire, put it into Jamieson’s hand, who preceded his eager steps like a male Thais, or one of the Eumenides in pantaloons. He now stood upon a rock which hung over the river, and from that eminence, and with the assistance of the firebrand, examined the bottom of it carefully. His body was bent over the water, and his ready leister held almost vertically ; as the light glared on his face you might see the keen glistening of his eye. In an instant he raised up his leister, and down he sprang from the rock right into the river, and with that wild bound nailed the salmon to the channel. There was a struggle with his arms for a few seconds ; he then passed his hands down the pole of the weapon a little way, brought himself vertically over the fish, and lifted him aloft cheered by shouts of applause from his friends on the shore.

‘ Two or three more fish were taken amongst the stones at the tail of the cast, and the sport in the Carrywheel being now ended, the fish were stowed in the hold of the boat, the crew jumped ashore, and a right hearty appeal was made to the whisky bottle. It was first tendered to the veteran, Tom Purdie, to whom it was always observed to have a natural gravitation, but to the astonishment of all, he barely put his lips to the quaigh, and passed it to his nephew.

SALMON FISHING

‘ “Why, uncle, mon, what the deil’s come owre ye? I never kent ye refuse a drappie afore, no not sin’ I war a callant; I canna thole to see ye gang that gait.”

‘ “Why, I’ll tell ye what it is, Charlie. I got a reproof from Sir Walter for being fou the ither nicht. . . .”

‘ Tom Purdie’s forbearance, however, was not of an enduring quality; his eyes glistened as he followed the course of the bottle; three times was his arm extended to make a grasp at it, and thrice did he draw it back with modest confusion. At length when all were served he could hold out no longer, but elongating his dexter, he laid fast hold of the bottle, and filling the quaigh to the brim, “Here goes,” said he, “to the lousy stranger.” After he had drank, and mended his draught, he kept the bottle in his own custody with a pretty smart allowance in it, in the character of residuary legatee. I had an account, however, to settle with him; for being the only stranger in company, I fancied his toast meant a reflection upon my cleanliness. What did he mean by the dirty and degrading epithet? This I demanded, advancing with a warlike countenance, and leister in the rest; and had not Tom been in a very benign humour, this book might never have been inflicted on the public, for the man was well armed and resolute, and might have leistered me according to art. But putting on his sweetest smile, he assured me that by the “lousy stranger” he meant a newly-run fish with tide lice on it, “which,” said he, “are far the best, ye ken.” This I well knew, though the application did not occur to me at the moment. And here, by the way I beg to observe, however odd it may seem, that you may know the best *clean* fish, by their having tide lice upon them.

‘ “All hands to the boat again. Come, Bob, give us a merry blaze; never spare the tar barrel; well done, Vulcan! Now we have a splendid light on the water, and can see well enough to read small print at the bottom of it.”

‘ “Sandy Trummel, ye great bear, what gars ye stamp and scream at that rate.”

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

‘Sandy in fact not only stamped and screamed, but swore that he was dreadfully *brunt* with the pieces of charcoal and drops of flaming pitch which insinuated themselves between his shirt and cape of his jacket behind ; whereat Tom Purdie, who was a considerate and humane man, took up the scoop which was used for ladling out the boat, and, filling that capacious utensil with water to the extent of its capacity, came behind the aggrieved, and emptied the whole contents down his back. “And now Sandy, mon,” says he, “I hae made ye quite comfortable, and ye owe me a gude turn.” But, who would have thought it ? The blood of the Trummels was up ; and seizing a firebrand in a style that did little honour to his gratitude, the diluted one rushed forward intent on vengeance. Grim looked Tom Purdie, and, charging with his leister, he held the foeman at bay. Who can say what Homeric deeds might not have been done, had not Charlie, first whispering to the master to stand fast, given the boat a sudden whirl round with the stroke of an oar, which laid Tom Purdie flat upon his back at the bottom of the boat, and canted Sandy Trummel fairly overboard ? He fell in rather a picturesque attitude, for which I cannot in candour give him much credit, as the affair seemed to be quite involuntary and too sudden for him to study effect. His right hand held the torch aloft for a moment, Marmion fashion, which soon fell and hissed in the current with a train of smoke which trailed along the surface of the water. Sandy’s feet were actively employed in kicking his best, by which means he agitated the water in such a manner that, with the assistance of the light, it made a very brilliant and imposing appearance. The stream here being very shallow, he soon began to emerge, and about two-thirds of his fair proportions rose up from the channel ; his mouth seemed full of water and abuse ; he soon got rid of the one ; but before he could vent the other, he was anticipated by the boat’s crew, who all shouted out shame upon him for his awkwardness, and for having nearly upset the boat in his fall, and endangered the lives of several worthy individuals. Thus a sort of balance

*Salmon Fishing :
The First Jump*



SALMON FISHING

was struck between faults on both sides, and Tom Purdie himself assisted him to regain the boat ; “ and Sandy, mon,” said he, as he lifted him in, “ I shall be always willing to do ye the same good service when ye need it ; so yee’l let me ken when the burning pick gets aboard ye again.”

‘ They now passed over some bare streams where no salmon would lie ; the navigation amongst the rocks was somewhat intricate, there being barely room for the width of the boat in some of the rapids ; but Charles Purdie hit the thing off to a nicety. They then burned the Glass-wheel Pot, the Oak Tree, and the Noirs, in all of which they got a few fish. . . .

“ Come, come, lads,” says the master, “ hold your clishma-clavers, for we are just going into Brig-end Pool ; so keep back the boat as well as you can, or we shall go fiery fast over the stream.”

‘ As the boat neared the pool, the men shouted out, “ Auld Michael ! auld Michael ! the charm for auld Michael Scott : trim the boat, and take care the muckle wizard doesna loup intill her.” “ Od, lads ! ” cried Tom Purdie, “ pit yer best fut foremost ; they are lying afore us like sacks, and will be as thick as you can dab them up. Mind the light, Sandy, and take care that kipper doesna wallop out o’ the boat. See what a muckle fish Charlie has got ! ”

‘ In fact the men were making a great slaughter ; and when they had gone over the pool two or three times, had half filled the boat with the spoil ; so as they found they were well laden, they called to Rob Colyard to come forward with his cart and take them home.

“ Shove the boat to the shore ; Colyard, come forrat wi’ yer cart ; that ’ll do, mon ; aw honds to wark, count the fish as ye pit them in ; Charlie, how many hae ye coonted ? ”

“ There jest a hunder and twa, great and sma’—whitling, bull-trout, saumonts, and a’ theigither.”

‘ The men passed round the whisky bottle, and we resumed our sport ; I, Harry Otter, stood as before at the head of the boat, and the other men in their allotted places ; we passed

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

pretty swiftly down the streams, broadside in front, striking many fish, till we came near the Elfin Burn, when, observing that the water-break in the centre of the river, caused by a concealed rock, was more gentle than usual, I thought the boat would strike, so I called out to Charlie for caution.

‘“Hout, tout! he mun let her gang: there is plenty of water to take her over.”

‘Charlie Purdie was never more mistaken in his life; the stream drove us downward at a rapid race, notwithstanding we in some measure moderated it by capping our best with the leisters. Bang went the boat’s broadside right against the rock, to which she stuck fast till the stream above poured into her in the most effective possible style, and down she went of course. The water, however, was by no means deep; but those fish, which we had taken since the load went home, found their way again into the river, and began to vanish down the streams. Being deprived of life, they went passively along, followed by all the boat’s crew, who rushed about and charged with their leisters, “Hurry, hurry, splash, splash,” till they fished out most of them, the remainder being left to solace the eels. This in common parlance would be called a disaster; a sort of shipwreck in miniature; but judging from the merriment it excited, it might be deemed the best sport of the night.’

The heaviest salmon ever landed by an angler was one of $69\frac{1}{4}$ lb. killed by the then Earl of Home on the Tweed. The late Mr. Henry Ffennell thought this might be accepted as authentic. Other large fish killed in Scottish rivers are: Mr. Haggard, 61 pounder on the Stanley water of the Tay, 1870; Mr. J. B. Lawes’ 54 pounder on the Awe, near Dalmally, 1877; the keeper on the Ardoe water, Dee, 57 pounder; Mr. Pryor on the Floors water, Tweed, $57\frac{1}{2}$ pounder, 1886; Mr. Bruton at Mertoun, 55 pounder, 1889; and the Marquis of Zetland on the Stanley water, Tay, 55 pounder, 15th October 1895.

These are some of the heaviest Irish fish: a 58 pounder on

SALMON FISHING

the Shannon, 1872; a professional fisherman on the Suir, 57 pounder, 1873; Mr. F. Milburn, Doonass Water, Castle Connell, 54 pounder.

The heaviest English fish are: a 55½ pounder on the Cumberland Derwent in 1874; Mr. G. Mackenzie's 56 pounder on the Warwick Hall water of the Eden, 1892.

The heaviest British salmon recorded was that taken in the Haggis Station nets below Newburgh in 1870: it weighed 70 lb. when it reached Mr. Frank Buckland's hands in London, and was probably 1 lb. heavier when caught: this fish was 53 inches long, and girthed 31½ inches. A 68 pounder was taken in the nets below Perth in June 1893: it also was 53 inches long: girth 30½ inches. Fish of over 60 lb. have been netted in both Shannon and Severn.

THE TAKING OF THE SALMON

A Birr! a whirr! a salmon 's on;
A goodly fish! a thumper!
Bring up, bring up the ready gaff,
And if we land him we shall quaff
Another glorious bumper!
Hark, tis the music of the reel;
The strong, the quick, the steady;
The line darts from the active wheel:
Have all things right and ready.

A birr! a whirr! the salmon 's out
Far on the rushing river:
Onward he holds with sudden leap,
Or plunges through the whirlpool deep,
A desperate endeavour!
Hark to the music of the reel!
The fitful and the grating;
It pants along the breathless wheel,
Now hurried—now abating.

A birr! a whirr! the salmon 's off!—
No, no, we still have got him:

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

The wily fish is sullen grown,
And, like a bright imbedded stone,
Lies gleaming at the bottom.
Hark to the music of the reel!
'Tis hush't, it hath forsaken ;
With care we'll guard the magic wheel
Until its notes awaken.

A birr ! a whirr ! the salmon 's up !
Give line, give line and measure ;
But now he turns ! keep down ahead,
And lead him as a child is led,
And land him at your leisure.
Hark to the music of the reel !
'Tis welcome ; it is glorious ;
It wandering through the winding wheel,
Returning and victorious.

A birr ! a whirr ! the salmon 's in
Upon the bank extended ;
The princely fish is gasping slow,
His brilliant colours come and go,
All beautifully blended.
Hark to the music of the reel !
It murmurs and it closes ;
Silence is on the conquering wheel ;
Its wearied line reposes.

No birr ! no whirr ! the salmon 's ours,
The noble fish—the thumper :
Strike through his gills the ready gaff,
And bending homewards we shall quaff
Another glorious bumper !
Hark to the music of the reel !
We listen with devotion ;
There 's something in that circling wheel
That wakes the heart's emotion.

T. T. STODDART,
Songs and Poems, 1839.

TROUT FISHING

‘**B**UT now I must come to the second way of Angling at the top : which is with an artificial fly . . . with this you are to angle with a line longer by a yard and a half, or sometimes two yards, than your rod. . . . For the length of your rod you are always to be governed by the breadth of the river you shall choose to angle at : and for a Trout river one of five or six yards is commonly enough, and longer, though never so neatly and artificially made it ought not to be, if you intend to fish at ease ; and if otherwise where lies the sport ? . . . The length of your line is a mighty advantage to the fishing at distance : and to fish fine and far off is the first and principal rule for Trout-angling. . . .

‘ Now to have your whole line as it ought to be, two of the first lengths nearest the hook should be of two hairs apiece : the next three lengths above them of three ; the next three above them of four : and so, of five and six and seven to the very top : by which means your rod and tackle will in a manner be taper from your very hand to your hook.’ Thus far, Cotton.

General Venables described the end to be sought in fashioning rod and line in words that have never been bettered :

‘ The slenderness I conceive principally serveth to make the fly-rod long and light, easy to be managed with one hand, and casteth the fly far, which are to me considerations chiefly to be regarded in a fly-rod, for if you observe, the slender part of the rod, if strained, shoots forth in length as if it were part of the line, so that the whole stress and strength of the fish is borne or sustained by the thicker part of the rod.’

Such was the equipment of the trout fisherman in

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

Waltonian times. The hair most approved, by the way, was that 'taken from the middle of the tail of a young and healthy grey or white stallion.' It must have been an efficient tool, that rod and line in one, or they were deft anglers who used it; for 'he that cannot kill a Trout of twenty inches long with two (hairs next to the hook) in a river clear of wood and weeds . . . deserves not the name of an Angler.'

The brook trout would be in poor condition which, measuring twenty inches, does not scale $3\frac{3}{4}$ to 4lbs. We might arrive at a fair idea of seventeenth-century trout-fishing by tying to the top ring of a salmon rod the prescribed length of hair-line duly graduated to the fly.

The line was not always of hair. Mr. Thomas Barker,¹ it will be remembered, used one of silk and hair for night fishing: 'My lord sent to me at sun-going-down to provide him a good dish of Trouts against the next morning by six o'clock. . . . I went presently to the river and it proved very dark. I threw out a line of three silks and three hairs twisted for the uppermost part; and a line of two hairs and two silks twisted for the lower part—with a good large hook. I baited my hook with two lob worms, the four ends hanging as meet as I could guess them in the dark. I fell to angle. It proved very dark so that I had good sport: angling with the lob worms as I do with the flies on the top of the water: you shall hear the fish rise at the top of the water: then you must loose a slack line down to the bottom as nigh as you can guess; then holding your line straight, feeling the fish bite: give time, there is no doubt of losing the fish, for there is not one among twenty but doth gorge the bait: the least stroke you can strike fastens the hook and makes the fish sure, letting the fish take a turn or two; you may take him up with your hands. Then the night began to alter and grow somewhat lighter: I took off the lob worms and set to my rod a white palmer fly made of a large hook: I had good sport for the time, until it grew lighter: so I took off the white palmer, and set to a red

¹ *Art of Angling*, 1651.

TROUT FISHING

palmer made of a large hook. I had good sport until it grew very light ; then I took off the red palmer and set to a black palmer. I had good sport and made up the dish of fish, so I put up my tackles and was with my lord at the time appointed for the service.'

Mr. Barker used a stronger line for night angling than he did by day : he knew, as Walton knew, that 'in the night the best Trouts come out of their holes.'

General Venables, before mentioned, was the first angler to improve upon the hair cast. In his *Experienc'd Angler* (1662) he refers to the superior strength of 'the smallest lute or viol strings,' the principal objection to which was that they rotted so quickly in the water. It was reserved for Mr. William Cæsar, the lute master, to get over this objection : you would remember that he told Pepys (18th March 1667) of a 'pretty experiment of angling with a minnikin, a gut string varnished over which keeps it from swelling' ; in other words keeps it from saturation and the resultant rotting. Mr. Cæsar may have obtained the idea from Venables' book ; on the other hand it is quite likely he conceived it himself ; lute player as well as angler, he well may have done so.

I trust it may be not heresy to suggest that Walton had leanings towards the worm rather than the fly. When he takes the education of his pupil in hand he puts worm-fishing first : 'The Trout is usually caught with a worm, a minnow, which some call a penk, or with a fly, viz. either a natural or an artificial fly.' When Cotton begins his pupil's education it is in these words : 'Why then, first of fly-fishing.' It seems at least arguable that Walton preferred the worm while Cotton most esteemed the fly.

There is one passage in Walton which has ever been as a first line of defence to him who, defying later or minor lawgivers of the angle, prefers to fish down stream. 'And let me again tell you that you keep as far from the water as you can possibly, whether you fish with a fly or worm : and fish down stream. And when you fish with a fly, if it be possible, let no part of

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

your line touch the water but your fly only : and be still moving your fly upon the water, or casting it into the water, you yourself being also always moving down the stream.'

Walton speaks more warmly of dry fly-fishing than other angling 'at the top'—'And now I shall tell you, that the fishing with a natural fly is excellent, and affords much pleasure. They may be found thus : the May-fly, usually in and about that month, near to the river-side, especially against rain : the Oak-fly, on the butt or body of an oak or ash, from the beginning of May to the end of August ; it is a brownish fly and easy to be so found, and stands usually with his head downward, that is to say, towards the root of the tree : the small black-fly, or Hawthorn-fly, is to be had on any hawthorn bush after the leaves be come forth. With these and a short line, as I showed to angle for a Chub, you may dape or dop, and also with a grass-hopper, behind a tree, or in any deep hole ; still making it to move on the top of the water as if it were alive, and still keeping yourself out of sight, you shall certainly have sport if there be Trouts ; yea, in a hot day, but especially in the evening of a hot day, you will have sport. . . .'

Cotton's advice on 'daping, dabbling or dibbling' (it is 'dapping' in Ireland unto this day) holds good in the main as when he gave it : 'First, then, of the Natural Fly ; of which we generally use but two sorts ; and those but in the two months of May and June only ; namely, the Green-drake, and the Stone-fly : though I have made use of a third, that way, called the Camlet-fly, with very good success, for Grayling, but never saw it angled with by any other, after this manner, my master only excepted, who died many years ago, and was one of the best anglers that ever I knew.

'These are to be angled with a short line, not much more than half the length of your rod, if the air be still ; or with a longer, very near, or all out, as long as your rod, if you have any wind to carry it from you. And this way of fishing we call daping, dabbling, or dibbling ; wherein you are always to have your line flying before you up or down the river, as the wind

Trout Fishing





TROUT FISHING

serves, and to angle as near as you can to the bank of the same side whereon you stand, though where you see a fish rise near you you may guide your quick fly over him, whether in the middle or on the contrary side ; and if you are pretty well out of sight, either by kneeling or the interposition of a bank or bush, you may almost be sure to raise, and take him too, if it be presently done : the fish will, otherwise, peradventure be removed to some other place, if it be in the still deeps, where he is always in motion, and roving up and down to look for prey, though, in a stream, you may always almost, especially if there be a good stone near, find him in the same place. Your line ought in this case to be three good hairs next the hook ; both by reason you are, in this kind of angling, to expect the biggest fish, and also that, wanting length to give him line after he has struck, you must be forced to tug for it : to which I will also add, that not an inch of your line being to be suffered to touch the water in dibling, it may be allowed to be the stronger.'

Cotton declaimed against the destruction of angling by ' the basest sort of people ' addicted to those ' unlawful ways of fire and netting in the night, and of damming, groping, spearing, hanging and hooking by day ' ;¹ but his own account of the sport he enjoyed in the May-fly season which immediately precedes, shows that the poachers could not have done much harm :

' But with these two, the Greendrake and the Stone-fly, I do verily believe I could some days in my life, had I not been weary of slaughter, have loaden a lusty boy : and have sometimes, I do honestly assure you, given over upon the mere account of satiety of sport : which will be no hard matter to believe, when I likewise assure you, that with this very fly, I

¹ Cotton's remark that to prevent such practices ' we have very good laws,' which had fallen into abeyance, probably refers to the Statutes 1 Eliz. c. 7 and 1 Eliz. c. 17. The former forbade the use of nets and specified the minimum size of pike, salmon, trout, and barbel that might be taken ; the latter prohibited nets of mesh less than two and a half inches.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

have, in this very river that runs by us, in three or four hours taken thirty, thirty-five and forty of the best Trouts in the river.'

Had Cotton's ideas of legitimate fishing been as those of a later day he might have cast a dubious eye upon the principles of his 'father Walton' who held that 'fishing with a dead rod, and laying night hooks, are like putting money to use; for they both work for their owners when they do nothing but sleep, or eat or rejoice as you know we have done this last hour.' And while upon this subject of methods now held unlawful it may be recalled that Mr. Thomas Barker was the discoverer of the deadly nature of salmon-roe; which secret he kept to himself, greatly sorrowing that he had not possessed it twenty years earlier; for then 'I would have gained a hundred pounds onely with this bait.'

Which reticence on Barker's part invites the reflection that the love of seventeenth-century anglers one for another, insisted upon by Walton, even as the affection among them of a later day, stopped short of disclosures relating to craft secrets.

This is from one of Charles Kingsley's Chalk Stream Studies:¹ '. . . Now we will walk down the meadows some half mile,

"While all the land in flowery squares,
Beneath a broad and equal-blowing wind
Smells of the coming summer,"

to a scene, which, as we may find its antitype anywhere for miles round, we may boldly invent for ourselves. A red brick mill (not new red brick, of course) shall hum for ever below giant poplar-spires, which bend and shiver in the steady breeze. On its lawn laburnums shall feather down like 'dropping wells of fire,' and from under them the stream shall hurry leaping and laughing into the light, and spread at our feet into a broad bright shallow, in which the kine are standing

¹ *Fraser's Magazine*, 1858.

TROUT FISHING

knee-deep already, a hint alas! that the day means heat. And there, to the initiated eye, is another and a darker hint of glaring skies, perspiring limbs and empty creels. Small fish are dimpling in the central eddies; but here, in six inches of water, on the very edge of the ford road, great tails and back-fins are showing above the surface, and swirling suddenly among the tufts of grass, sure sign that the large fish are picking up a minnow-breakfast at the same time that they warm their backs, and do not mean to look at a fly for many an hour to come.

‘Yet courage; for on the rail of yonder wooden bridge sits, chatting with a sun-browned nymph, her bonnet pushed over her face, her hayrake in her hand, a river-god in coat of velveteen, elbow on knee and pipe in mouth, and rising when he sees us, lifts his wideawake, and holloas back a roar of comfort to our mystic adjuration:—“Keeper! Is the fly up?”’

“Mortial strong last night, gentlemen.”

‘Wherewith he shall lounge up to us, landing-net in hand, and we will wander up stream and away.’

‘We will wander—for though the sun be bright, here are good fish to be picked out of sharpe and stop holes—into the water tables, ridged up centuries since into furrows forty feet broad and five feet high, over which the crystal water sparkles among the roots of the rich grass, and hurries down innumerable drains to find its parent stream between tufts of great blue geranium, and spires of purple loose-strife, and the delicate white and pink comfrey-bells, and the avens—fairest and most modest of all the water-side nymphs, who hangs her head all day long in pretty shame, with a soft blush upon her tawny cheek. But at the mouth of each of those drains, if we can get our flies in, and keep ourselves unseen, we will have one cast at least. For at each of them, on some sharp-rippling spot, lies a great trout or two, waiting for beetle, caterpillar, and whatsoever else may be washed from the long grass above. There, and from brimming feeders, which slip along, weed-choked, under white hawthorn hedges, and beneath the great

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

roots of oak and elm. shall we pick out full many a goodly trout. There, in yon stop-hole underneath that tree, not ten feet broad nor twenty long, where just enough water trickles through the hatches to make a ripple, are a brace of noble fish, no doubt ; and one of them you may be sure of, if you will go the proper way to work, and fish scientifically with the brace of flies which I have put on for you—a governor and a black alder. In the first place, you must throw up into the little pool, not down. If you throw down, they will see you in an instant, and besides, you will never get your fly close under the shade of the brick work, where alone you have a chance. What use throwing into the still shallow tail, shining like oil in the full glare of the sun ?

‘ “But I cannot get below the pool without—”

‘ “Without crawling through that stiff shrubbed hedge, well set with trees, and leaping that ten-foot feeder afterwards. Very well.” It is this sort of thing which makes the stay-at-home cultivated chalk-fishing as much harder work than mountain angling, as a gallop over a stiffly-enclosed country is harder than one over an open moor. You can do it or not, as you like ; but if you wish to catch large trout on a bright day, I should advise you to employ the only method yet discovered.

‘ There, you are through ; and the keeper shall hand you your rod. You have torn your trousers, and got a couple of thorns in your shins. The one can be mended, the other pulled out. Now, jump the feeder. There is no run to it, so—you have jumped in. Never mind : but keep the point of your rod up. You are at least saved the lingering torture of getting wet inch by inch ; and as for cold water hurting any one—*Credat Judaeus*. Now make a circuit through the meadow twenty yards away. Stoop down when you are on the ridge of each table. A trout may be basking at the lower end of the pool, who will see you, rush up and tell all his neighbours. Now, kneel down, take off that absurd black chimney-pot, which you are wearing, I suppose, for the same reason as

TROUT FISHING

Homer's heroes wore their koruthous and phalerous, to make yourself look taller and more terrible to your foes.

'Shorten your line all you can—you cannot fish with too short a line up-stream; and throw, not into the oil-basin near you, but right up into the darkest corner. Make your fly strike the brick-work and drop in. So? no rise? Then, don't work or draw it, or your deceit is discovered instantly. Lift it out, and repeat the throw.

'What? You have hooked your fly in the hatches? Very good. Pull at it till the casting line breaks, put on a fresh one, and to work again. There! you have him. Don't rise! fight him kneeling; hold him hard, and give him no line, but shorten up anyhow. Teat and haul him down to you before he can make to his home, while the keeper runs round with the net. . . . There he is on shore. Two pounds, good weight. Creep back more cautiously than ever, and try again. . . . There. A second fish, over a pound weight. Now we will go and recover the flies off the hatches; and you will agree that there is more cunning, more science, and therefore more pleasant excitement, in 'foxing' a great fish out of a stop-hole, than in whipping far and wide over an open stream, where a half-pounder is a wonder and a triumph. And as for physical exertion, you will be able to compute for yourself how much your back and knees, and fore-arm will ache by nine o'clock to-night, after some ten hours of this scrambling, splashing, leaping and kneeling upon a hot June day. This item in the day's work will of course be put to the side of loss or of gain, according to your temperament; but it will cure you of an inclination to laugh at us Wessex chalk-fishers as cockneys. So we will wander up the streams, taking a fish here and a fish there, till—Really it is very hot. We have the whole day before us; and the fly will not be up until five o'clock at least; and then the real fishing will begin. Why tire ourselves beforehand? The Squire will send us luncheon in the afternoon, and after that expect us to fish as long as we can see, and come up to the hall to sleep, regardless of the ceremony of dressing. For is

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

not the green drake on? And while he reigns, all hours, meals, decencies, and respectabilities must yield to his caprice. See, here he sits, or rather tens of thousands of him, one on each stalk of grass. Green drake, yellow drake, brown drake, white drake, each with his gauzy wings folded over his back, waiting for some unknown change of temperature, or something else, in the afternoon, to wake him from his sleep, and send him fluttering over the stream; while overhead the black drake, who has changed his skin and reproduced his species, dances in the sunshine, empty, hard, and happy, like Festus Bailey's *Great Black Crow* (the only humorous thing he ever wrote), who all his life sings :

“Ho, ho, ho,

For no one will eat him, he well doth know.”

‘However, as we have insides, and he has actually none, and what is more strange, not even a mouth wherewith to fill the said insides, we had better copy his brothers and sisters below whose insides are still left, and settle with them upon the grass awhile beneath yon goodly elm.

‘Comfort yourself with a glass of sherry and a biscuit, and give the keeper one, and likewise a cigar. He will value it at five times its worth, not for the pleasure of it, but because it raises him in the social scale. “Any cad,” so he holds, “smokes pipes; but a good cigar is the note of a gentleman,” and of them who “keep company with the quality,” as keepers do. He puts it in his hat-crown, to smoke this evening in presence of his compeers at the public-house, retires modestly ten yards, lies down on his back in a dry-feeder, under the shade of the long grass, and instantly falls fast asleep. Poor fellow! he was up all last night in the covers, and will be again to-night. Let him sleep while he may, and we will chat over chalk-fishing.

‘The first thing, probably, on which you will be inclined to ask questions, is the size of the fish in these streams. We have killed this morning four fish averaging a pound weight

TROUT FISHING

each. All below that weight we throw in, as is our rule here ; but you may have remarked that none of them exceeded half a pound ; that they were almost all about herring size. The smaller ones I believe to be year-old fish, hatched last spring twelve months ; the pound fish two-year olds. At what rate these last would have increased, depends very much, I suspect, on their chance of food. The limit of life and growth in cold-blooded animals seems to depend very much on their amount of food. The boa, alligator, shark, pike and I suppose the trout also, will live to a great age, and attain an enormous size, give them but range enough ; and the only cause why there are trout of ten pounds and more in the Thames lashers, while one of four pounds is rare here, is simply that the Thames fish has more to eat. Here, were the fish not sufficiently thinned out every year by anglers, they would soon become large-headed, brown, and flabby, and cease to grow. Many a good stream has been spoilt in this way, when a Squire has unwisely preferred quantity to quality of fish.'

Let us turn from the chalk stream of the south to the lake of the north. This is Mr. Gathorne Hardy's story of a day on Loch-na-Larich :—

' Travellers who have been in the Holy Land describe the Sea of Galilee as being of the shape of a harp, and the same simile will give a good idea of the little mountain tarn which breaks upon my view in a cup of the hills below Cruach Lussa. There is no bloom yet upon the heather which clothes the moors around it, as it is early June, but the young bracken is shooting up through last year's withered fronds ; and the small birch trees which fringe the opposite side of the little bay at the near end are brilliant with their early green. Great kingcups shine like stars among the stones at the side, and the sandpipers busily flit from rock to rock, while the air is musical with their voices, and the louder bubbling breeding-season note of the curlew which hovers over the opposite brae. Two or three mallards fly away as we approach, and a matronly duck leads a numerous brood of some eleven tiny balls of down into the

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

reeds at the far end for shelter. The boat is moored to a small pier below me, padlocked to a chain and rope, and I sit down and put my rod together, while my attendant unfastens the padlock and prepares to get all ready for a start. And now occurs the first misfortune of the day. The gillie has duly unfastened the padlock, but the chain is broken, and at the first pull it comes away in his hands, leaving the boat still floating out of reach. I ask him what is to be done, and he replies that he must wade for it; and after I have vainly endeavoured to move it by throwing my light line across it, we determine that wading is the only plan likely to succeed. He is for going in at once, accoutred as he is, but I impress upon him that there is no hurry, and he so far indulges my weakness as to consent to take off his shoes and stockings. This does not, however, prevent his getting wet, for the water is not merely well over his knickerbockers, but nearly up to his shoulders, before he is able to reach the boat with a long stick. While he is baling, I see a rise a little to the left, just within reach of the shore, and as I drop my fly with a longish line into the circle, a little fellow rises boldly and takes the dropper, although there is no ripple on the water. I haul him out, pulling and struggling manfully considering his size, and, as I land him, find that there is a second one attached to the tail-fly, and that I have caught two with my first cast. They are not so long as my hand, but I do not put them back again, for there are really too many fish in the loch, and it would be a good thing to reduce the stock. Besides, they are excellent for breakfast, and if I am too particular about size, it is quite probable that there may not be enough for a fry. The ordinary run of fish in this loch is about three to a pound, and one is lucky if one gets one of over a pound in a good day's fishing.

'And now commences the familiar but unsatisfactory process of hunting the breeze. We gaze round the loch, and make up our minds that the best chance will be in the little bay under the birches, where there appears to be a tiny ripple. As soon as we arrive there, it has entirely disappeared, and

TROUT FISHING

seems to have turned its attention to the very spot we have just left. It is not hard work either for rower or fisherman, and the former just holds the boat within reach of shore, while I keep dropping my three flies as lightly as possible a few yards from the rocks, and am occasionally rewarded with a shy rise, and get a few fish, some of them of quite a decent size. What determined fighters they are ! They bend my light rod, and even run out a little line. If the lazy South-Country giants of the Test or Mimram had half their energy and strength, few indeed in those weedy streams would succumb to the tiny hooks and gossamer gut necessary for effecting their capture at any time but the May-fly season. I see a few alders on the water, and am most successful with an imitation of that fly, dressed pretty large and sunk rather deep. In spite of the weather, I nearly always get an offer from any fish I see rise within reach and manage to put my fly over ; but although I strike very quickly, I do not succeed in touching one in three, as they see too much, and turn before they actually touch the fly. One little fish of about a quarter of a pound is hooked foul, near the ventral fin, and makes for the weeds near the bottom so stubbornly that, until I see where he is hooked, I try to persuade myself that I have at last got hold of a monster of the deep. The most productive spot is the end near the reeds, where a line of water-lily leaves are just showing. There I get one fish of nearly three-quarters of a pound, beautifully shaped and marked, which really makes a determined struggle for liberty, actually reaching the weeds and for a moment attaching the dropper to one of them, which, fortunately, is not sufficiently firm to break the casting-line.

‘ And now for a few moments a change comes over the scene. Hitherto there has been nothing but the lightest possible ripple, and often not even that ; but now a sudden blast beats down from the hills, and the light boat is flying down the loch almost too rapidly for fishing, and, in spite of the utmost exertions of the man at the oars, the boat is down over the flies almost as soon as they touch the water. Two or

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

three fish move at the fly in the course of the drift, but none of them are hooked, as it is really impossible to keep the line properly straight and strike in a workmanlike manner. It is but an easterly squall, and falls as rapidly as it rises; and, when a toiling and laborious pull up-wind has got us nearly back to the far end of the loch, all is calm once more, and rock, hill, and reed are reflected double in the glassy surface. The basket at the end of the day contains only thirteen trout, and although there are one or two big ones, the average weight of the whole cannot be more than a quarter of a pound—a bad day both in number and size. At this time of the year I ought to be sure of a couple of dozen in an afternoon of about three to the pound. I have not changed my flies much, as the rising fish have seemed contented with what was offered them—a teal and green, a zulu and an alder. My cast was a very fine one, and when for a short time I tried burn-trout flies of the smallest size on drawn gut, I did not meet with sufficient success to encourage me to persist in the experiment. I also condescended to a minnow for a short time while I enjoyed my after-luncheon pipe, but not a touch rewarded the poaching expedient. Altogether the pleasure of the day consisted rather in the delicious air, the beautiful landscape, and the life and music around me, than in the moderate sport enjoyed. All day the birds have been busy and noisy, and I have noted fourteen varieties—herring-gull, kittiwake, heron, curlew, lapwing, sandpiper, duck, coot, moorhen, blackcock, grouse, rook, jackdaw, and cuckoo, without counting the smaller birds, such as swallows, martins, pipits, and warbler, the latter of which I find it difficult to identify with certainty at any distance.

‘I do not, of course, record the above day’s sport as a typical or satisfactory sample of the pleasures of loch-fishing. I have had many days in various spots where the basket has been heavy at the end of the day, and fish up to two pounds, with an occasional monster even larger, have rewarded my exertions. But just as marmalade has been described as “an

TROUT FISHING

excellent substitute for butter at breakfast," so to my mind fishing in a loch from a boat is only a substitute for the real thing, and except for a change occasionally, I would rather have indifferent sport in a river or burn than fish the finest loch in the Highlands. . . .'

SPRING

Now when the first foul torrent of the brooks,
Swell'd with the vernal rains, is ebb'd away,
And, whitening, down their mossy-tinctured stream
Descends the billowy foam ; now is the time,
While yet the dark-brown water aids the guile,
To tempt the trout. The well-dissembled fly,
The rod fine tapering with elastic spring,
Snatch'd from the hoary steed the floating line,
And all thy slender wat'ry stores prepare. . . .
Just in the dubious point, where with the pool
Is mix'd the trembling stream, or where it boils
Around the stone, or from the hollow'd bank
Reverted plays in undulating flow.
There throw nice-judging the delusive fly
And as you lead it round in artful curve,
With eye attentive mark the springing game.
Straight as above the surface of the flood
They wanton rise, or urged by hunger leap,
Then fix with gentle twitch the barbéd hook ;
Some lightly tossing to the grassy bank,
And to the shelving shore slow dragging some,
With various hand proportion'd to their force.
If yet too young, and easily deceived,
A worthless prey scarce bends your pliant rod ;
Him, piteous of his youth and the short space
He has enjoy'd the vital light of Heaven,
Soft disengage, and back into the stream
The speckled captive throw. But should you lure
From his dark haunt, beneath the tangled roots
Of pendent trees, the monarch of the brook,
Behoves you then to ply your finest art.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

Long time he, following cautious, scans the fly ;
And oft attempts to seize it, but as oft
The dimpled water speaks his jealous fear.
At last, while haply o'er the shaded sun
Passes a cloud, he desperate takes the death,
With sullen plunge. At once he darts along,
Deep struck, and runs out all the lengthen'd line ;
Then seeks the farthest ooze, the sheltering weed,
The cavern'd bank, his old secure abode ;
And flies aloft, and flounces round the pool,
Indignant of the guile. With yielding hand
That feels him still, yet to his furious course
Gives way, you now retiring, following now
Across the stream, exhaust his idle rage :
Till floating broad upon his breathless side,
And to his fate abandon'd, to the shore
You gaily drag your unresisting prize.

JAMES THOMSON, 1728.

PIKE AND OTHER FISHING

HAVE you ever read Gervase Markham on the Inward Qualities of the Angler's Mind? The mental equipment held necessary by this authority was elaborate, and, it is to be feared, few, even in this hour, could satisfy Mr. Markham of his fitness to wield rod. Hear him :—

‘ A skillful angler ought to be a generall scholler and seene in all the liberal sciences as Gramarian to know eyther how to write a discourse of his art in true tearmes eyther without affection or rudeness. He should have sweetnesse of speech to persuade and intice others to delight in an exercise so much laudable : strength of argument to defend and maintain his profession : knowledge of the Sunne Moone and Starres that by their aspects he may guesse the seasonableness or unseasonableness of the weather : a good knower of Countries and well used to high wayes that by taking the readiest paths to every Lake, Brooke or River his journeys may be more certaine and lesse wearisome. He should have a knowledge of proportion of all sorts whether Circular, Square or Diametricall, that when hee shall be questioned of his diurnall progresses he may give a Graphicall description of the Angles and Channells of Rivers, how they fall from their heads and what compasses they fetch in the severall windings. He must also have the perfect Art of Numbering that in the sounding of Lakes or Rivers he may know how many foot or inches each severally containeth, and by adding subtracting or multiplying the same he may yield the Reason of every River's swift or slow current. He would not be unskilfull in Musique, that whenever eyther Melancholy, heavinesse of thought or the perturbations of his own fancies, stirreth up sadnesse in him he may remove the same with some

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

godly Hymme or Antheme. He must be of well settled and constant beliefe to injoy the benefit of his expectations for than to dispayre it were better never to put in practice.'

Good Master Markham, thou sayest well! 'to injoy the benefit of expectations' is phrase most happy: for what weigh fish caught against fish yet to catch? Proceed, Master Markham: be the angler neither Gramarian, rhetorician, mathematician, surveyor nor skilled in musique, yet Hope ever is his. Proceed:—

' . . . Exceeding patient and neyther vext nor excruciate himselfe with losses and mischances, as in losing the prey when it is almost in the hand. Must be full of humble thoughts, not disdayning when occasion commands to kneele, lye downe or wet his feete or fingers as oft as there is any advantage given thereby.'

Now, Master Markham, weigh this utterance. Who, losing fish at the net's edge, shall, at your bidding, fail to excruciate himself? Your ideal angler too: if he mean to go fishing, yet blench when he should kneele or lye downe or wet his feete or fingers, he must, for all the accomplishments afore catalogued, be a sorry 'prentice. What manner of man, furthermore, is this your angler-in-the-making to be conjured thus:—

' He must be strong and valiant neyther to be amazed with stormes nor affrighted with Thunder, but to hold them according to their naturall causes . . . must be of strong constitution of body and able to endure much fasting and not of a gnawing stomacke, observing houres in which if it be unsatisfied it troubleth both the mind and the body and loose that delight which maketh the pastime only pleasing.'

We cavil not at admonition to be of good courage in the storm: knowing that in an elder day Thunders and Lightnings were phenomena right mysterious and awful. But lacked this angler wit to put bread and cheese in his wallet that he must be taught endurance of fasting and the virtues of a stomacke that shall not unseasonably gnaw?

It would seem that Markham was hardly a practical angler;

PIKE AND OTHER FISHING

nevertheless he knew something of fish—of coarse fish, at all events. He thinks it not amiss to begin with the ‘Goodgin Roch and Dace which, being fishes of eager bit, most foolish, least affrightful and soonest deceived, are the first fittest prayes for young schollers and such as are but learners in the Art of Angling: for the easiness of their gaining will not only settle an unresolved mind, but give unto ignorance both comfort and encouragement.’

It is to be regretted that so few of the old anglers realised Markham’s ideal, in so far, at all events, as writing a discourse of their art in true terms. What they wrote when they did take pen in hand was to the point, lacking descriptive embroidery: the characteristics of fish and baits suitable for the various species practically monopolised their endeavours. Thus Leonard Mascall on the ‘Barbyll’ for example, ‘a subtill and straunge fish to take and very daintie to take his baite.’ Walton recommends that rod and line be both long and strong for barbel fishing, as ‘you will find him a heavy and a dogged fish to be dealt withal.’

The carp (said by Mascall to have been introduced into this country by a namesake of his own, but mentioned in the *Boke of St. Albans*, published at an earlier date than he assigns to its arrival) was too wary to be popular among anglers, however conspicuous its merits for the pond or stew. ‘If you will fish for Carp,’ says Walton, ‘you must put on a very large measure of patience, especially to fish for a river Carp. I have known a very good fisher angle diligently four or six hours in a day, for three or four days together, for a river Carp and not have a bite. . . . But you are to remember that I have told you there is no rule without an exception: and therefore being possest with that hope and patience which I wish to all fishers, especially to the Carp angler, I shall tell you with what bait to fish for him. . . . And some have been so curious as to say the tenth of April is a fatal day for Carp.’ One of the suitable pastes for carp, it may be observed, includes the flesh of a rabbit or *cat*, cut small.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

The perch is commended by Walton as a 'bold biting fish': for 'if there be twenty or forty in a hole they may be, at one standing, all caught one after another. They being . . . like the wicked of the world, not afraid though their fellows and companions perish in their sight.'

The chub we ever remember as the fish which afforded Walton opportunity of displaying his knowledge of fish life and his skill in applying it.

'The worst fish that swims,' exclaims Venator. 'I had hoped for a Trout to my dinner.'

'Though a Chub be by you and many others reckoned the worst of fish, yet you shall see I'll make it a good fish by dressing it.'

'Why, how will you dress him?' asks the pupil.

'I'll tell you by and bye when I've caught him,' responds Piscator the cautious.

But Walton knew his chub: he bids Venator mark, among a number, one with a white mark on his tail: 'that very chub I mean to put into your hands presently.' And the 'fearfullest of fishes' is caught with a grasshopper as promised. Walton preferred the grasshopper above all baits for chub.

'Our forefathers,' says Daniel, 'were wont to pursue even their amusements with great formality. An angler a century and a half back must have his *Fishing Coat*, which, if not black, was at least of a very dark colour, a black velvet cap like those which jockeys now wear, only larger, and a Rod with a stick as long as a *Halbert*: thus equipped he stalked forth followed by the eyes of a whole neighbourhood: but in these days *bag-rods* have been invented, which the Angler may easily convey, so as not to proclaim to every one he meets where he is going.'

The bag or case may have been an invention of Daniel's age, but 'angle rods of many pieces' with brass sockets and ferrules were in use when Gervase Markham wrote in 1614. Such were 'approved'; but there is every reason to suppose that the spliced rod was by far the most generally used.

Markham anticipated Walton in advising the beginner to

PIKE AND OTHER FISHING

devote himself to the 'Goodgin.' Says Izaak : 'He is an excellent fish to enter a young angler, being easy to be taken with a small red worm, on or very near the ground. He is one of those leather mouthed fish that has his teeth in his throat and will hardly be lost off the hook if he be once stricken. They be usually scattered up and down every river in the shallows, in the heat of summer : but in autumn, when the weeds begin to grow sour and rot, and the weather colder, then they gather together, and get into the deepest parts of the water : and are to be fished for there, with your hook always touching the ground, if you fish for him with a float or with a cork. But many will fish for the Gudgeon by hand with a running line upon the ground without a cork as a Trout is fished for : and it is an excellent way if you have a gentle rod and as gentle a hand.'

The roach and dace were in Walton's esteem 'inferior fish which make the angler excellent sport, for you know there is more pleasure in hunting the hare than in eating her.' Particularly does he commend the 'great Roaches about London, where I think there be the best Roach anglers.'

Concerning pike, Markham has not much to say beyond telling us that 'your best Anglers use most commonly a chaulke line,¹ hair not being strong enough.' Walton's advice on the subject of catching the 'mighty Luce or Pike, the tyrant of the fresh waters,' is minute in its detail, and bears out the belief that this was the most desired among coarse fish.

'You may fish for a Pike, either with a ledger or a Walking bait ; and you are to note, that I call that a Ledger-bait, which is fixed or made to rest in one certain place when you shall be absent from it ; and I call that a Walking-bait, which you take with you, and have ever in motion. . . .

'First, for your LIVE-BAIT. Of fish, a roach or dace is, I think, best and most tempting ; and a perch is the longest lived on a hook, and having cut off his fin on his back, which may be done without hurting him, you must take your knife,

¹ 'Chalk line' as used by carpenters(?).

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

which cannot be too sharp, and betwixt the head and the fin on the back, cut or make an incision, or such a scar, as you may put the arming-wire of your hook into it, with as little hurting or bruising the fish as art and diligence will enable you to do ; and so carrying your arming-wire along his back, unto or near the tail of your fish, betwixt the skin and the body of it, draw out that wire or arming of your hook at another scar near to his tail ; then tie him about it with thread, but no harder than of necessity, to prevent hurting the fish ; and the better to avoid hurting the fish, some have a kind of probe to open the way for the more easy entrance and passage of your wire or arming ; but as for these, time and a little experience will teach you better than I can by words. Therefore I will for the present say no more of this ; but come next to give you some directions how to bait your hook with a frog. . . . Now of these water-frogs, if you intend to fish with a frog for a Pike, you are to choose the yellowest that you can get, for that the Pike ever likes best. And thus use your frog, that he may continue long alive :—

‘ Put your hook into his mouth, which you may easily do from the middle of April to August ; and then the frog’s mouth grows up, and he continues so for at least six months without eating, but is sustained, none but He whose name is Wonderful knows how : I say, put your hook, I mean the arming-wire, through his mouth, and out at his gills ; and then with a fine needle and silk sew the upper part of his leg, with only one stitch, to the arming-wire of your hook ; or tie the frog’s leg, above the upper joint, to the armed-wire ; and, in so doing, use him as though you loved him, that is, harm him as little as you may possibly, that he may live the longer.

‘ And now, having given you this direction for the baiting your ledger-hook with a live fish or frog, my next must be to tell you, how your hook thus baited must or may be used ; and it is thus ; having fastened your hook to a line, which if it be not fourteen yards long should not be less than twelve, you are to fasten that line to any bough near to a hole where a Pike is, or is likely to lie, or to have a haunt ; and then wind your line

PIKE AND OTHER FISHING

on any forked stick, all your line, except half a yard of it or rather more ; and split that forked stick with such a nick or notch at one end of it as may keep the line from any more of it ravelling from about the stick than so much of it as you intend. And choose your forked stick to be of that bigness as may keep the fish or frog from pulling the forked stick under the water till the Pike bites ; and then the Pike having pulled the line forth of the cleft or nick of that stick in which it was gently fastened, he will have line enough to go to his hold and pouch the bait. And if you would have this ledger-bait to keep at a fixt place undisturbed by wind or other accidents which may drive it to the shore-side, for you are to note, that it is likeliest to catch a Pike in the midst of the water, then hang a small plummet of lead, a stone, or piece of tile, or a turf, in a string, and cast it into the water with the forked stick to hang upon the ground, to be a kind of anchor to keep the forked stick from moving out of your intended place till the Pike come ; this I take to be a very good way to use so many ledger-baits as you intend to make trial of.

‘ Or if you bait your hooks thus with live fish or frogs, and in a windy day, fasten them thus to a bough or bundle of straw, and by the help of that wind can get them to move across a pond or mere, you are like to stand still on the shore and see sport presently, if there be any store of Pikes. Or these live baits may make sport, being tied about the body or wings of a goose or duck, and she chased over a pond. And the like may be done with turning three or four live baits, thus fastened to bladders, or boughs, or bottles of hay or flags, to swim down a river, whilst you walk quietly alone on the shore, and are still in expectation of sport. The rest must be taught you by practice ; for time will not allow me to say more of this kind of fishing with live baits.’

Touching those methods of angling (if angling it be) with bough or bundle of straw or with the pressed service of goose or duck, at a later date these were known as ‘ Huxing.’ The latter, according to Daniel, was formerly practised ‘ in the

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

Loch of Monteith in Scotland, which abounds with very large Perch and Pike. Upon the islands a number of Geese were collected by the Farmers who occupied the surrounding banks of the loch ; after baited lines of two or three feet long had been tied to the legs of their geese they were driven into the water ; steering naturally homewards in different directions, the baits were soon swallowed : a violent and often tedious struggle ensued in which, however, the geese at length prevailed, though they were frequently much exhausted before they reached the shore. This method has not been so long relinquished, but there are old persons upon the spot who were active promoters of the amusement.'

Trimmers, beloved of Colonel Thornton as 'Foxhounds,' were much in use for pike ; but that ardent sportsman, assiduous as he was in the use of these contrivances, enjoyed a fair struggle with a big fish. This is his account of the killing of the great pike in Loch Alvie :—

'On the second trip, I saw a very large fish come at me, and, collecting my line, I felt I had him fairly hooked ; but I feared he had run himself tight round some root, his weight seemed so dead ; we rowed up, therefore, to the spot, when he soon convinced me he was at liberty, by running me so far into the lake, that I had not one inch of line more to give him. The servants, foreseeing the consequences of my situation, rowed, with great expedition, towards the fish, which now rose about seventy yards from us, an absolute wonder ! I relied on my tackle, which I knew was in every respect excellent, as I had, in consequence of the large pike killed the day before, put on hooks and gimp, adjusted with great care ; a precaution which would have been thought superfluous in London, as it certainly was for most lakes, though here, barely equal to my fish. After playing him for some time, I gave the rod to Captain Waller, that he might have the honour of landing him ; for I thought him quite exhausted, when, to our surprise, we were again constrained to follow the monster nearly across this great lake, having the wind too much against us. The

PIKE AND OTHER FISHING

whole party were now in high blood, and the delightful *Ville de Paris*¹ quite manageable; frequently he flew out of the water to such a height, that though I knew the uncommon strength of my tackle, I dreaded losing such an extraordinary fish, and the anxiety of our little crew was equal to mine. After about an hour and a quarter's play, however, we thought we might safely attempt to land him, which was done in the following manner: Newmarket, a lad so called from the place of his nativity, who had now come to assist, I ordered, with another servant, to strip and wade in as far as possible, which they readily did. In the meantime I took the landing-net, while Captain Waller, judiciously ascending the hill above, drew him gently towards us. He approached the shore very quietly, and we thought him quite safe, when, seeing himself surrounded by his enemies, he in an instant made a last desperate effort, shot into the deep again, and, in the exertion, threw one of the men on his back. His immense size was now very apparent; we proceeded with all due caution, and, being once more drawn towards land, I tried to get his head into the net, upon effecting which, the servants were ordered to seize his tail, and slide him on shore: I took all imaginable pains to accomplish this, but in vain, and began to think myself strangely awkward, when, at length, having got his snout in, I discovered that the hoop of the net, though adapted to very large pike, would admit no more than that part. He was, however, completely spent, and in a few moments we landed him, a perfect monster! He was stabbed by my directions in the spinal marrow, with a large knife, which appeared to be the most humane manner of killing him, and I then ordered all the signals with the *sky-scrapers* to be hoisted; and the whoop re-echoed through the whole range of the Grampians. On opening his jaws to endeavour to take the hooks from him, which were both fast in his gorge, so dreadful a forest of teeth, or tusks, I think I never beheld; if I had not had a double link of gimp, with two swivels, the depth between his stomach

¹ The name of the boat.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

and mouth would have made the former quite useless. His measurement accurately taken was *five feet four inches* from eye to fork.'

The weight of this fish was estimated by Colonel Thornton at between 47 and 48 lbs., which estimate is borne out by comparison of its dimensions with those of other pike that have been weighed. Large pike killed of recent years are two of 40 lbs. each : one taken at Epton House, Edgehill, in 1879, the other from Suffolk waters in 1896.¹ These were far outdone by the pike caught in an inlet of Lough Corrib in 1905, particulars of which Major A. E. Mainwaring sent to the *Field* (16th May 1905). This pike weighed 48 lbs. : it was a spent female in poor condition ; had it been caught before spawning it would have weighed at least 60 lbs. It was caught with a gaff.

Reference to monster pike suggests inclusion here of that which is surely the Earliest Fish Story. Marred though it be by the parish clerk's escape, this from the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* of 25th January 1765 compares favourably with modern enterprise in the same field :—

' On Thursday last, at Lilleshall Lime Works, near Newport (Shropshire) the water of a pool about nine yards deep was drawn off, when an enormous pike was found. He was drawn out by a rope fastened round his head and gills in the presence of hundreds of spectators, many of whom assisted. He weighed upwards of 170 lb. and is thought to be the largest pike ever seen. Some time ago, the clerk of the parish was trolling in the above pool when his bait was seized by this ferocious creature, and doubtless it would have devoured him also, had he not by wonderful agility and dexterous swimming escaped the dreadful jaws of this voracious animal.'

Let us turn from daring fiction to homely fact. Among its thousand modern scribes the late Mr. Frank Buckland remains unsurpassed in his description of Thames angling.

¹ See 'The Big Pike List' compiled by the late Lord Inverurie and published in the *Fishing Gazette* of 13th November 1897.

PIKE AND OTHER FISHING

Hairbreadth 'scapes of parish clerks from such pike as never were had no attractions for him : naturalist first and angler after, this from *Curiosities of Natural History* shows him in both capacities :—

' We well remember, one fine day in August last, going out on a gudgeon-fishing expedition. A luxurious dog-cart carried us quickly to Surley Hall, well known to Etonians. There we found the Charon of this part of the river, Finmore by name, waiting for us in his punt. This old man's family has had the fishing of the water for more than a hundred years ; and the old man himself knows every hole and patch of weeds in the river just about Windsor as well as a Londoner does the shops of Regent Street.

' In the punt were placed three chairs and three fishing-rods, two punt-poles with sharp iron spikes on their ends, called in these parts " rypecks " : why or wherefore they have received this name we cannot ascertain ; lastly, an enormous iron rake. Three anglers occupied the three chairs : two of them were great salmon-fishers, who, but a few weeks ago, thought a fish under twenty pounds nothing ; they were now pleased by catching a little gudgeon not a quarter of an ounce in weight. The laziness of gudgeon-fishing is indeed laziness. " If " (as most aptly remarked at the time) " you exert yourself in the least, the whole thing is spoilt." It is quite contrary to the rules to put on one's own bait, to alter one's own float, to take the captured fish off the hook ; all is done by Charon, who not unfrequently has quite enough to do. Everything prepared, the boat is pushed out into the middle of the river, the two rypecks are fixed firmly into the ground at the bottom, and the boat is fastened to them across the stream. The first operation is to rake up the bottom well with the big rake. Immediately this is done, all the gudgeon in the neighbourhood flock to the place, and if they are in a biting humour, begin instantly to be caught. Bold biters are these gudgeon ; they take the hook with a rush, and down goes the float deep into the water. This is capital fun when the fish are on the

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

feed ; so pleased, indeed, was one of the salmon-fishers aforesaid, that he exclaimed, " Well, there are only two kinds of fishing, salmon fishing and gudgeon fishing," a dictum worthy of the respected speaker. When we first went out, not a fish could we catch, though we knew there were plenty close under the punt. The reason was that we had not got the hook at the proper depth ; it ought to be an inch, or rather less, from the bottom ; if it is more, the fish, who feed only at the bottom, don't see it, and it passes over them untouched. Gudgeon are curious fish as regards biting ; some days they will bite furiously, another day they won't look at the bait. Even when they are biting well, they will suddenly leave off. The remedy then is to " scratch their backs," as Charon says, " with the rake." This will often make them begin again. We have been out and caught eight or ten fish in one day, and a few days afterwards, with two rods in the same place, we catch fifteen dozen—the best day's sport we ever had. Much, however, depends on the bait ; worms, we find, are decidedly the best, and those the small red worm from the dunghill. They will be taken by the fish better if they are kept in moss a day or two beforehand, than if used directly they are dug up. We have found that a little cream poured on the moss causes the fish to bite at them with eagerness ; the reason probably is, that the worms feed on the cream and thereby acquire a fine transparent look. Something, too, depends on the line ; this must not be too thick, nor of a colour easily seen in the water. The finest line that can be used is made of human hair ; it is much finer and much stronger than gut made from silk-worms ; but it must be made by the fisherman himself ; it cannot be bought anywhere that we know of. It is difficult, also, to get human hair long enough ; the hair-merchants in the City are the only people who sell it ; it is, moreover, very expensive.

When the gudgeon are caught, they are placed in the well of the boat, which communicates with the water outside by means of an open grating. The fish seem to know they are captives, for they all crowd to the grating when one attempts

A Quiet Backwater





PIKE AND OTHER FISHING

to take them out of the well. I have also observed, about all the kinds of fresh-water fish that I have caught, that they will, when placed on the bank, always jump towards the water. I once saw a fine barbel, that was covered with grass by the waterside and thought to be quite defunct, suddenly begin a series of jumpings towards the river ; and a fine race I had to prevent his getting back again into the hole whence he had just been taken. How is this to be accounted for? I have placed a fish where he can neither see nor hear the water, even supposing that he has the power of seeing and hearing when out of his own element ; yet he has always jumped in the proper direction towards it.'

THE SOUTH WIND

A FISHERMAN'S BLESSINGS

O blessed drums of Aldershot !
O blessed South-west train !
O blessed, blessed Speaker's clock,
All prophesying rain !

O blessed yaffil, laughing loud !
O blessed falling glass !
O blessed fan of cold grey cloud !
O blessed smelling grass.

O blest South wind that toots his horn
Through every hole and crack !
I'm off at eight to-morrow morn
To bring *such* fishes back !

CHARLES KINGSLEY, 1856.

POLO

IF the history of polo in England be short, the history of the game elsewhere is of the longest. Mr. T. F. Dale¹ says it was played as far back as 600 B.C. among the Persians. There is in existence a curious old picture, which was taken from the palace of the King of Oude, representing an early game of polo : and whatever rules may then have been in vogue, the resemblance of the implements to those of the present day is noticeable ; the shape of the stick used suggests a lighter ball ; and, unless the players were very small men, the horses they ride are at least fifteen hands. Mr. Dale cites *The Tale of the Wazir and Sage Duban* as containing the tale of the genesis of the game. Yuan, King of Fars in the land of Roum, being afflicted with leprosy, permitted the Sage Duban to undertake his case, all other physicians having failed ; and the sage, according to the chronicler translated by Sir Richard Burton, ‘set to work at choosing the fittest drugs and simples, and he fashioned a bat hollow within and furnished with a handle without, for which he made a ball : the two being prepared with consummate art. On the next day, when both were ready for use and wanted nothing more, he went up to the King ; and kissing the ground between his hands bade him ride forth on the parade ground, there to play pall and mall. He, the King, was accompanied by his suite, Emirs and Chamberlains, wazirs and lords of the realm, etc. Ere he was seated the sage Duban came to him, and handing him the bat said, “Take the mall and grip it as I do ; so ! and now push for the plain, and leaning well over thy horse drive the ball with all thy might until thy

¹ *The Game of Polo.*

POLO

palm be moist and thy body perspire, then the medicines will penetrate though thy palm and will permeate thy person. When thou hast done with playing and thou feelest the effects of the medicine, return to thy palace and make the ablution in the Hammam bath and lay thee down to sleep, so shalt thou become whole, and peace be with thee.

‘ Thereupon King Yuan took the bat from the sage and grasped it firmly, then mounting steed he drove the ball before him and galloped after it till he reached it, when he struck it well with all his might, his palm gripping the bat handle the while, and he ceasing not malling the ball till his hand waxed moist and his skin perspiring, imbibed the medicine from the wood.’

‘ There is only one cure for all maladies sure ’: but the most ardent may doubt whether leprosy would yield even to a course of fox-hunting. Let that pass, however: King Yuan and his malady, whatever it may have been, are faded into oblivion; the cure remains. That Sage Duban should have escaped beatification for five-and-twenty centuries, albeit his prescription had been adopted by half the nations of the East ere it was vouchsafed to our knowledge, is melancholy proof of the ingratitude of mankind.

The Chinese would seem to have taken kindly to the game, when it was brought to their notice about 1400 years ago. ‘ Polo,’ says Mr. Herbert Giles, Professor of Chinese at Cambridge,¹ ‘ seems to have become known to them under the T’ang Dynasty, or from about A.D. 600 onwards, when it was at first considered by some writers . . . to be a revival of football, though it was no doubt quite a separate game, learnt, most probably, by the Chinese from the Tartars. The earliest mention of the game is by Shin Chüanch’i, a poet who died in 713.’ More than one Chinese Emperor took part in the game. Professor Giles quotes from a memorial presented to a reigning sovereign of the tenth century, in which the following reason among others is urged against the participation of royalty:

¹ *Nineteenth Century and After*, March 1906.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

‘ To jump on a horse and swing a club, galloping madly here and there with no distinction of rank, but only eager to be first and win, is destructive of all ceremony between sovereign and subject.’ The risk of accident was also urged. ‘ The Emperor sighed over its excellence for a long time ’ when this memorial was handed in. What his Imperial Majesty said concerning the relative importance of ceremony and polo, unhappily, has not been recorded ; but perhaps we can guess. Professor Giles has unearthed a brief description of the game as played by the Tartars, to whom China is thought to have owed introduction of it :—

‘ The players mounted well-trained ponies, and each one was provided with a club (ball-staff) of a good many feet in length and shaped at one end like the crescent moon. They were then divided into two teams, the object of contention to both sides being a ball. Previously, at the south end of the ground two poles had been set up, with boarding in between, in which a hole had been cut, having a net attached to it in the form of a bag. That side which could strike the ball into the bag were the winners. Some say that the two teams were ranged on opposite sides of the ground, each with its own goal, and that victory was gained by driving the ball through the enemies’ goal. The ball itself was as small as a man’s fist, made of a light but hard wood and painted red.’

Perhaps there were two varieties of the game, and the latter, being the better, outlived the single goal and net-bag arrangement. However this may be, the latter is the game played by the Chitralis and other frontier tribes, including the Munipuris, from whom we learned it.

Polo was first played in British territory by the planters in the tea districts of Cachar in 1854-1855. The tea-planting district was full of Munipuris who had settled there, political refugees from their own states. These had brought with them among other things their polo ponies, and each group of villages had its own little club, a circumstance which naturally produced frequent matches. In the early ’fifties, when the planters

POLO

came into the station of Cachar at Christmas, matches would be arranged on the parade ground, between them and the Muni-puris : three of the former against half a dozen of the latter was the usual thing. Between 1854 and 1859 the European population of Cachar increased greatly, and after the interruption caused by the Mutiny the game had become so popular that steps were taken to form the first club. The first meeting was held in the bungalow of Captain Robert Stewart, Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, in March 1859. Captain Stewart was a keen player, as also was the Assistant Commissioner, Captain 'Joe' Sherer : these two, with Messrs. James Davidson, Julius Sandeman, James Abernethy, Ernest Ekhart, Arthur Brownlow, W. Walker and J. P. Stuart, were the original members of the first British Polo Club.

The game was first played in the plains of India, towards the close of the cold season of 1862. The players were officers of the 7th Hussars, 2nd Bn. Rifle Brigade, and 89th Regiment at Umballa ; and 'hockey on horseback' was adopted as an acceptable alternative to the paperchases which had served as substitute for the hunting which for the season had been abandoned owing to scarcity of fox and jackal.

Business connected with the tea industry brought to Cachar young men from Calcutta, and these, entered to polo, brought the game with them on their return. The real establishment of polo in the capital dates from February 1864, when Major Sherer, as he then was, brought down a team of six Muni-puris to show how the game should be played. The game caught on at once : Major Sherer was canonised as 'Father of Polo,' was entertained at a great banquet in the Indigo Mart, and presented with a very handsome silver tankard and salver.

Here is an account of the match which was played on the Calcutta maidan before the King on 1st January 1876 when, as Prince of Wales, he visited India. It was contributed to the *Oriental Sporting Magazine* by a writer who subscribes himself 'Marc O'Polo.' The match was arranged at the special request of Lord Lytton, the Viceroy, who took a keen interest in

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

the game and maintained, contrary to the generally received opinion, that the Europeans would make a good fight of it.

‘The afternoon of Saturday, 1st January 1876, was fixed for the match, and the noise of it having been bruited abroad, at the appointed hour a vast concourse of people assembled (on foot, on horseback, and in carriages), and whilst the players were girding up their loins and their ponies’ girths for the coming contest, took up their places round the four sides of the ground, forming a boundary line of living bodies more distinguishable than the cut in the turf. The Prince arrived with punctuality, and on taking up a prominent position in the centre of the ground, surrounded by his staff and large party from Government House, the rival champions cantered into the lists. Imagine, if it is possible, the Eton and Harrow match transported from Lord’s to the Calcutta *maidan*, and instead of 22 cricketers, 12 polo players the centre of attraction, and you have the scene before you.

‘Calcutta was represented by Mr. W. L. Thomas (Captain), Mr. G. E. Thomas, Mr. C. R. Hills, Mr. C. H. Moore, Mr. G. Fox, Captain D. A. J. Wallace, R.E. ; and Munipore by Bedam Sing, (Captain), and five others, whose names I have been unable to discover. I hear one was named Chai Tai Yar No Hazaree, and no doubt the others were gentlemen of equally high degree, and with names equally unspellable and unpronounceable. The two sides formed a marked contrast. The fair-skinned amateurs were clothed in white breeches and top boots, and flannel racing jackets of the club colours, *viz.* white with a broad scarlet sash crossing over the left and under the right shoulder, and compared to their antagonists were the personification of elegance and agility, their attire being natty in the extreme, and their ponies, on which they sat with ease and grace peculiar to the European seat, being sleek and well-groomed. The dusky professionals were clothed in a costume striking to the European eye, from its originality of design, unique though hardly picturesque. Their heads were muffled up in dirty puggeries ; their bodies were covered with jackets

POLO

of divers colours all of a dingy hue and the inevitable *dhootee* ; and between the knee and the ankle they wore things somewhat resembling cricket pads. The unusual *quantity* of clothing we conclude was donned in honour of the Belatee Rajah,¹ for when they first appeared in public they wore little except a hockey stick. Their ponies were shaggy, unkempt and ungroomed, and the saddle gear almost beyond description. The saddles were a kind of cross between a pillion and an elephant howdah. They have a frame-work of skin and wood which rests on the ponies' backs, and above it soft leather for the rider. At the back is a sort of hollow, to sit in ; in front of this comes a kind of mound, goodness knows what for, and in front of this is a curved frame like a pair of bull's horns over which their reins are hitched now and again. They cling to their saddles like monkeys, their naked feet rammed into rough iron stirrups braced up so short that their thighs are at right angles to their hips. Hanging from each side of the saddle are articles of the same colour and material, and very much the same shape, as carriage splash boards. The stirrups hang inside them and the two sides of the articles are curved round, away from the ponies' sides and in front of the players' legs, the object of them being apparently two-fold, *viz.* to protect the players' legs, and to extract the speed of terror out of the ponies, for when they get into action the splash-boards make a noise hideous enough to frighten the most stout-hearted tat. The prettiest part of the get-up was the ponies' headstalls, which were made of scarlet cloth dotted over with white worsted balls, and the reins were of a thick plaited substance and light blue colour.

'The men were a strong wiry-looking lot, but wore an anxious expression, arising perhaps from excess of keenness to win, rumour saying that they get 'toko' from the Rajah if they do not distinguish themselves. The Calcutta team, in perfect confidence of being utterly beaten, had no anxiety on this score, and commenced the game therefore in a more

¹ English Prince.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

favourable frame of mind. The order of battle was as follows : Calcutta, *forwards*—Hills, Moore, Wallace ; *half-backs*, W. L. Thomas and Fox ; *back*—G. E. Thomas. The Munipoories ranged very differently, and the order they took showed the peculiarity of their game. They had one man, back, and three forwards, and of the remaining two, one posted himself between Calcutta half-backs, and the other alongside the Calcutta back. This rather astonished the world in general and the players alluded to in particular. Wherever the vicissitudes of the game took the latter there went also attendant sprites, and would not be shaken off. It had one good effect, for it made the Calcutta backs keep their eyes open and most careful to see that their back territories were never left for an instant unguarded. The game commenced as usual from the centre of the ground, and from the start until the close may well be described as fast and furious, high pressure being maintained throughout without abatement. It was one of the quickest and most interesting games I have ever witnessed, and the play was admirable. It was expected that the sides would be most unequal, and this being the impression there was not at the outset much enthusiasm, the only feeling in the bosoms of the spectators being one of curiosity ; but as the game got into full swing and it was seen, that instead of being overpowered, the Calcutta men were fully holding their own, it gave way to excitement, which became intense when after a short struggle the Calcutta scored “ first blood ” by making a goal.

‘ Loud cheering then arose, and the other members of the club, who had hitherto been depressed and almost silent on-lookers, awoke as from a trance, and for the rest of the match encouraged and aided their representatives by cheering advice and enthusiastic shouts. The Munipoories who were looking on grunted guttural dismay when the first goal was made, and looked as if they did not altogether like the appearance of things. After a brief respite the second game was begun. Like the first game it was obstinately contested, but unlike the previous game the goal was secured by the Munipoories,

Polo





S. E. ARMOUR



POLO

whose dismay in consequence changed to guttural glee. One goal all. Excitement was great as the third game began. The Munipoories came up smiling. Calcutta men serious but determined. Again a long exciting struggle, but eventually a resolute rush of the Calcutta team carried the ball right up to their adversaries' goal, and after a short sharp scuffle it was smacked through the posts. Two goals to one; Europeans triumphant. Aborigines growling gloomy expletives.

'After a change of ponies the fourth game began, and it was soon apparent that the second horses of the Calcutta men were not equal to the first, the result of which was that the ball remained throughout the game in unpleasant proximity to their goal, through which it was eventually hit, the Munipoories thus winning the fourth game, and again putting themselves on an equality with Calcutta, the state of the match in commencement of the fifth game being two goals all. Time was now short, and both sides buckled to in earnest for the final tussle, a slight gleam of the savage breaking out on the one side, whilst the aspect of the other was one of dogged determination. The Munipoories, who had a herd of ponies to choose from, had a decided pull after the change of nags, which was again evident from the play, and throughout the last game the ball was more often at the end of the Calcutta goal than the other. The defence, however, was staunch, and several vigorous sorties were made by the Calcutta men into the enemy's country. The Munipoories, however, would not be denied and pressed the siege close, but the Calcutta team successfully repelled all attacks, and at last, dusk setting in, time was called and the victory was neither to the black man nor the white.

'Thus did the memorable and exciting match end in a draw, both sides having scored two goals.

'The noticeable feature of the play of the Munipoories was their quickness, their good position, and the wonderful accuracy of their back shots whether made on the near side or the off side of their ponies. In making a run, however, they did not

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

strike me as being so good as some of the Calcutta players, sometimes galloping over the ball, and not making such long hits. The Calcutta team played very well, both individually and collectively, and quickly got into the Munipoorie style of play. The experience of this match leads to the conclusion it is much the best game, for had strict "off side" rules been in force the same free game could not have been played, and the principal science of the Munipoorie would have been of little effect.'

The significance of the Munipuris' method of placing their men will not be lost upon modern players.

The first match ever played in England was that between the 9th Lancers and 10th Hussars at Hounslow Heath in the summer of 1871. Major St. Leger Moore, of the former regiment, writing to *The World* of 27th July 1894, says, 'We played eight a side and with a small ivory or bone ball which I have now in my possession, and ash sticks.'

To whomsoever credit is due, polo received its social benison on 16th July 1872, when a team of the Blues played a team of the 9th Lancers before the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Duke and Duchess of Teck, and a number of guests in the Home Park, Windsor. The ground was kept by a hundred men of the Blues, and as there was a large crowd present the scene must have been imposing. This is from *The Field's* account of the game :—

'On behalf of the Blues, the Marquis of Worcester, Lord Arthur Somerset, the Hon. T. and Hon. C. Fitzwilliam, Lord Kilmarnock, and Mr. A. Egerton took the field. The 9th Lancers were represented by Lord W. Beresford, Capt. Clayton, Capt. Palairet, Mr. Moore, Mr. Green, and Mr. Wheeler. Mr. Hartopp and Capt. Ewart acted as umpires. The competitors were mounted on strong and active ponies, and each man was armed with a hockey stick about 4 ft. long, the handle of which was of bamboo, with the head flat and fixed on at an angle. . . . The ball was little larger than a cricket ball, and painted white to be easily distinguishable when rolling. The ground marked

POLO

off was about 400 yards in length by 200 in width, and consisted of good level turf, a goal being marked at either end with flags, as at football.

‘ Play commenced about half-past three o’clock, the Lancers winning choice of ground by a toss ; but before the game began the competitors, at the desire of the Princess of Wales, fell in and passed in a body before the tent where the royal party were seated. A trumpeter having given the signal, the ball was thrown into the centre of the ground by a mounted outsider, and was charged at immediately by both parties. The scene which followed, as both sides endeavoured to drive the ball towards the goal of their opponents, and their nimble ponies were turned deftly or urged swiftly in pursuit of it, was eagerly watched by the spectators ; and there could be no question as to the correctness of an opinion we heard expressed, that to get a good hit at the ball, under the circumstances of the contest, “required some jockeying.” After play had continued for about an hour, during which the ball was several times driven out of the bounds, and the ponies were rested for a few minutes, the first goal was scored for the Lancers by a dexterous stroke on the part of Captain Clayton. The ponies were now refreshed, and when play was recommenced, no indications of weariness appeared in either the animals or their riders. The ball was driven from side to side of the ground repeatedly for something like twenty minutes, when the Blues were skilful enough to score a goal against that of their opponents. Mr. Egerton this time had the credit of the success on behalf of his party. In the *mêlée* preceding the goal the Marquis of Worcester, in stooping at the ball, received a stroke on the head which caused the blood to flow freely ; but until his attention was called to it he was unaware that he had been hit, and by his good spirits after the match it was evident that the wound was not serious. A third time play was commenced, but at half-past five, the hour appointed for its termination, the trumpeter gave the signal, and the sport of the day ended in a drawn game. . . .

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

‘ It was certainly the general opinion that the inauguration of the eastern game as a public spectacle had been a great success; and there can be little doubt that we shall find “ polo ” ranking henceforth among established sports, at least among the officers of our cavalry, to whom it is especially suited. We did not observe that the animals ridden in the game of Tuesday were in any way distressed, although they were not changed during the play; but then, as before remarked, they were rested for a few minutes as opportunity offered.’

The team of six was soon reduced to one of five, and in 1883 the Hurlingham Rules restricted the number to four. The Sussex Club, whose team included the three brothers Peat, well-nigh invincible in the 'eighties, were the first to recognise the supreme importance of combined play so strenuously inculcated by the late Mr. Moray Brown.

In Mr. Moray Brown polo lost a chronicler whose place has never been filled. His account of the final of the County Cup Tournament of 1894 at Hurlingham, in which Edinburgh beat Rugby by three goals to two, was one of the best of many descriptions he contributed to *Land and Water* :—

‘ Good as the first “ twenty ” had been, the succeeding one was no whit behind it in point of excellence, and began by Edinburgh attacking and hitting behind. Twice then Rugby made the mistake of trying to take the ball round instead of back-handing it, and the mistake was the more unpardonable from the fact of their missing it. But fortune favoured them, and their opponents also missed, thereby losing two chances of scoring. But what will you? We are all prone to make mistakes, and after all it will be more charitable, after pointing out the tactical error on the part of Rugby, to put down the missing to rough and bumpy ground. But Edinburgh meant business; they had got their adversaries fairly penned, and had no intention of allowing them to break through the cordon of investment. At length out of the scuffle shot Mr. “ Jack ” Drybrough on Robin. With neat near-side strokes he manœuvred the ball past more than one aggressive foe, and,

POLO

passing it on to Captain Egerton-Green most beautifully, enabled the gallant Lancer, who was on Sultan and anxiously awaiting his opportunity, to score. On ends being changed, some not very interesting play took place under the boards by the band-stand—why does the ball always go there, by the bye?—during which Edinburgh got the best of the fight, and eventually hit behind, and soon after Rugby, who were sorely pressed, did the same in self-defence.

‘ Ah ! now see Rugby will no longer brook being placed on the defensive. The ball, well hit out by Mr. G. A. Miller, is carried on by his comrades ; Lord Shrewsbury, easily distinguishable by his lighter-coloured shirt, is making the running on Lo-Ben, and with Mr. “ Jack ” Drybrough weaponless—he had dropped his stick—the chances seem in favour of Rugby. On they sweep ; a back-hander of Mr. G. A. Miller’s lands the ball on the very threshold of Edinburgh’s goal, and—? No, it wasn’t a goal, but only saved by Mr. T. B. Drybrough, who, in the nick of time, hit behind in self-defence. Now surely Rugby has a chance, as they meet the charge out in line of their opponents. Back goes the ball ; Lord Shrewsbury clears the front for his comrades, dropping into Mr. Beatty’s place as if the pair had been playing No. 1 and No. 2 respectively all their lives, whilst Mr. E. D. Miller, intent on goal-hitting, comes up with a rattle on The Snipe. But he makes a bad shot, and soon Rugby hits behind. Shortly after, however, he had his revenge and scored ; this was a smart bit of play, as coming up with a wet sail and foiled by the hard-smacked ball hitting a pony, he followed it up through the wheeling crowd, tapping it here and dribbling it there, till, in spite of all, he put it between the posts. It was pretty, I tell you. But a moment after Edinburgh went to the front again, and Mr. “ Jack ” Drybrough scored with a fine angle-shot through a perfect forest of ponies’ legs. Emboldened by this success the Northern team forced the fighting after the change of ends, but Mr. E. D. Miller promptly foiled them. A glance at the scattered forces convinced him of the practica-

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

bility of a scheme which had flashed across his brain, and that scheme he promptly put into execution. On one flank foes mustered strong, on the other there was only one, so he rightly went for the weak spot and made his dash, which deserved a better fate than being spoilt by the ball going over the boards. Again it went out of play, and then Edinburgh attacked in earnest. Their play was combined, and nothing could have been better than their valour, but they met their match; the Messrs. Miller frustrated their every attempt, and, directly the slightest opportunity presented itself, turned defence into attack.

‘Then the ball went out, and I am going to take refuge in Notes with an apology for their incoherent brevity. Thus they read: “Scrimmage, and soon Green has shot at goal, but wide of posts: slow scuffle, till “Jack” Drybrough a dart on Wiggler (A1 pony this), but E. D. Miller equal to occasion, ousts him, and works up to pavilion, when Younger hooks stick illegally, and foul given again Edinburgh, who have to go back to own goal line. Soon after a sharp bit of fighting.” Ay, was it indeed, and would that I could put as much life into my narrative as did Mr. E. D. Miller into the game. Into an opening he shot on Johnnie with heels going almost in the good Arab’s haunches as he urged him to fresh effort. On with never a swerve or shy the brave pony swept, with his long chestnut tail flung to the wind. On, ever on; Khalifa gallops his hardest to catch him; so does Lady D., whose twinkling feet hardly seem to touch the greensward; so does Charlton, but none can catch him. He has the *vis viva*, his rider smites straight and true, a second more the “whoop-whoop” announces a goal, a lovely one, gained for Rugby. Score—two goals all.’

DEER-STALKING AND COURSING

BEFORE fire-arms came into use at all the Scottish herds of deer were made to afford sport of a kind. In Sutherland it was the practice to drive them into the 'deer dykes,' two rough stone walls about a quarter of a mile long, a hundred yards apart at one end and gradually approaching till the further ends formed a narrow exit. The deer were driven into the width of the V, and the sportsmen awaited them at the other end to kill at their pleasure as the animals strove to escape.

More picturesque, if not less like butchery, was the system prevalent in another part of Sutherland, where the conformation of the coast lent itself to the business. A strong force of men with dogs surrounded the herds on the land side and drove them into the sea : boats were lying in concealment among the rocks, and when the deer took the water, the attack was made with spear and bow.

Organised drives on a large scale were undertaken early in the seventeenth century. Taylor, the 'Water Poet,' has this account of one such, to which the Earl of Mar invited numerous guests, in 1618 :—

'The manner of the hunting is this :—five or six hundred men doe rise early in the morning, and they doe disperse themselves divers wayes, and seven, eight, or ten miles compass, they doe bring or chase in the deer in many heards (two, three, or four hundred in a heard) to such or such a place as the noblemen shall appoint them ; then when the day is come, the lords and gentlemen of their companies doe ride or go to the said places, sometimes wading up to the middles through bournes

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

and rivers ; and then they being come to the place, doe lye down on the ground till those foresaid scouts, which are called the Tinckhell, do bring down the deer ; but as the proverb says of a bad cooke, so these Tinckhell men doe lick their own fingers ; for besides their bows and arrows, which they carry with them, wee can heare now and then a harquebusse or musket goe off, which they doe seldom discharge in vaine : then after we had stayed three houres, or thereabouts, we might perceive the deer appeare on the hills round about us (their heads making a shew like a wood) which being followed close by the Tinckhell, are chased down into the valley where wee lay ; then all the valley on each side being waylaid with a hundred couple of strong Irish greyhounds, they are let loose as occasion serves upon the hearde of deere, that with dogs, gunnes, arrowes, durks, and daggers, in the space of two houres, fourscore fat deere were slaine, which after are disposed of some one way and some another, twenty or thirty miles ; and more than enough left for us to make merry withall at our rendezvous.'

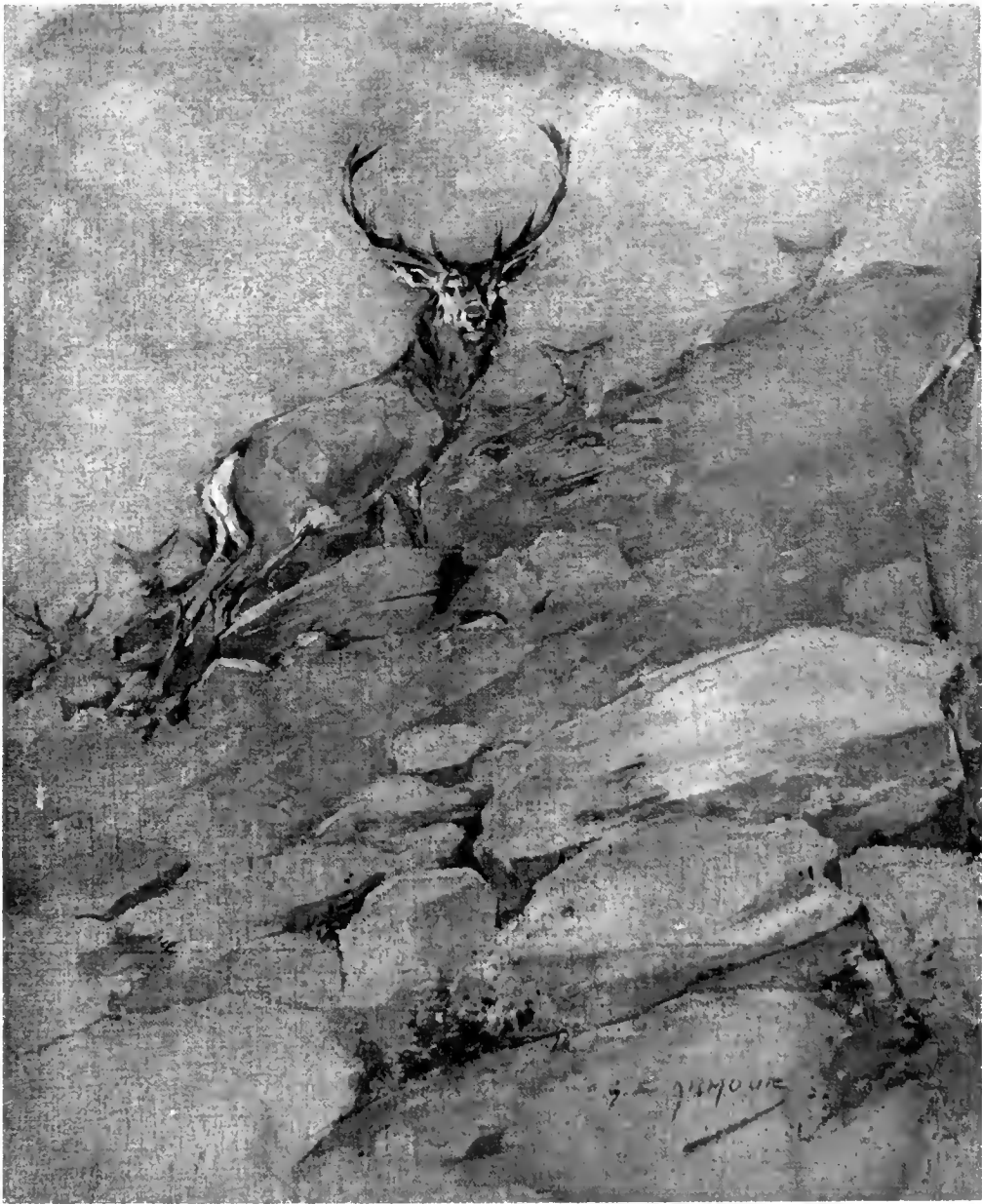
The 'strong Irish greyhounds' were without doubt Scottish deerhounds.

Deer-stalking found favour with Scottish landowners and others during the last quarter of the eighteenth century ; but few men who lived elsewhere than near the forests took any part in the sport. Captain Horatio Ross was one of the most successful stalkers of the earlier days before the example of the Prince Consort made deer-stalking the fashion. In the season of 1828 he shot 87 deer to his own rifle on 'a large range of shooting called Feloar,' which he rented from the Duke of Athol : in 1837 he killed 75 head in Sutherlandshire : and in 1851 his bag on Mar Forest was 118. Captain Ross's name lives in history principally as that of a magnificent shot with the rifle ; and it is worth noticing that in one day on Mar Forest he had fourteen chances and killed thirteen deer.

Scottish resident sportsmen introduced their English friends to the game : and Squire Osbaldeston said that Mr. William Coke 'was the first man that went in earnest deer-

Deer-Stalking:
'A Royal'







DEER-STALKING AND COURSING

stalking in the Highlands. He had a pair of corduroy breeches, and I believe he never took them off for a fortnight.'

The Prince Consort's opinion of the sport, as expressed in a letter to Charles, Prince Leiningen, in 1848, is familiar to every one :—

' Without doubt it is one of the most fatiguing, but it is also one of the most interesting pursuits. There is not a tree or a bush behind which you can hide yourself . . . one has therefore to be constantly on the alert in order to circumvent them : and to keep under the hill out of their wind, crawling on hands and knees and dressed entirely in grey.'¹

The Prince was an enthusiastic and successful stalker, and his devotion to it speedily gained for the sport the foremost place it deserves.

This is from St. John's *Wild Sports of the Highlands* (1846) :

' . . . On we went, taking a careful survey of the ground here and there. At a loch whose Gaelic name I do not remember, we saw a vast number of wild ducks, and at the further extremity of it a hind and calf feeding. We waited here for some time, and I amused myself in watching the two deer as they fed, unconscious of our neighbourhood, and from time to time drank at the burn which supplied the loch. We then passed over a long dreary tract of brown and broken ground, till we came to the picturesque-looking place where we expected to find the deer—a high conical hill, rising out of rather flat ground, which gave it an appearance of being of a greater height than it really was. We took a most careful survey of the slope, on which Donald expected to see the deer. Below was an extensive piece of heather with a burn running through it in an endless variety of windings, and fringed with green rushes and grass, which formed a strong contrast to the dark-coloured moor through which it made its way, till it emptied itself into a long narrow loch, beyond which rose Bar Cleebrieh and some more of the highest mountains in Scotland.

' In vain we looked and looked, and Donald at last shut up

¹ *Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands.*

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

his telescope in despair : “ They are no here the day,” was his remark. “ But what is that, Donald ? ” said I, pointing to some bluish-looking object I saw at some distance from us rising out of the heather. The glass was turned towards it, and after having been kept motionless for some time, he pronounced it to be the head and neck of a hind. I took the glass, and while I was looking at it, I saw a fine stag rise suddenly from some small hollow near her, stretch himself, and lie down again. Presently six more hinds and a two-year-old stag got up, and after walking about for a few minutes, they, one by one, lay down again, but every one seemed to take up a position commanding a view of the whole country. We crept back a few paces, and then getting into the course of the burn, got within three hundred yards of the deer, but by no means whatever could we get nearer. The stag was a splendid fellow, with ten points, and regular and fine-shaped horns. Bran winded them, and watched us most earnestly, as if to ask why we did not try to get at them. The sensible dog, however, kept quite quiet, as if aware of the importance of not being seen or heard. Donald asked me what o’clock it was ; I told him that it was just two. “ Well, well, Sir, we must just wait here till three o’clock, when the deer will get up to feed, and most likely the brutes will travel towards the burn. The Lord save us, but yon ’s a muckle beast.”

‘ Trusting to his experience, I waited patiently, employing myself in attempting to dry my hose by wringing them, and placing them in the sun. Donald took snuff and watched the deer, and Bran laid his head on his paws as if asleep, but his sharp eye, and ear pricked up on the slightest movement, showed that he was ready for action at a moment’s warning. As nearly as possible at three o’clock they did get up to feed : first the hinds rose and cropped a few mouthfuls of the coarse grass near them ; looking at and waiting for their lord and master, who, however, seemed lazily inclined and would not move ; the young stag fed steadily on towards us. Frequently the hinds stopped and turned back to their leader,

DEER-STALKING AND COURSING

who remained quite motionless, excepting that now and then he scratched a fly off his flank with his horn or turned his head towards the hill-side when a grouse or a plover whistled. The young stag was feeding quietly within a hundred and fifty yards of us, and we had to lie flat on the ground now and then to escape his observation. The evening air already began to feel chill, when suddenly the object of our pursuit jumped up, stretched himself and began feeding. Not liking the pasture close to him, he trotted at once down into the flat ground right away from us. Donald uttered a Gaelic oath, and I fear I added an English one. The stag that had been feeding so near us stood still for a minute to watch the others, who were all now several hundred yards away, grazing steadily. I aimed at him, but just as I was about to fire he turned away, leaving nothing but his haunch in view, and went after the rest. Donald applauded me for not shooting at him, but told me that our case was hopeless, and that we had better make our way home and attempt no more, as they were feeding in so open a place that it was impossible to get at them : even Bran yawned and rose, as if he too had given up all hope. " I will have one try, Donald ; so hold the dog." " You needna fash yoursel', Sir ; they are clean out of all hope and reason."

' I determined to make an effort before it became dusk, so leaving Donald, I set off down the burn, looking for some hollow place that might favour my getting up to them, but I could find none ; at last it struck me that I might by chance get up within a long shot by keeping a small hillock, which was in the middle of the plain, between me and the deer. The hillock was not two feet high, and all depended on the animals keeping together, and not outflanking me. On I went, not on my hands and knees, but crawling like a snake, and never rising even to my knee. I could see their hind-quarters as they walked away, feeding, however, most eagerly, and when they looked up I lay still flatter on the ground with my face buried in the heather. They appeared, however, not to suspect danger in the open plain, but often looked anxiously

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

towards the burn or the rocky side of the mountain. One old long-legged hind kept me in a constant state of alarm, as she frequently looked in my direction, turning her head as if to catch some suspicious sound. As for the stag, he never looked about him once, leaving that to the hinds. I at last got within about a hundred yards of the whole of them : as they fed in a group turned away from me, I could not get a shot at anything but their hind-quarters, and I did not wish to shoot unless I could get a fair broadside towards me. While waiting for an opportunity, still flat on the ground, a grouse cock walked out of the heather close to me, and strutted on with head erect and his bright eye fixed on me till he came to a little hillock, where he stopped and began to utter a note of alarm. Instantly every deer left off eating. I saw that no time was to be lost, and raised myself on my elbow, and with cocked rifle waited for the hinds to move, that I might get at the stag, who was in the midst of them. The hinds soon saw me and began to trot away, but their leader seemed determined to see what the danger was, and before he started turned round to look towards the spot where the grouse was, giving me a good slanting shot at his shoulder.

‘ I immediately touched the trigger, feeling at the same time sure of my aim. The ball went true, and down he fell. I began reloading, but before I had half done the stag was up again and making play after the hinds, who were galloping up a gentle slope of the hill. The poor beast was evidently moving with the greatest difficulty and pain ; sometimes coming to his knees, and then recovering himself with a strong effort, he still managed to keep not far behind them. I sat in utter despair : looking round too for Donald and Bran I could see nothing of them. Between anxiety and vexation I did not know what to do. All at once I saw the hinds dash away in different directions, and the next moment my gallant Bran appeared in the midst of them. I shouted with joy. On came the dog, taking no notice of the hinds, but making straight for the stag, who stood still for one instant, and then

DEER-STALKING AND COURSING

rushed with apparently full vigour down the hill. Down they came towards the burn, the dog not five yards behind the stag, but unable to reach his shoulder (the place where he always struck his game). In a few minutes deer and hound went headlong and seemingly both together into the burn. Donald appeared running like a lunatic : with good judgment he had, when I left him, gone to cut off the deer in case I wounded one and it took up the hill. As good luck would have it, the hinds had led off the stag right up to where Donald and Bran were, notwithstanding his inclination to go the other way.

‘ I ran to see what had become of them in the burn, expecting to find the stag at bay. When I got there, however, it was all over. The deer had probably tumbled from weakness, and Bran had got his fangs well into the throat of the poor brute before he could rise again. The gallant dog, when I was up with him, lay down panting, with his fore-paws on the deer, and wagging his tail, seemed to congratulate me on my victory, and to expect to be caressed for his share in it. A fine stag he was, in perfect order, with noble antlers. Donald added to my satisfaction by applauding my manner of getting up to him, adding that he never would have thought it possible to kill a stag on such bare and flat ground. Little did I feel the fatigue of our three hours’ walk, two of them in the dark and hard rain.

‘ We did not go home, but went to a shepherd’s house, whose inhabitants were at evening prayer when we arrived : we did not interrupt them, but afterwards the wife prepared us a capital supper of eggs and fresh trout, which we devoured with vast relish before the bright peat-fire, our wet clothes steaming like a boiler. Such was the death of my first stag.’

Changed conditions brought about the disappearance of the deerhound from the side of the stalker. In the old days forests were comparatively few, but deer in small groups of six or eight were to be found, says Captain Ross, scattered over the higher mountains throughout Scotland. It did not greatly matter if so small a party were disturbed ; therefore, if a stalker

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

happened to wound a deer and it sought refuge with one of these small herds, there was no scruple about slipping stag-hound or lurcher to bring the wounded quarry to bay. When the old unprofitable sheepwalks were abandoned as such, and, in obedience to the demand for forests, given over to the deer, the herds increased in size, as many as two or three hundred banding together. If under such circumstances a wounded deer joined the herd pursued by a dog, the whole crowd would be frightened away, and probably take up its quarters on a neighbouring forest where dogs were not allowed.

The deerhound was a very necessary assistant in the days when sporting rifles were much less accurate than they have since been made. A hundred yards, says Captain Ross, was the limit of range, practically speaking, and many stalkers used a smoothbore, which could be depended on up to seventy yards : some smoothbore users put ball in one barrel and slugs in the other. Thus a vast number of deer were wounded and would have escaped, had not deerhound or other fast dog been held ready to slip and bring it to bay.

Great attention was bestowed on the dogs employed for this work. Lord Breadalbane had a famous kennel of dogs which he used exclusively for bringing deer to bay : these were mostly a cross between foxhound and greyhound, but some were foxhound-deerhound cross.

Deer-coursing was a very old sport in England. Turber-vile says : ' We here in England do make great account of such pastime as is to be seen in coursing with Greyhounds at Deare, Hare, foxes or such like. . . . First for the course at the Deare (especially if it be a red Deare) you may devide your Greyhounds into three sundry parts, viz. Teasers, Side-layes and Back sets or Receytes. By this worde Teasers is ment the first Greyhounde or brase or lease of Greyhoundes which is let slip either at the whole hearde, to bring a Deare single to ye course or els at a lowe (lone) deare to make him streine before he come at the sidelayes and backsets. For a deare is of this nature, that when he once hath set his head forwarde any way he will

DEER-STALKING AND COURSING

hold on the same waye and never turneth and wrencheth as a Hare will do. . . .’

The ‘sidelayes’ took up the chase midway—it would make considerable demand on the knowledge of deer and their habits possessed by the man in charge to choose his station—and the ‘receytes or backsets’ came into action ‘towards the latter end of ye course.’ These last were ‘commonly let slip full in the face of the Deare, to the end they may the more amaze him : and so they with the help of the other teasers and sidelayes may the better take hold on him all at once and pull him doune.’

The same sport was pursued under artificial conditions in parks, hounds being slipped at deer in racecourse-like enclosures constructed for the purpose : in this ‘sidelayes and backsets’ of hounds were not used.

Deer-coursing was considered the noblest of all the Highland sports, and had long been a favourite in the north and west of Scotland ; but when Scrope wrote his famous *Art of Deer-Stalking* in 1838 it had fallen into disuse, though pursued in some parts of the country. This is the account of the manner in which the sport was conducted as given to Scrope by one of the few sportsmen who had had the good fortune to enjoy it. The course described took place on the Isle of Jura in August, 1835. Buskar, it may be mentioned, stood 28 inches at the shoulder, girthed 32 inches, and weighed, in running condition, 85 lbs. :—

‘The direction in which we should proceed being agreed upon, Finlay (than whom a better deer-stalker never trod the heath) set out about fifty yards in advance, provided with a telescope ; while the rest of the party followed slowly and silently with the dogs in slips. We had thus proceeded up a rocky glen for some miles, gradually ascending from the sea, when the stalker descried (without the aid of his glass) a stag about a mile off. He immediately prostrated himself on the ground, and in a second the whole party lay flat on the heath ; for even at that great distance we might have been discovered

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

by the deer. Finlay then returned, crawling along the ground, to the spot where we were lying, and directed us to creep back for a short distance until we were out of sight. As yet, the rest of the party had seen nothing of the stag, and although the stalker pointed steadily in the direction in which he was, not one of the party could discover him with the naked eye; but Buskar, who had hitherto followed quietly, now commenced a low whining noise, and with ears erect, gazed steadily at the spot where the deer was lying. On taking the glass, we were soon satisfied of the correctness of the stalker's vision, for we could distinctly perceive a fine stag lying on the side of the valley to our left, quietly chewing the cud, and looking round in all directions. We immediately retreated, and following our guide, got into the channel of a mountain stream, which (though the stag was in a situation that commanded a greater part of the valley) enabled us, from its depths and windings, to approach towards him until we should be screened by some intervening rocks.

'We then left the channel of the stream, and finding that we could proceed no farther in that direction without being observed or scented by the deer, whose power of smell is most acute, we turned to the left, and, keeping the lowest ground, proceeded some way up the side of the valley on which he lay, when Finlay informed us that we should soon be again in sight; and that, in order to keep ourselves concealed, it was necessary to throw ourselves on our faces, and creep through some rushes that lay before us. This we did, following each other in a line, and closely observing the motions of our guide, for the distance of a 100 yards, until a rising ground intervening between us and the deer permitted us to regain an upright posture. Having gained this point, Finlay thought it necessary to take another view of the deer, in case he might have changed his position, and thus, perhaps, be brought into sight of us when we least expected it. It was proper also to ascertain whether or not there were any deer in his neighbourhood, who might be disturbed by our approach, and communi-

Deer Coursing







DEER-STALKING AND COURSING

cate their alarm to him. For this purpose, unbonneted, his hair having been cut close for the occasion, he slowly ascended the rising ground betwixt us and the deer, looking at every step to the right and to the left, and raising himself as if by inches, with his head thrown back so as to bring his eyes to as high a level as possible. Having, at length, caught a view of the deer's horns, he satisfied himself that he had not moved, and having sunk down as gradually and slowly as he rose, that he might not by any sudden movement attract the attention of the deer, he returned to us, and again led the way ; and after performing a very considerable circuit, moving sometimes forwards, and sometimes backwards, we at length arrived at the back of a hillock, on the opposite side of which, he informed us in a whisper, the deer was lying, and that, from the spot where we then stood, he was not distant 100 yards. Most of the party seemed inclined to doubt this information, for they verily believed that the deer was at least half a mile to the right ; but Finlay's organ of locality was so visibly and strongly developed, and his practice in deer-stalking so great, that the doubts of the party were suppressed, if not altogether removed. Buskar, however, soon put the matter beyond question, for raising his head, he bounded forwards, and almost escaped from the person who held him. No time was to be lost : the whole party moved forward in silent and breathless expectation, with the dogs in front, straining in the slips ; and on our reaching the top of the hillock, we got a full view of the noble stag, who having heard our footsteps, had sprung to his legs, and was staring us full in the face at the distance of about sixty yards. The dogs were slipped ; a general halloo burst from the whole party, and the stag, wheeling round, set off at full speed with Buskar and Bran straining after him.

' The brown figure of the deer, with his noble antlers laid back, contrasted with the light colour of the dogs stretching along the dark heath, presented one of the most exciting scenes that it is possible to imagine.

' The deer's first attempt was to gain some rising ground to

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

the left of the spot where we stood, and rather behind us ; but, being closely pursued by the dogs, he soon found that his only safety was in speed ; and (as a deer does not run well up hill, nor, like a roe, straight down hill), on the dogs approaching him, he turned, and almost retraced his footsteps, taking, however, a steeper line of descent than the one by which he ascended. Here the chase became more interesting ; the dogs pressed him hard, and the deer, getting confused, found himself suddenly on the brink of a small precipice, of about fourteen feet in height, from the bottom of which there sloped a rugged mass of stones. He paused for a moment, as if afraid to take the leap, but the dogs were so close that he had no alternative.

‘ At this time the party were not above 150 yards distant, and most anxiously waited the result, fearing, from the ruggedness of the ground below, that the deer would not survive the leap. They were, however, soon relieved from their anxiety ; for though he took the leap, he did so more cunningly than gallantly, dropping himself in the most singular manner, so that his hind-legs first reached the broken rocks below : nor were the dogs long in following him ; Buskar sprang first, and extraordinary to relate, did not lose his legs ; Bran followed, and on reaching the ground, performed a complete summerset ; he soon, however, recovered his legs ; and the chase was continued in an oblique direction down the side of a most rugged and rocky brae, the deer apparently more fresh and nimble than ever, jumping through the rocks like a goat, and the dogs well up, though occasionally receiving the most fearful falls. From the high position in which we were placed, the chase was visible for nearly half a mile. When some rising ground intercepted our view, we made with all speed for a higher point, and, on reaching it, we could perceive that the dogs, having got upon smooth ground, had gained on the deer, who was still going at speed, and were close up with him. Bran was then leading, and in a few seconds was at his heels, and immediately seized his hock with such violence of grasp, as seemed in a great measure to paralyse the limb, for the deer’s speed

DEER-STALKING AND COURSING

was immediately checked. Buskar was not far behind, for soon afterwards passing Bran, he seized the deer by the neck. Notwithstanding the weight of the two dogs which were hanging to him, having the assistance of the slope of the ground, he continued dragging them along at a most extraordinary rate (in defiance of their utmost exertions to detain him), and succeeded more than once in kicking Bran off. But he became at length exhausted : the dogs succeeded in pulling him down, and, though he made several attempts to rise, he never completely regained his legs.

‘ On coming up, we found him perfectly dead, with the joints of both his fore-legs dislocated at the knee, his throat perforated, and his chest and flanks much lacerated.

‘ As the ground was perfectly smooth for a considerable distance round the place where he fell, and not in any degree swampy, it is difficult to account for the dislocation of his knees, unless it happened during his struggles to rise. Buskar was perfectly exhausted, and had lain down, shaking from head to foot much like a broken-down horse ; but on our approaching the deer, he rose, walked round him with a determined growl, and would scarcely permit us to come near him. He had not, however, received any cut or injury ; while Bran showed several bruises, nearly a square inch having been taken off the front of his fore-leg, so that the bone was visible, and a piece of burnt heather had passed quite through his foot.

‘ Nothing could exceed the determined courage displayed by both dogs, particularly by Buskar, throughout the chase, and especially in preserving his hold, though dragged by the deer in a most violent manner. This, however, is but one of the many feats of this fine dog. He was pupped in autumn 1832, and before he was a year old killed a full-grown hind single-handed.’

FALCONRY

‘**H**E that will be a falconer,’ wrote Simon Latham in 1615, ‘must be no sluggard, he must be up early and down late or else he shall never see how his Hawk rejoiceth : neither must he be tempted with other mutabilities or wandering affection but remain and continue in the art he protesteth.’

This is a view of the practical side of the art to which clings an old-world savour that has faded from sports as ancient : for who shall see hawk on fist without recalling the days of romance and chivalry, though the fist appear from sleeve of Norfolk jacket ?

Enclosure of lands and reclamation of wastes have made an end of falconry over the greater part of England. Colonel Thornton, you will remember, forsook Thornville Royal and Sportsman’s Hall when the Yorkshire wolds were given over to the plough, and sought a new home in Wiltshire, on whose downs he might still fly the hawks he loved. An enthusiast was Colonel Thornton : how lovingly he dwells on the doings of his hawks on the moors during his Scottish tour ! Thus, for instance :—

‘We rode, and the falconer attended with a cast and a half of hawks, one of which I took on my fist and hunted, to oblige Mr. Drighorn, with a brace of my pointers. The road, as I imagined, he would find very indifferent : game abounded. I had long resisted the solicitations of Mr. Drighorn to fly a hawk whenever we happened to mark in a poult near us, which was frequently the case. At length one came so near that I could not deny him this breach of the law in a country which requires none. I consented. Determined to follow up the bird, a tercel was unhooded and took a very handsome place, killing

FALCONRY

his bird at the first flight. Having once broken the law, grown bolder in iniquity, as is usually the case, we stuck at nothing, and had a very pleasant day's sport indeed : for the hawks were well broke in to ptarmigants and flew well. We killed twenty-two birds and had a most incomparable flight at a snipe, one of the best I ever saw, for full sixteen minutes. The falcon flew delightfully, but the snipe got into a small juniper bush near us, her only resource. I ordered the tercel to be leached down, and I took the other falcon, meaning at any rate that they should succeed with this snipe. When flushing it I flew my falcon from the hood ; the other was in a very good place, and on the falconer's head. A dreadful, well-maintained flight they had, and many good buckles in the air. At length they brought her like a shot from the clouds, into the same juniper bush she had saved herself in before, and close to which we were standing. Pluto stood it, and so closely that I fortunately took it alive : and throwing out a moor poult to each falcon as a reward, and preventing by this means, the two hawks fighting for the snipe and carrying it away, we fed them up, delighted beyond measure at this noble flight. We minuted them very accurately both times, when they took the air, and the last flight was eleven minutes ; during which time, moderately speaking, they could not fly less than nine miles, besides an infinite number of buckles or turns.'¹

Like a good sportsman, Colonel Thornton spared the snipe which had given such a flight and let it go, as the bird had received only a slight stroke from one of his pursuers and, though very stiff, was little hurt. The power of the falcon's stoop is exhibited in the author's remark that he once saw a bird of his ' at one stroke cut a snipe in two parts, so that they fell separate.'

' The noblest of all possible flights in which the powers of a trained hawk could be engaged,' says Major Hawkins Fisher, ' were those of the wild kite and heron.'

¹ The late Major Hawkins Fisher timed one of his falcons to travel a mile in fifty-eight seconds, so Colonel Thornton's estimate may be less extravagant than it appears.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

The esteem in which our ancestors held the heron is proved by the many Acts of Parliament placed on the statute-book to protect the bird, its eggs and nest; but heron-hawking has long been a thing of the past. It is not that herons are lacking; on the contrary we have them in plenty. Mr. J. E. Harting (*Hints on Hawks*) says:—

‘ Nothing would be easier than to walk out into the marshes “ with great Goshawk on hand,” find a heron in a drain, stalk it, and on its rising fly the hawk and capture it. But this is not heron-hawking in the proper sense of the term. There would be no sport at all in taking the quarry in this way. What is wanted is a heron passing on the wing at a moderate height so that the hawk or hawks (formerly both falcons and ger falcons were used for this sport) on being hooded off would have to “ ring up ” to get above the heron, an advantage which the latter would always endeavour to prevent by rising also, and a fine ringing flight would be the result. But to effect this it is necessary to have good open country in the neighbourhood of a heronry where the falconer may wait with his hawks and watch for a heron going out light (*i.e.* empty) or returning laden, intercepting the heron, as it were, on its passage and thus ensuring a good flight.’

Norfolk saw the last of English heron-hawking. This is from the *Norfolk Chronicle* of 12th June 1823:—

‘ The ancient pastime of heron-hawking is still carried on in this county. The casts of hawks, with four falconers, natives of Holland (to which country they repair annually to catch hawks for the ensuing season) are kept at Didlington Hall, the seat of Major Wilson, near to which place there is an extensive heronry.’

The season (*i.e.* May and June) of 1822 was a very good one; no fewer than 172 herons were taken. A flight which took place in 1823 is thus described:—¹

‘ The heron on its way from the heronry to the fens was seen

¹ Quoted in *Hints on Hawks*, by J. E. Harting.

FALCONRY

at a considerable distance going down the wind. He was so far off that the falconers hesitated whether they would venture to unhood their hawks, but one of them having luckily upon his wrist a famous hawk in whom he had great confidence, cast him off alone. It instantly made at the heron, who mounted higher in the air, though still advancing rapidly in his course. The whole field was instantly in motion, and those only who have hunted with our crack packs of foxhounds can form an idea of the ardour with which each person including the ladies strove to be foremost. The hawk made numberless stoops at the heron, which his activity and stoutness enabled him to avoid, and it was not until some time after the birds had ceased to be visible to the chief part of the field that the hawk was able, after repeatedly striking his quarry, to bring him to the ground. The flight lasted twenty-six minutes, and the distance from point to point exceeded six miles. The height to which the birds rose was so great that, to use the expression of the falconers, "they were six steeples high in the air—no bigger than bumble-bees."

By the way, Mr. Harting remarks upon the common belief that 'a heron when hard pressed and stooped at by the falcon will point his beak upward and receive the descending hawk upon its sharp extremity, thereby disabling, if not killing it outright, Somerville represents the heron adopting this method of defence—surely calculated to result in a broken neck!—and Sir Walter Scott has done the same. 'There is not only no authority for this pretty story,' says Mr. Harting, 'but we have the direct testimony of eye-witnesses that it has never happened within their experience.' Adrien Mollen, head falconer of the Loo Club, stated that in all the hundreds of flights at heron he had seen, he never saw this mode of defence adopted.

Sir John Sebright, who wrote in 1826, held that the magpie gave better sport with hawks than any other bird:—

'Magpies may be flown with eyess slight falcons, and afford excellent sport. A down or common, where low trees

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

or thorn bushes are dispersed at the distance of from 30 to 50 yards apart, is the place best calculated for this diversion.

‘ When a magpie is seen at a distance, a hawk is immediately to be cast off. The magpie will take refuge in a bush, the moment that he sees the falcon, and will remain there until the falconer arrives, with the hawk waiting on in the air. The magpie is to be driven from his retreat, and the hawk, if at a good pitch, will stoop at him as he passes to another bush, from whence he is to be driven in the same way, another hawk having been previously cast off, so that one or the other may always be so situated as to attack him to advantage.

‘ The second hawk is necessary, for the magpie shifts with great cunning and dexterity to avoid the stoops ; and when hard pressed, owing to the bushes being rather far apart, will pass under the bellies of the horses, flutter along a cart rut, and avail himself of every little inequality of the ground in order to escape.

‘ Four or five assistants, besides the falconer (who should attend solely to his hawks) are required for this sport. They should be well mounted, and provided with whips ; for the magpie cannot be driven from a bush by a stick ; but the crack of a whip will force him to leave it, even when he is so tired as hardly to be able to fly. Nothing can be more animating than this sport : it is, in my opinion, far superior to every other kind of hawking. The object of the chase is fully a match for its pursuers—a requisite absolutely necessary to give an interest to any sport of this kind ; and it has the advantage of giving full employment to the company, which is not the case in partridge-hawking. The magpie will always endeavour to make his way to some strong cover ; care, therefore, must be taken to counteract him, and to drive him to that part of the ground where the bushes are farthest from each other. It is not easy to take a magpie in a hedge. Some of the horsemen must be on each side of it ; some must ride behind, and some before him ; for, unless compelled to rise, by being surrounded on all sides, he will flutter along the hedge, so as to shelter

Hawking :
A Flight at a Heron



FALCONRY

himself from the stoops of the falcon. Many requisites are necessary to afford this sport in perfection—a favourable country, good hawks, and able assistants.’

The curlew is held the most difficult bird to kill with trained hawks. The late Major Hawkins Fisher gave an admirable account of a flight at curlew in the address he delivered before the Cotteswold Naturalists’ Field Club¹ twenty years ago: here it is, with his description of a flight at grouse and a noteworthy one at a woodcock:—

‘The nearest approach to a heron flight that I have ever seen, occurred in this wise. In October 1889, my old grouse hawk, “Lady Jane,” was waiting on at a height so great, that though she is upwards of three feet across from tip to tip of expanded wings, she appeared in the sky, like a pin’s head, over the moor, the dogs being unable for some time to find her a grouse. Presently they stood, and on the men moving forward to put them up for her, I perceived her in the act of stooping. I called out, to prevent their purpose, and fixed my glasses on the hawk expecting to see her in pursuit of other grouse, raised accidentally. Presently she was down, and instantly engaged with some large bird, which I deemed, and the men asserted to be, a carrion crow. As it looked large and light-coloured, I said, “then it is a hoody (Royston) crow”; but in a moment, as the excited couple rose high in air—at it ding dong—I knew it was no crow. No; none of that ignoble brood ever flew, or held the air, like this strange quarry, which, in a few seconds more, I made out to be *Numenius arquata*, the common or long-billed curlew. I know no instance of this grand flier having been taken by a trained hawk, and it is generally deemed beyond the power of any such. Of course it is occasionally slain by a wild falcon; but then, doubtless, the worst wild falcon is far before the best trained one, and, if inclined and meaning it, can take most fowls that wing the air with more or less ease. My poor trained bird (I should add, the best I have ever had of her sex) was in very indifferent

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. x. part i., 1889-90.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

plumage then, but she stuck to her work for more than twenty minutes, during the whole of which time the curlew (in desperate earnest) was quite unable to get away from her. Stoop succeeded stoop, and, as I thought, too rapidly; and when it is considered that the sole effort of the curlew was to avoid the deadly blow, and mount higher than her adversary after its failure, and that every failure placed the stooping falcon 60 yards and more below the curlew, rapidly mounting on the best of wings, and that she had to regain her position, and get 100 yards above her hoped-for quarry, before she could again return to the attack, the courage, ability, and perseverance with which she kept at it, until both were out of sight of two of the best pair of eyes I have known, fairly astonished me. My excellent field glasses still shewed *me* two little black dots in the clear blue sky: the falcon even then repeating her unavailing efforts, by ringing widely against the wind, and so mounting laboriously over the curlew, whose upward progression was accomplished by the most extraordinary bounds (I can call her movements nothing else) I ever saw. Only two, of these many stoops, "told" all through this long contest. Twice I saw the curlew knocked round and up, and twice her feathers floated in the air like tiny dust; but the harm done was not enough, and the two dots finally separated, and the disappointed falcon was shortly recalled to us (though she needed no "lure," and seldom or never gets one shown, as she is perfectly willing to stay and work with *us*). It may be of interest to remark, that on looking round, we saw the pointer and setter (which on another occasion stood for half an hour by the watch) were still "on the point"; and when the hawk came over, still at a vast elevation, the long-suffering dogs were relieved.

'The grouse (three or four) were sprung, and "Lady Jane," tired as she was, stooped and killed one with her usual ease. Needless, I hope, to say she did not go hungry to bed that night, for want of a meal on grouse! We were all convinced that, with a companion to help her (two falcons are *always*

FALCONRY

flown together at a heron, as two greyhounds are usually slipped at a hare), the curlew would have been taken in five minutes, and with such a complete suit of new and good feathers as the old falcon now possesses, I should myself be very sorry indeed to be a curlew in front of her.

‘ Shall I mention again a singular flight I once saw worked at a woodcock ? This bird, when put to it, possesses remarkable powers of flight, as its extended migrations, and splendid shape and length of wing, abundantly warrant. It occurred in this wise, in October 1866. I found myself with hawks (eyesses), dogs, gillies, a keeper, and my gun, on the moor near the western end of Loch-Eil, in Argyle, at a place called Fassiefern, not far from the place where Prince Charlie met his devoted Highland clansmen in arms for his crown, only to lose the day, and their lives, at fatal, and bloody, Culloden. I made a line to beat out a wide bank of bracken, then brown with early autumn, and saw a bird which I believed then to be a cock, and the keeper, a winged grouse, jump up in front. Had I but had the courage of my convictions, and put my favourite falcon, called “Taillie” from her broken tail—a Welsh hawk she from the Glamorgan precipices, of the Worms Head—aloft, then she would have probably been saved much trouble, and we should have lost a glorious sight, and flight, for the day was stilly, bright, and lovely, and the sea loch and its waves sparkled in the sun. No; I took her on my fist, and struck her hood in readiness, half disposed to believe in McPhee the game-keeper. Just where I saw the bird spring, suddenly up went a fine woodcock. No winged bird she, but in full possession of the excellent pair, that had not long before brought her (I suppose, for we do not know) from Finland, or elsewhere in the North, to Argyle. I unhooded and cast “Taillie” after her, and the flight began. This woodcock would have much astonished sportsmen only used to their actions in a thick cover. Up and up she went in long zig-zags, and with precisely the style and action of her small relative, *Scolopax Gallinago*, the common snipe, but mute. The falcon mounted

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

rapidly in her train, though at a considerable disadvantage at first. I saw it was going to be a long affair, got out my glasses, and lay down on the heather, and on one side was my then falconer, Jamie Barr, one of the well-known family of Scotch falconers,—there were once a father and three sons of that name (all falconers by profession), with most acute and trained vision,—and on the other side the proud possessor of the best pair of eyes in all Argyle, if not in the West of Scotland—the so-called “fox-hunter’s” son, my gillie, Sandy Kennedy. This man got much employment in seeking sheep lost on the hills and mountains, and long practice had rendered his ancestral eyesight (his father’s had been as good) equal to most glasses on the moor. The woodcock, with the falcon below and behind her, did not dare to come down or return—*vestigia nulla retrorsum* was her motto—and soon the pair of dots were high over the sea loch, there a mile wide, the cock’s point being evidently Morven, on the other side of the strait. Soon I called out, “I can see but one.” Presently from Barr came—“I canna see them;” from Kennedy, “I ken ’em fine!” I hardly believed he could, for my own eyes were then far above the average, and aided by the best of Voigtlaender’s field glasses, it was as much as I could do. Presently, methought that the single dot in the sky, which I still discerned, became, instead of fainter, faintly more visible. “They are coming back,” quoth Kennedy; and before long the spot had visibly increased, and the falconer Barr declared that he saw them once more. So did we, and so did all, before long, for the woodcock, finding herself over the water, and unable to shake off her pursuer, or gain the distant haven of Morven, had no alternative but to seek the shelter of the bracken on our side, from whence she sprang; so the poor fowl turned tail, and “went for it” in a long slanting descent from an incredible altitude. As they both neared us, they presented the appearance of two little balls falling out of the sky right towards us, and quite straight, with the difference (fatal to the poor woodcock) that “Taillie,” that began below her, was now well

FALCONRY

above. The hawk was evidently unwilling or afraid to stoop over the water, but the moment the cock was over the land she shot herself forward, and straight in air, instead of slanting, half perpendicularly down, like her quarry (both moving with incredible speed) turned over, and stooped. No one knows the speed of a falcon's stoop, but it must be very great, as I have seen it bring a hawk up to old grouse flying hard down wind, just as though they had been sitting still, with absurd ease, if only she be but high enough. Anyhow, it was fatal this time to the woodcock, for, leaving a cloud of feathers behind, she tumbled head over heels before us, into the very patch of bracken she came from, and meeting there with an old ant-hill, bounded off it, many a yard, and lay still. The hawk soon recovered herself, and dashed on to her well-earned quarry. Needless to say, I did not disturb her thereon, but served out the whiskey, and drank her health, all round.'

Major Hawkins Fisher preferred grouse to partridge-hawking :—

'The partridge is a jolly little fowl, though not to be compared with the denizen of the heather. (I have usually three coveys of partridges on my moor, where they appear to feed on the seeds of a rush, and are smaller and darker than the type.) I hawked them regularly for many years on the open downland arable expanse of South Wilts, using good dogs, and possessing two of the best partridge hawks—tiercels or males, and nestling peregrines—possible. Of course it is indispensable to possess or rent a sufficient quantity of suitable ground, well stocked with partridges, and the right to preserve them upon it : 2000 or 3000 acres is quite necessary, if not more, for good sport and success. The fixed idea that "hawking drives birds off the land" is everywhere prevalent, and utterly unremoveable. This prejudice militates heavily, against even renting grouse, or partridge ground, for our present purpose. It happens to be a perfectly incorrect idea, from a common-sense point of view, but it is useless to attempt to discuss it, nor will I write about it here. Suffice it to say that the

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

constant presence of two or more wild peregrine falcons, living very much indeed on my own and neighbours' partridges, not only never drove our numerous partridges away, but was not thought to do so; whereas two or three miserably inferior tame hawks, not to be named in the same week with the wild ones, with reference to their ability to take partridges, were believed to drive all our game away. Luckily it did not. On the contrary, when hard shot, it was our neighbour's lands that were bare, whilst ours, being kept quiet from the report of the gun, were a land of plenty (for partridges) to our great content, and I hope to our neighbour's disgust. But they stuck to their text just the same!

'Every single flight, even at partridges, throughout the day differs considerably from its predecessor and its successor. The two best days I can remember were twelve partridges one day and fourteen on the next (both in October). I once remember killing a partridge with a nearly perfect game hawk called "Lundy," from his birthplace in the Bristol Channel, and who, before a bad neighbour killed him, to deliver a pigeon from his clutches, had taken in his four years of service more than 400 partridges, besides two kestrels, some falcons being desperately fond of going at any wild hawk. This little fellow had done enough one day, when a neighbour's keeper came up and asked to see a flight. Too late, said I, the other hawks being fed up. Just then the dog employed, a ceaseless worker and finder, came to a dead point in some high clover. Quite forgetting what I was about I struck the hawk's hood and cast him off, but to my horror with his swivel in his jesses, and the leash, a yard and a quarter long, and its button attached and dangling down. Few hawks, I hope, thus adorned or encumbered, have ever been asked to take partridges. But it seemed to make little difference to this old hand. Up he went in wide rings, and as fast, apparently, as ever, with his ridiculous appendages; when high enough, the partridges were moved, and he stooped and killed one (for the keeper) with little ado.'

FALCONRY

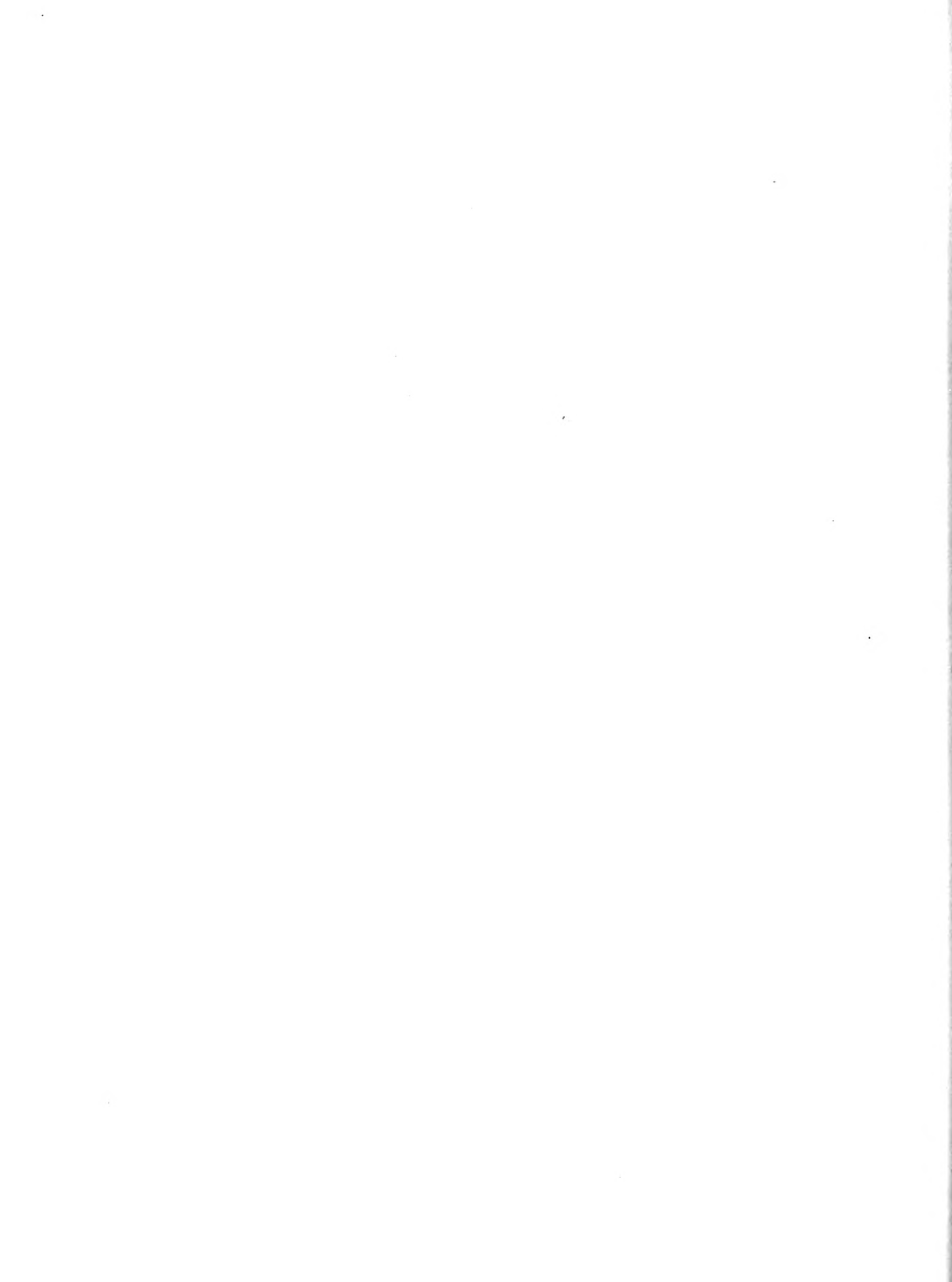
When such a quarry as the woodcock, which of course can fly far as well as fast, 'takes the air,' an extraordinary distance may be covered by pursued and pursuer. One of the most remarkable flights recorded, is that mentioned by the late Mr. Knox (*Gamebirds and Wild Fowl*, 1850). He was hawking with the Hon. R. Westenra in Rossmore Park, Co. Monaghan, when a woodcock was put up. The bird, after a short chase, took the air closely pursued by the falcon—the property of Mr. Westenra—whose name and address were engraved on her bells and varvels. In a short time both birds had attained such an elevation that they were with difficulty kept in view. At last, just as they had become like specks in the sky they were observed to pass rapidly towards the north-east under the influence of a strong south-west wind, and were soon completely out of sight. Some days elapsed without any tidings of the truant falcon: but before the week had expired, a parcel arrived at Rossmore Park accompanied by a letter, bearing a Scotch postmark. The first contained the dead body of the falcon, the latter the closing chapter of her history from the hand of her destroyer, a farmer, who resided within ten miles of Aberdeen. Upon comparison of dates it was found that she had been shot near Aberdeen, within forty-eight hours after she had been flown at the woodcock in a central part of the province of Ulster.

RACING

DESCRPTIVE accounts of races until the nineteenth century are curiously few. Their paucity is to be regretted, for the occasional sidelights we obtain from the old Calendars—Pond, Cheney, Heber, and Tutting and Falconer—suggest that eighteenth-century meetings were conducted in a happy-go-lucky fashion as regards management, while the glimpses we get of racing and its surroundings from other sources indicate the loss of a peculiarly interesting chapter of English social life. The crowd that lined the course in the days when four-mile heats were started by beat of drum offered large possibilities to the descriptive writer.

In an earlier day 'crossing and jostling' were recognised methods of spoiling the chances of a competitor; but by the middle of the eighteenth century these heroic methods of race-riding were falling into disuse on English courses. In 1751 the Articles relating to His Majesty's Plates included the proviso that 'as many of the Riders as shall cross, jostle, or strike or use any other foul play, shall be made incapable of ever riding—for any of His Majesty's Plates hereafter.' The Rules concerning Racing published in 1752 provide, it is true, that 'Crossing and Jostling is allowed in matches if no agreement to the contrary'; but from the absence of comment such as would show that crossing and jostling were practised, it would seem that an 'agreement to the contrary' was usual at this time. At the Epsom November meeting of 1769, Mr. Bishop's Pancake beat Lord Milsington's Surry, 'but being accused of crossing of Surry the match was given to Surry.' These methods were continued in Ireland: at the Trim, Co. Meath, meeting in March 1752, Messrs. Moore and Scott's

Racing in Old Times :
Between the Heats





RACING

bay mare was 'thrown down by a jostle and killed, and the rider, Mr. Scott, violently bruised.' Again at Loughrea, Co. Galway, in August of the same year, 'Mr. Daly's Gelding was thrown down in the third heat and killed by the fall.'

Such incidents grow rarer as we look through the Calendars, and twenty years later their total cessation suggests that crossing and jostling had been given up in Ireland also.

Matches formed a prominent feature of most meetings in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Taking a Calendar at random (it happens to be that of 1772) and turning to the Newmarket Second Spring meeting, we find that the six days' racing, 11th to 16th May inclusive, consisted of fifteen sweepstakes, 'subscriptions' and plates, and twenty-nine matches; while in eighteen other matches which had been arranged forfeit was paid. At most meetings the stake was usually the £50 minimum allowed by law (13 Geo. II., c. 19), and the big prize of the meeting fortunate enough to secure it was a Royal Plate worth a hundred guineas. Far more valuable prizes might, of course, be won at Newmarket, where sweepstakes of a hundred guineas each figured at every meeting: matches were arranged for any stake from £50 a side to £2000 or more. In those days when enclosed meetings and gate money were unknown, the greatest proportion of the cash was found by the men who ran horses; but at minor meetings the authorities looked to the winner to contribute something out of the stakes towards the sport. Thus at Barnet in 1751 the winner of each of the three races was required to pay six guineas 'towards Repairing the Course, Setting up Posts and keeping them in Repair.' At the Canterbury meeting of the same year the winner of the County Plate, £50, was 'enjoin'd to pay three guineas towards the expense attending the Race, and of the City Plate, £50, ten Pounds towards a Purse to be run for in the following year.'

Reference has been made to the happy-go-lucky fashion in which racing was carried on. Here is an example: at the Newmarket October meeting of 1752, Mr. Edward Popham ran

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

his grey filly by Crab against Mr. Valentine Knightley's Marplot over the Beacon Course for £50 a side ; but they, or the stewards, had omitted to appoint a judge, and unfortunately they made so close a race of it that they could not decide between themselves who had won. 'As it occasioned some Disputes it was by Agreement left to Lord *Godolphin*, who determined it to be a drawn Match.' An extraordinary case occurred at the Farn (Cheshire) meeting of 1761, when Mr. Egerton's Dionysius and the Hon. Harvey Ashton's Wildair were entered for the Second Annual Prize of twenty-one guineas.¹ Says the Calendar: 'Dionysius started alone between 12 and 3. Wildair started alone between 3 and 5. A dispute arose which was entitled to the Plate, and was not settled when this went to Press.' We must suppose that a time was appointed for starting that race ; but if this trifling formality had been overlooked, the point was indeed a knotty one for the authorities to determine, supposing them to regard the performance as a race at all.

The hard case presented to the judge by an accident at the Oxford meeting of 1731 probably arose from a too successful jostle. Conqueror and John Trot fell together so near the 'ending post' that the judge could not determine whether either horse had carried his rider past the post. The method adopted to decide the point was curious : 'a person making an affidavit that before John Trot fell his weight at least had passed the post,' his evidence was accepted and the race awarded to that horse. The proceeding displays confidence in the disinterestedness of that person.

One or two races sufficed for a day's sport when the event was decided in heats of two, three, or four miles with half an hour 'for rubbing' between. Three heats usually revealed the winner, but when fields were large, more were often required. At the Beverley meeting held in May 1751, nine five-year-olds started for a £50 purse, three-mile heats : each

¹ An endowed race : and therefore exempted from operation of the Act which prescribed a £50 minimum stake.

RACING

of the first three heats was won by a different horse, so a fourth, in which these three started, was run to decide it. At the Carlisle meeting of May 1761, nine four-year-olds started for a £50 stake, two-mile heats, weight 9 stone. Cadabora won the first; Stella, the second; Cadabora and Heart of Oak 'were so near together the judges could not tell which won' the third; Bold Burton won the fourth; Cadabora and Bold Burton ran a dead heat for the fifth; and the sixth and last was won by Cadabora, Bold Burton second, and Stella third. In their later days these long heats were not always ridden out from start to finish. Nimrod, writing of the early decades of the nineteenth century, says: 'So much is the system of a four-mile heat disliked, that when it does occur the horses often walk the first two miles.' Sir Charles Bunbury is said to have been the man who brought about the discontinuance of races in four-mile heats.

Thus were handicaps made under mid-eighteenth-century rules: 'A Handy-Cap Match is for *A. B.* and *C.* to put an equal sum into a Hat. *C.*, which is the Handy-Capper, makes a match for *A.* and *B.*, which when perused by them they put their Hands into their Pockets and draw them out closed, then they open them together, and if both have money in their hands, the match is confirmed: if neither have money it is no Match. In both Cases the Handy-Capper draws all the money out of the Hat: but if one has Money in his Hand and the other none, then it is no Match: and he that has the money in his Hand is entitled to the Deposit in the Hat.'

The Handy-Capper under these conditions had inducement to make a match which should be accepted by both parties.

The thoroughbred of this period, it is hardly necessary to remark, was a very different animal from his modern descendant. As Sir Walter Gilbey has pointed out in his *Thorough-bred and Other Ponies*, 'fourteen hands was the normal or average height of the race-horse' during the latter half of the eighteenth century. The racing career of the thoroughbred then began

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

at an age when his descendant of our own day is retiring from active life. The practice of racing two-year-olds (I quote again from Sir Walter Gilbey) was introduced about the end of the eighteenth century, 'bringing with it the inevitable process of forcing the growth of young stock.' Staying power and ability to carry weight were the distinguishing characteristics of these old-time race-horses, not speed as we understand it. Could Eclipse and Ormonde be recalled to life together, Eclipse would hardly be able to keep Ormonde in sight.

The behaviour of the race-going crowd in old times left much to desire. We can draw our own conclusions from a passage in the Act of 1740 (13 Geo. II., c. 19) already referred to. The object of this statute was not only to make an end of racing worthless horses at small local meetings by prescribing the weights to be carried¹ and the value of stakes; it declared another purpose with a candour incompatible with a low franchise qualification; seeking 'to remove all temptation from the lower class of people who constantly attend these races to the great loss of time and hindrance of labour, and whose behaviour still calls for stricter regulation to curb their licentiousness and correct their manners.'

The manners of the crowd in George II.'s time must indeed have stood in urgent need of correction if those of the crowd sixty years later exhibited any improvement. Small local meetings in Kent *may* have been attended by a mob more disorderly than that which patronised others; but if this description of the behaviour of the mob at two meetings on the south-west coast is representative, we have to congratulate ourselves on a very vast improvement. Thus the famous painter, George Morland, then a young man of one or two and twenty, wrote to his friend, Philip Dawe, in the autumn of 1785:—

'You must know I have commenced a new business of jockey to the races; I was sent for to Mount Pleasant [East of

¹ The clauses which related to weights were repealed five years later by 18 Geo. II., c. 34.

RACING

Minster five miles from Margate] by the gentlemen of the turf, to ride a racer for the silver cup, as I am thought to be the best horseman here. I went there and was weighed and afterwards dressed in the tight-striped jacket and jockey's cap, and lifted on the horse, led to the start, placed in the rank and file ; three parts of the people laid great bets that I should win the cup, etc. Then the drums beat and we started : 'twas a four-mile heat, and the first three miles I could not keep the horse behind them, being so spirited an animal : by that means he soon exhausted himself, and I soon had the mortification to see them come galloping past me, hissing and laughing, whilst I was spurring his guts out. A mob of horsemen then gathered round, telling me I could not ride, which is always the way if you lose the heat : they began at last to use their whips, and finding I could not get away, I directly pulled off my jacket, laid hold of the bridle, and offered battle to the man who began first, though he was big enough to eat me : several gentlemen rode in, and all the mob turned over to me, and I was led away in triumph with shouts. But, however, I did not fare near so well at Margate races, and was very near being killed ; I rode for a gentleman and won the heat so completely, that when I came into the winning post the other horses were near half a mile behind me, upon which near four hundred sailors, smugglers, fishermen, etc., set upon me with sticks, stones, waggoners' whips, fists, etc., and one man, an innkeeper here, took me by the thigh and pulled me off the horse : I could not defend myself : the sounds I heard all were, " Kill him ! " " Strip him ! " " Throw him in the sea ! " " Cut off his large tail ! " and a hundred other sentences rather worse than the first. I got from them once, and ran into the booth : Michiner rode in to me, dismounted and took me up in his arms, half beat to pieces, kept crying to the mob to keep back, and that his name was Michiner and he would notice them : at last, a party of light horsemen and several gentlemen and their servants, some post-boys, hairdressers, bakers, and several other people I knew armed themselves with sticks, etc., and

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

ran in to my assistance and brought me a horse, though the mob pressed so hard 'twas long before I could mount.'

The methods permitted at Mount Pleasant were evidently not such as would be approved at more strictly ordered meetings : Morland, it will be noticed, weighed out first and donned his colours afterwards.

Twenty years later we obtain another glimpse, brief but eloquent, of the state of affairs prevailing on a very different course. Thus the *Sporting Magazine* of 1806 :—

' From the number of accidents that have happened by the intemperance of drivers and the crowds on the course at Epsom, it has been agreed that there shall not be any races run after dinner, and it is imagined that the Derby and Oaks Stakes will shortly be transferred to some other place.'

It is worth reproducing this by way of showing the contrast between those days and our own. Accidents occur on Epsom Downs, and not every man of the crowd—ten times the size of the 1806 crowd, we may be sure—goes home sober ; but the multitude takes its pleasure in cleaner fashion now than it did a century ago.

Turning to more recent times, here is 'The Druid's' account of the St. Leger of 1850, famous for the dead heat between Voltigeur and Russborough :—

' At last the flags were lowered, and away went the eight in a cluster, Nat going in front at once and cutting out the work with Beehunter ; Chatterbox and Russborough well up, and Voltigeur settling down about seventh. Along the flat the pace was very slow, but when they reached the foot of the hill Beehunter seemed to warm to his work, and led them up and over it at capital speed. No change took place in their Indian-file positions until they approached the Red House, when Marson took Voltigeur well by the head and administered a couple of smart strokes of the whip to rouse him to a sense of his position. The gallant brown answered immediately, and at the Intake Farm was fifth, with Pitsford and Beehunter on his left, Bolingbroke on his right, and Russborough and

RACING

Italian at his quarters. Just at this point Bolingbroke looked formidable ; but in another hundred yards he began to hang towards the rails, and Marson, seeing at a glance that he would be shut out, promptly shot his horse through the gap and took the lead at the distance, Russborough being handy on the off-side. Half way up the distance Marson steadied his horse, who seemed to be in slight difficulties from the severe pace, and just when he got him extended again Jim Robinson, with a well-timed effort, swooped down upon Marson, and after a thrilling finish made a dead heat.

‘ As Russborough was nearest to the Judge the great majority of spectators thought that he had won, and when the fielders learnt the decision their joy knew no bounds.

‘ The two antagonists made their way back to the enclosure, and were keenly scrutinised as their jockeys dismounted and unsaddled them. Some strong suspicions were expressed that Russborough was a four-year-old, and an examination of his mouth was demanded by Lord Zetland. The horse was examined by Mr. George Holmes, the well-known veterinary of Thirsk, and by Mr. J. Shaw of the 3rd Dragoon Guards, who pronounced him all right. A little after five, when all the other races were over, the two champions of the day were again seen approaching the enclosure in their sheets. Robinson jumped into the pigskin with a jaunty air, and a whisper went round that he was going to make it hot for the Richmond-trained horse, by forcing the running. Marson then came out from the weighing house, looking very pale but full of quiet confidence, and mounted his horse on the course. Another canter, and another parade, and the two were again alongside Mr. Hibburd, the starter, waiting for the signal. Robinson at once showed that his cutting down intentions had not been misrepresented. The moment that the flag dropped he was off like a shot, and Marson as quickly got Voltigeur on his legs and laid off two lengths. The pace quickened as they rose the hill, and the fielders were in high hopes that the two lengths would become four when the T. Y. C. post was reached. They

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

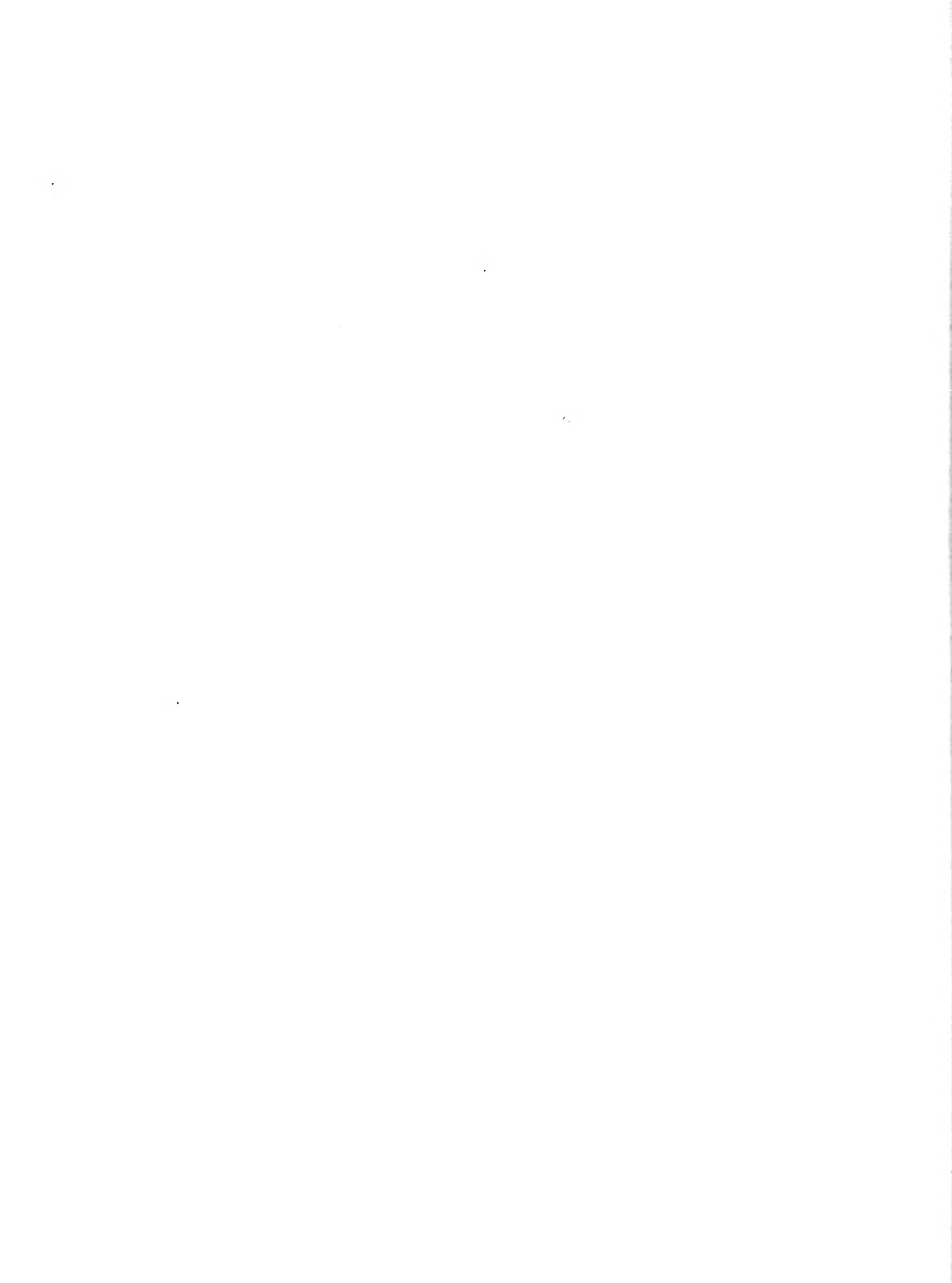
reckoned, however, without their host, as the two steeds kept in exactly the same position till the Red House was passed. Into the straight running Russborough came with the same strong lead, Robinson glancing over his shoulder at Marson, who sat with his hands well down on his horse's withers, and as cool as an iceberg. The vast crowd closed in upon them, and the roar of a hundred thousand iron voices fairly rent the air. "Voltigeur's beat!" and "Is 'er beat?" was Bob Hill's response; "You maun't tell me that; I knaws 'im better—Job's a coming!" And sure enough, Job, half way within the distance, slipped a finger off his rein, gave the Derby winner a sharp reminder with his spurs, had him at Russborough's girths in the next three strides, and landed him home a clever winner by a length. The hurrahs that greeted horse and jockey as they returned to the Stand were perfectly deafening, and became, if possible, louder when the Countess of Zetland descended with her husband and patted the conqueror's neck. Spotted handkerchiefs, symbolising Lord Zetland's colours, were waving everywhere, hats were flung recklessly in the air, and even the fielders cheered because one of the right sort had won. This was Voltigeur's third race, all of which he has won, and it is remarkable that Charles XII., the only other son of Voltaire who ever gained the St. Leger, had to run two heats for it.'

They who speak with authority maintain that a south-country crowd does not take the close interest in the horses and the racing that is taken by the men of the north: an Epsom crowd discusses anything but the racing: a Knavesmire or Doncaster crowd has thought and word for nothing else. But the south-country crowd is roused to an extraordinary pitch of enthusiasm on occasion.

One of the most memorable among Derbies was that of 1896: those who saw—and heard—are never likely to forget it.

'The mingled clamour on the Downs is dying away: the course has been cleared: the inevitable dog, a mongrel Irish terrier this time, has been hunted into private life among the

*Modern Racing:
The Starting Gate*







RACING

legs against the ropes, and the horses are coming out, while from the enormous throng rises the murmur of expectation. Here they come, one, two, three—eight of them. Where's Persimmon and Bradwardine and Earwig? Leave has been given for them to go straight to the start, says somebody behind us; they are being saddled at Sherwood's and won't take part in the parade. The preliminary over, the eight take a short cut across to the starting post where Mr. Coventry is waiting. Somebody wants to know why Regret isn't running, and does not seem consoled when it is suggested that the hard ground probably explains his absence. Now the field of eleven has come under the starter's orders and the tense minutes of waiting begin: you feel the pent-up excitement through the comparative silence. It seems an hour—seven or eight minutes it proves—before the roar of "Off!" heralds the vain rush of the crowd from the starting post across the Downs: it is a wonderful sight that advancing wave of humanity, but every eye is on the race. Who's that in front? Toussaint. Only for a moment: Woodburn has steadied him, and Bay Ronald, Bradwardine, Spook, Earwig, and Teufel draw out from the rest. Persimmon and St. Frusquin together whipping in. Now Gulistan leads; Bradwardine overhauls him as they ascend the hill, passes him at the top, followed by St. Frusquin, Bay Ronald, and Teufel: Persimmon behind them, with Toussaint and Tamarind ("neither of those two, Derby horses," mutters a voice at our elbow) bringing up the rear, already out of it. Down the hill they come; as they near Tattenham Corner, Bradwardine falls behind. Bay Ronald and St. Frusquin draw to the front with Persimmon in waiting. Bay Ronald leads round the Corner into the straight, but falls back leaving St. Frusquin and Persimmon to draw clear at the distance. It is between those two, and as the pair single themselves out the Downs find voice again in a swelling roar. St. Frusquin leads! St. Frusquin! St. Frusquin wins! No! Persimmon! Persimmon! for a hundred yards from home Watts on the Prince's horse

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

challenges, and the pair fight it out amid a roar of excitement which, when Persimmon wins by a neck, culminates in an outburst of cheering compared to which the previous uproar was a whisper. The hubbub that follows the winning of the Derby generally dies away as the horses pull up to return to scale; not so to-day. The purple and scarlet of the Heir to the Throne has been borne past the post first by a neck after a splendid race, and it is not a vast crowd of racegoers but of loyal subjects that is cheering. Now it lulls for a moment, now swells again, while hats by hundreds are thrown in the air by men fairly beside themselves. The crowd floods the course and surges, a dense mass, round the winner as Marsh leads him, escorted by mounted police, to the gate where the Prince is waiting. Another roar as Watts doffs his cap to His Royal Highness. Another lull. "All right!" from the weighing room, is acknowledged by yet another deafening storm of cheering. The crowd seems unable to leave off. "Well," says an old racegoer, "I have seen a good many Derbies, and I thought the demonstration when Ladas won couldn't be beaten; but it was *nothing* to this."

The Derby crowd of Persimmon's year was one of the largest—some estimated it to be quite the largest—ever seen on Epsom Downs: the police maintained that there were a quarter of a million people present.

The Derby of 1901, Volodyovski's year, was the first in which the starting gate was used. The field was a large one, twenty-five horses, and only one, Orchid, made any objection to the barrier he was required to face.

The origin of the starting gate can be traced to the Arabs. The famous Emir Abd-el Kadir in the account of racing he gave General Daumas (*The Horses of the Sahara*) says: 'The horses are grouped together by tens, but before allowing them to start and to prevent false starts, the following precaution is taken. A rope is stretched across touching the animals' chests, the two ends of which are held by two men. This rope is called *el mikbad* and *el mikouas*.' The gate had been an

RACING

institution on Australian courses for some few years before its adoption in this country : every one remembers the animated discussion which followed the Jockey Club's decision to establish it on English courses two years after it had first been experimentally tried. The Tathwell Stakes at the Lincoln meeting of 1900 was the first race to be started by the gate under the compulsory rule which applied to the two-year-old events of that season, by way of progressively introducing the appliance to all races. Few of those connected with the turf would care to revert now to the old flag system of starting.

The autumn of 1897 saw the appearance at Newmarket of Sloan the American jockey, whose peculiar seat on a horse furnished food for abundant merriment—for a time. 'That Sloan,' says Mr. Charles Richardson in *The English Turf*, 'won races was at first regarded as a benevolent freak of Providence : for who, taking the accepted English seat as the model of perfection, could do justice to the race-horse in the monkey-on-a-stick attitude assumed by the American ?' Jocular criticism was silenced, however, when, in the autumn of 1898, Sloan came to England again, and in 98 races rode 41 winners, 21 seconds, and 7 thirds. The peculiarity of his seat perhaps did something to blind the majority to the fact that he was an extraordinarily good judge of pace and had exceptionally good hands. Sloan's success revolutionised the style of race-riding in Britain, but the change has not been all for the better. Races are now run from start to finish more frequently than they used to be, and this is attributed to the impossibility of properly controlling the horse when the 'monkey-on-a-stick' seat is assumed. To the same cause may be traced the frequent interference with one another of horses and 'bumping finishes.' After all, the old-fashioned seat in the saddle which allowed the jockey to *ride* his horse had much to recommend it over the attitude said to have been copied from North American Indian horsemen.

STEEPLE-CHASING

THE modern steeplechase or point to point race might hardly recognise the original parent of both. When the ardent 'bruiser' of the mid-eighteenth century felt moved to run his horse against another across country he challenged the owner of that other to a 'wild goose chase': whereof let old authority speak. It was:—

'A sort of racing on horse-back, used formerly, which resembled the flying of wild geese, those birds generally going in a train one after another, not in confused flocks as other fowls do. In this sort of race the two horses after running twelve-score yards had liberty, which horse soever could get the leading, to ride what ground the jockey pleased, the hindmost horse being bound to follow him within a certain distance agreed on by articles, or else be whipped in by the tryers and judges who rode by: and whichever horse could distance the other won the race.'

The obvious objection to this style of racing wrought its undoing. If the leader could not distance his rival—*i.e.* gain a lead of 240 yards—and the rival, faint yet pursuing, scorned to pull up, the horses might be galloped to death and yet leave the match drawn. Hence some daring innovator suggested the advantages of a race run over a specified distance: a plan which had humanity and common-sense to recommend it.

There is record of a cross-country race in Ireland in the year 1752, between Mr. O'Callaghan and Mr. Edmund Blake; four miles and a half; but this we must suppose was merely a solitary incident. Cross-country races, in England at all events, did not become a recognised form of sport until the early years of the nineteenth century; and they were not

STEEPLE-CHASING

frequent then if we may base an opinion on this note in the *Sporting Magazine* of January 1804 :—

‘ CURIOUS HORSE RACE. A wager betwixt Captains Prescott and Tucker of the 5th Light Dragoons was determined on Friday, 20th inst., by a singular horse-race which we learn is denominated *steeple-hunting*. The race was run from Chapel Houses on the west turnpike, to the Cowgate, Newcastle, a distance of three miles in a direct line across the country, which Captain T. gained by near a quarter of a mile. The mode of running such races is not to deviate more than fifteen yards from the direct line to the object in view notwithstanding any impediments the rider may meet with, such as hedges, ditches, etc : the leading horse has the choice of road to the extent of the limits, and the other cannot go over the same ground, but still preserving those limits must choose another road for himself.’

A genuine point to point race you will observe : Captains Prescott and Tucker rode ‘ the direct line to the object in view,’ just as in modern point to point races during the later ’seventies and early ’eighties, the field were lined up and despatched on their journey to some distant mark, church steeple or the like.

A famous race was that run on 30th March 1826 between Captain Horatio Ross and Captain Douglas. ‘ Nimrod ’ was among those present and he wrote an account of it—the first detailed description of a steeplechase extant :—

‘ . . . The following was the origin of the match—As Lord Kennedy, Captain Ross, and Mr. Cruickshank were on their road to Epsom races, last spring, the merits of a Captain Douglas (who hunts in Forfarshire) as a rider, became the topic of conversation, and a comparison was hazarded between him and some of the crack Melton men. Captain Ross observed that a tip-top *provincial* rider will generally be found *in the crowd* in a Leicestershire field—a truism which can never be doubted. It was then hinted that Captain Ross, with his stable of horses, ought to be always in the first flight

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

in the Quorn country. In short, to use an humble phrase, one word produced another ; and the argument, as arguments among Englishmen generally do, concluded in a bet ; and Captain Douglas was matched to ride four miles over Leicestershire against Captain Ross. . . . The ground run over—from Barkby Holt to Billesden Coplow—is generally supposed to want about a quarter of a mile of four miles, and is, for the most part, of very uneven surface. From the repeated trials each party had had over it, the fences were considerably broken ; and were, indeed, not in a state to have stopped the commonest hack. Nevertheless, though the ground was dry enough to bear the horses, and all grass, it was distressing.

‘The weight of the parties was as follows :—Douglas, previous to training, 14 st. ; but he rode the race 12st. 9 lb. Ross, previous to training, 13 st. 5 lb. ; and he rode the match 11st. 8 lb. ; in a 10 lb. saddle. Mr. White was umpire to the former, and Sir Vincent Cotton to the latter, with Mr. Maxse as judge. When Captain Ross came to Melton for the winter, he found himself not only without a horse, in his own stable, which he considered fit for such a match, but he knew not where to go to find one. His friends, however, were particularly kind to him, and offered him the picking of their studs. After several trials a horse called Clinker, the property of Mr. Holyoake, was fixed upon ; and as in his trial he went over the ground—then very deep—in eleven minutes and fifteen seconds, with Dick Christian, weighing 13st. 4 lb. on his back, little doubt, barring accidents, was entertained of his being the winner. Clinker was purchased by Mr. Holyoake from Mr. J. Leeds, a celebrated rider with the Oakley hounds ; and is got by Clinker, dam by Sancho, granddam by Fidget, out of Lily of the Valley, by Eclipse. If any proof were wanting to shew the effect of condition on good form and high breeding it would be found in the remarkable instance of this horse having been formerly in Mr. Musters’ stable and considered too bad to be kept at fifty pounds.

‘The following facts should be stated to the very great

STEEPLE-CHASING

credit of Mr. Holyoake. From fear of accidents, he gave up hunting Clinker for two months before the race; and three weeks previous to the day of starting, he refused twelve hundred guineas for him¹—declaring, that, as he had promised him to Captain Ross, five thousand should not purchase him.

‘The same difficulty attended my Lord Kennedy in selecting a horse for this arduous undertaking. He first purchased a brown horse from Colonel Wallace, for £400; Why not, a horse that ran pretty well three years ago, as a cocktail; a brown horse, at a pretty large price, from the Hon. Mr. Moreton; and Radical,—the horse that started—from Mr. Thomas Assheton Smith, for £500. Radical, also got by Clinker, is quite thoroughbred; and Mr. Smith, who has ridden him three seasons, considered him the fastest horse he ever had. Lord Kennedy also deputed Captain Douglas to go to Lord Lynedoch, and offer him £800 for Whitestockings, the horse his Lordship purchased the season before last from Lord Kintore.

‘The concourse of people upon the ground on the morning of the race was very great, and a considerable display of carriages was to be seen in the grounds of Quornby Hall, situated about a mile from the Coplow, and through which the riders were to pass.

‘A little after two o’clock the gentlemen started; and as nearly as I could collect, the following is a statement of the race:—Mr Holyoake’s instructions to Captain Ross were, that he should let Captain Douglas go first, provided he went off at a slapping pace; but if not, Clinker was to take the lead. Douglas, however, took the lead, and kept for about four fields, when Radical, refusing a fence, swerved against a gate, and threw his rider over it. Clinker followed him to the gate, and here some confusion arose. Ross was not shaken from his seat; but in consequence of the wrists of both these gentlemen being strapped to their bridle reins—with a view of preventing their losing their horses in case of falls—he got

¹ Mr. Holyoake afterwards sold Clinker to Captain Ross for 600 guineas.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

entangled in those of his adversary, but soon extricated himself, and went on at a killing pace. In attempting to catch him, it is generally considered that Douglas pumped the wind out of Radical, which occasioned him to fall at a small fence; and, by all accounts, his rider had a narrow escape of being seriously injured. Nothing daunted—for few men are harder or have better nerve—Douglas was in his saddle again, and charged a very large place (to get back into his line), which Radical cleared in a most workmanlike manner. His chance, however, was now out; Ross was gotten more than half a mile ahead of him; and when he passed me, about a mile from home—he was going quite at his leisure, not three parts speed.

‘The scene at the Coplow beggars description. I can only compare it to a charge of cavalry, without the implements of destruction, although those who were in the thick of it were not free from danger. I never saw so much happiness depicted in one man’s face as shewed itself in that of the winner, and the acclamations of his friends rent the air.

‘That Captain Ross appeared the favourite of the field, truth compels me to state; and I think it was to be attributed, among others, to these causes:—first, the unassuming conduct he has invariably observed on the occasion; and secondly, to the great and never ceasing exertions of his friend Mr. Holyoake, to pull him well through. My old acquaintance, Mr. Frank Needham of Hungerton, exerted himself most powerfully in his favour, and no doubt his friends were pretty numerous on the ground.

‘Some idea may be formed of the pace these gentlemen must have gone over the first part of the ground, when I state the fact, that the distance was performed by Clinker in eleven minutes thirty seconds;¹ although, as I have before stated, he was going quite at his ease for the last mile, or more. During this part of the race I rode by the side of, and conversed

¹ Captain Ross says the time ‘by stop-watch was 11½ minutes; a good pace over a very hilly country.’

Steeple-Chasing





STEEPLE-CHASING

with, my friend Captain Ross, who also appeared quite at his ease; and when he pulled up at the Coplow, I narrowly observed the state of his horse. There were no symptoms of fatigue; no tottering on his legs; no poking out his nose; no quivering of the muscles; no distress for wind; but he walked down the hill with his rider upon him, in full possession of his powers, and fit to have carried him over a large fence at the bottom of it. His condition, it must be allowed, was perfect.

‘Not being able to be in two places at one time, I did not see Radical till some minutes after he had come in, when I perceived no symptoms of distress. He has all the appearance of a hunter, with immense powers in his thighs and hocks. He was ridden in a snaffle bridle, and I understand he will go in no other. Indeed, I should imagine from an expression of his late owner, that he is not every one’s horse. . . .’

Concerning that incident at the gate, Captain Ross gave an account which puts it in a somewhat different light. The evening before the race, he says, Lord Kennedy sought an interview with him and, urging the desirability of leaving no loophole for misunderstanding, suggested that each rider should do just as he pleased. ‘In short,’ rejoined Captain Ross, ‘I understand that we may ride over each other and kill each other, if we can. Is that so?’ ‘Just so,’ was Lord Kennedy’s answer. ‘Odd enough,’ continues Captain Ross, ‘the first jump was a five-barred gate. I lay with Clinker’s head about Douglas’s knee. When within forty or fifty yards of the gate I saw clearly that Radical meant to refuse: so recollecting last night’s bargain, I held Clinker well in hand. Radical, as I expected, when close to the gate turned right across Clinker. I stuck the spur in, knocked Douglas over the gate and sent Radical heels over head, and lying on this side of it.’

The foundation-stone of organised steeple-chasing was laid in 1830 when certain officers of the 1st Life Guards asked the well-known trainer ‘Tommy’ Coleman, then landlord of the

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

Chequers Inn, or Turf Hotel, at St. Albans, to arrange the matter. It was a thoroughly sporting affair: the 'articles' provided for a sweepstakes of 25 sovereigns, each horse to carry 12 stone over not less than four miles of fast hunting country, to be chosen by Coleman within forty miles of London. No rider was to be told the line until at the starting-post, and no rider to pass through an open gateway or traverse road or lane for more than 50 yards. Coleman chose a genuine point to point course, starting the field of fifteen from the hill where Harlington Church stands, the winning post being the Obelisk in Wrest Park near Silsoe. Here is 'The Druid's' account of the race:—'Coleman so managed the line, that he could start them, and then by making a short cut, judge them as well. Lord Ranelagh's grey horse Little Wonder, with Colonel Macdowell up, won the stake, which was worth about 300 sovereigns. The Colonel's orders were to watch nothing but Lord Clanricarde, who was on a little Irish chestnut; and one of the Berkeleys was third.¹ The rest found their way into the Park from all quarters; with the exception of poor Mr. Stretfield on Teddy the Tiler, who had a fall in jumping a gate back on to a bridge after he had missed his line, and died in consequence.'

Coleman's general idea of a steeplechase was two miles out and two miles in, and 'keeping the line quite dark.' Hence he concealed men in the ditches, with flags, which they raised at a given signal, as soon as the riders were ready. Other managers liked four miles straight, and after erecting scaffold poles, with a couple of sheets to finish between, they left the riders to hunt the country for their line, with no further directions than 'leave that church on your right, and the clump on your left, and get to the hill beyond.'

The St. Albans meeting lasted only a few years: its own success was its undoing. Steeple-chasing was a novelty, and such large and unmanageable crowds collected that the

¹ Lord Clanricarde's 'little Irish chestnut' was Nailer, who came in second: the Hon. A. Berkeley rode Mr. Wombwell's grey Rockingham.

STEEPLE-CHASING

farmers over whose land the sport took place rebelled, and in 1838 the last St. Albans race was run.

There had been a selling steeplechase at Aintree (nine runners; won by the Duke) in 1836, but, as 'The Druid' says, 'Liverpool began its Grand National in earnest' in 1839, and the glory that had been St. Albans' was translated to the Aintree course.

Commander W. B. Forbes, R.N., sends the following account of the Grand National of 1882, famous in the annals of the great race as having been won by a man who rode his own horse, after one of the closest finishes ever seen:—

“That must be the happiest man on the top of the earth at the present moment,” said the late Mr. John Watson to me in his own emphatic way, as we watched the mud-bespattered Lord Manners strip the saddle from the back of the gallant Seaman after the race. And though Lord Manners seemed very calm amid the uproarious cheering and overwhelming congratulations of those who crowded round him, I feel pretty sure that my old friend was right; for not to many comes, even once in a lifetime, the intense and satisfying joy that follows the accomplishment of some great deed upon which the heart is set.

‘Never shall I forget the scene as the owner-jockey emerged from the weighing room when “all right” had been pronounced after the most exciting struggle I ever witnessed on a steeplechase course. There were many circumstances connected with the race which made it in every way one of the most memorable contests on record: and not even when His Majesty’s royal purple was borne first past the post on *Ambush II* was victory more popular. For it was known to all that Lord Manners, then a young Guardsman, 30 years of age, had purchased Seaman at a long figure for the express purpose of winning the Grand National with him and riding him himself; an idea, which, though it seemed quixotic to the British Public, caused the gallant Guardsman to become a popular idol when it was realised. Yet Lord Manners was not

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

the tyro at the game that he was generally represented to be, for he owned at least one other very good horse, also an Irish bred one and, like Seaman, from Linde's stable. This was Lord Chancellor, by the Lawyer out of Playfair, a six year old, on whom his Lordship had won the Grand Military Gold Cup at Sandown three weeks before ; so the jockey was pretty fit, as a man must needs be to accomplish the proudest ambition of the soldier rider—to win the Gold Cup and the National in the same year. As a five year old Lord Chancellor had shown good form in Ireland ; as a four year old, under the name of Pickpocket, he had won the Farmers' race at the Ward Hunt Meeting, and also the Bishopscourt Plate at Punchestown, with Mr. "Harry" Beasley in the saddle on both occasions. And now about the antecedents of the equine hero of the Grand National of 1882.

' In that year the Linde combination—Mr. Linde to train and the brothers Beasley to ride—was going very strong indeed. The stable with Empress and Woodbrook had won the two previous Grand Nationals, those of 1880 and 1881, while in 1879 poor Garrett Moore had done the trick on his own Liberator, and it almost seemed as if we were never again to see the winner of the great race trained and ridden by Englishmen.

' The Eyrefield Lodge master had seldom a stronger hand to play than was his when he threw away his trump card, and sold Seaman to Captain Machell for Lord Manners. But Mr. Linde was a very astute personage and knew that there was a "wonder" who was little known, and a couple of clinkers besides in his stable ; while he doubted much if Seaman would stand a Grand National preparation—such a preparation, at least, as he was in the habit of bestowing upon his charges. Seaman, son of Xenophon and Lena Rivers, in 1882 was a six year old ; he was not a very big horse nor had he the best of legs, indeed they showed signs of the Veterinary surgeon's art. He was a good bay, very deep over the heart and one of the gamest that ever looked through a bridle.

STEEPLE-CHASING

He made a memorable first appearance as a four year old in Ireland by winning the Members' Plate at Longford when there was a very bumping finish between Seaman, ridden by Mr. H. Beasley, and Mr. Croker's Sir Garnet, a crack four year old of the time, ridden by Mr. D. Murphy. The latter came in first by a neck, but was disqualified for unfair riding on Mr. Murphy's part.

' Next year (1881) Seaman rose to great fame by jumping the big fences like a deer, gaining at every fence and winning the Conyngham Cup at Punchestown by ten lengths with his pilot, Harry Beasley, looking back at his followers. It has not been often remarked, I think, that Lord Manners rode his own horse Grenadier in that Conyngham Cup, and here it was that he probably made his first acquaintance with Seaman, whose last race this was in the maroon and blue cap of Mr. Linde, for he crossed the channel and went into Captain Machell's care. But in the stable at Eyrefield remained a brace of five year olds with either of which Linde thought he might win another National. One of these was Cyrus, another son of Xenophon and an unlucky horse for Mr. Linde, the other Mohican by Uncas, the property of the late Major Ralph Bunbury, a most cheery and amusing sportsman, a friend of my own and one of the best men to hounds in Kilkenny. Mohican had won a Farmers' race in Kilkenny for Major Bunbury, but he won it by about a mile, and after the race poor Roddy Owen, then a subaltern at Cork, thought he saw a "soft thing" and asked Bunbury to put a price on his horse. "1000 golden sovereigns" instantly replied the hilarious owner. The fact was that Mohican had shown great speed on the flat when in training at the Curragh but had developed a "pain in his temper"—with the usual result. However he had grown into a slashing young dark brown horse, had an immense stride and was a tremendous jumper. Here was the trump card! His trial with Cyrus proved him a wonder, and I believe that he easily beat and gave weight to the horse that was to give him 2 lb. in the National.

BRITISH SPORT PAST AND PRESENT

Mohican, ridden by Harry Beasley, carried most of the money and started favourite in a field of 12 for the Grand National. Cyrus, 10 st. 9 lb., was ridden by Mr. T. Beasley. Seaman by Lord Manners, 11 st. 6 lb. Adams was on Liberator the '79 winner, Captain Smith was on "Zoedone" —the next year's winner: Frank Wynne steered "Black Prince," Mr. Thirlwell, "Eau de Vie": Jewitt rode the Scot: Waddington, Montauban: Mr. E. P. Wilson was on Fay: Andrews on Wild Monarch, and Sensier on Ignition. It will thus be seen that the pick of all the talent of the time was arrayed against the venturesome Lord Manners.

'Very heavy rain had fallen, and the morning of March 23rd was as disagreeable as it often is at Aintree, the course in front of the stands was horribly muddy, and light misty rain almost obscured the canal turn. There was a murmur of applause when Seaman passed in the Parade, but in the canter Harry Beasley fetched Mohican a rib-binder to wake him up, a proceeding that I did not like, tho' his owner, who stood next to me, took it as a "matter of course." (I beg leave to say that no joke is intended!)

'There is nothing in racing that seems to me quite as exciting as the start for the National. When the flag fell away they went in splendid line into the dull grey distance. My little money was on the favourite, but Seaman's progress attracted me most and I watched through my glasses the splendid style in which he sailed over what used to be called "Fan's fence"; but thanks to the weather our glasses became of little use after that. Mohican fell at the big second fence into the country, taking off far too soon and dropping his hind legs into the far ditch, but Mr. Beasley rolled away unhurt; he was striding along in great form when he fell and looked the giant of the cluster that led. Seaman at the water covered a lot of space in his jump and Cyrus skimmed it "like a swallow on a summer's eve"; but the day grew darker as they turned and it was difficult to see more till they came round again for home. Then it was clear that two horses

STEEPLE-CHASING

were out by themselves. Though jackets and faces of riders were of one uniform mud-colour I recognised the neat seat of little Beasley and the other horse, I knew, was Seaman.

‘Now at the Curragh three years later Fred Archer, having been beaten in the Welter race by Tommy Beasley on Spahi after a great set-to, declared that he had never seen an amateur who could ride as good a finish as his opponent. So here was the “tyro” pitted against this redoubtable race-rider in one of the most desperate finishes ever seen at Aintree. As they neared the last fence, however, my glasses showed me that Cyrus was a more beaten horse than Seaman, and Beasley took hold of him and resolutely drove him at it. I think the fences were then not so strongly made up as they seemed to be the last time I walked the course, for Cyrus fairly “mowed it,” while Seaman jumped it clean and well. Once over, though, he hung a bit and lost some ground. Beasley was “at” his mount and level again with Seaman. Locked together they passed the stands, Lord Manners sitting still but riding out his horse with his hands. Beasley doing all he knew and squeezing the last ounce out of Cyrus, the last ounce, the absolutely last ounce! for on the very post he drops back the merest trifle and the race is Seaman’s by the shortest of heads. “How did the Lord work?” I heard one of the Irish brigade ask the defeated jockey. “He made no mistake from first to last,” was the quiet reply—“Don’t I wish he had!” The gallant Seaman broke down after passing the post and came back on three legs to be greeted as I have described, having run his last race. The leg “held” just a little too long for Mr. Linde.’

Printed by T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to His Majesty
at the Edinburgh University Press

