

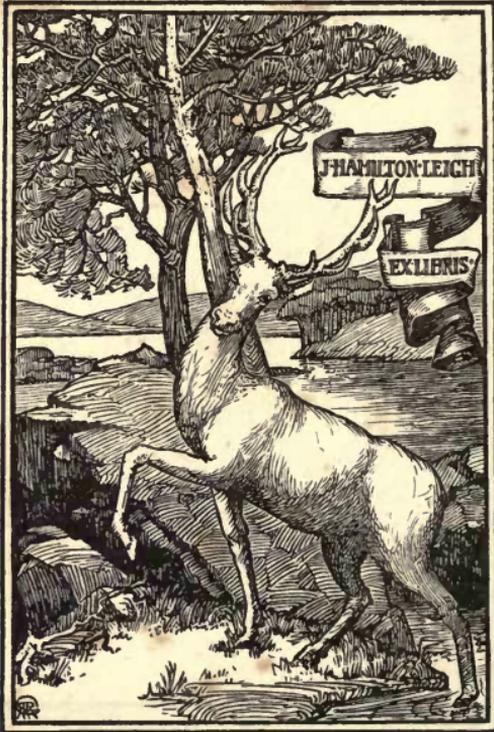
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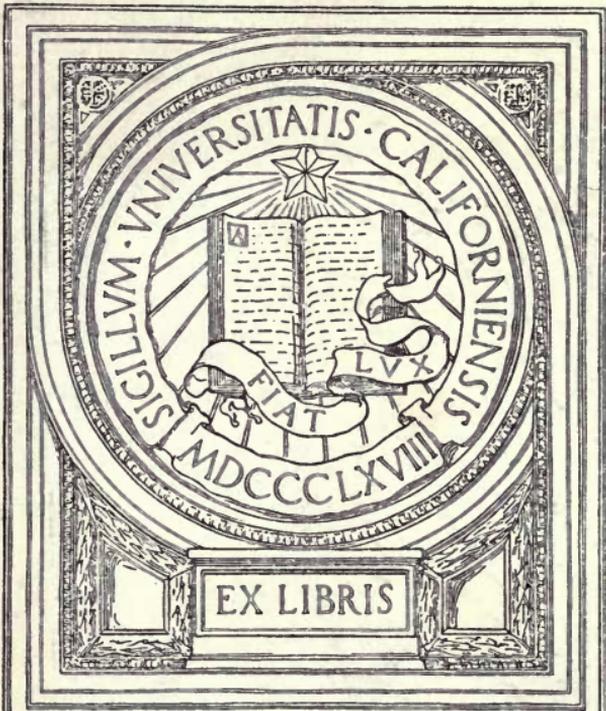
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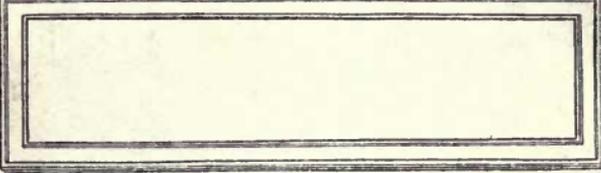
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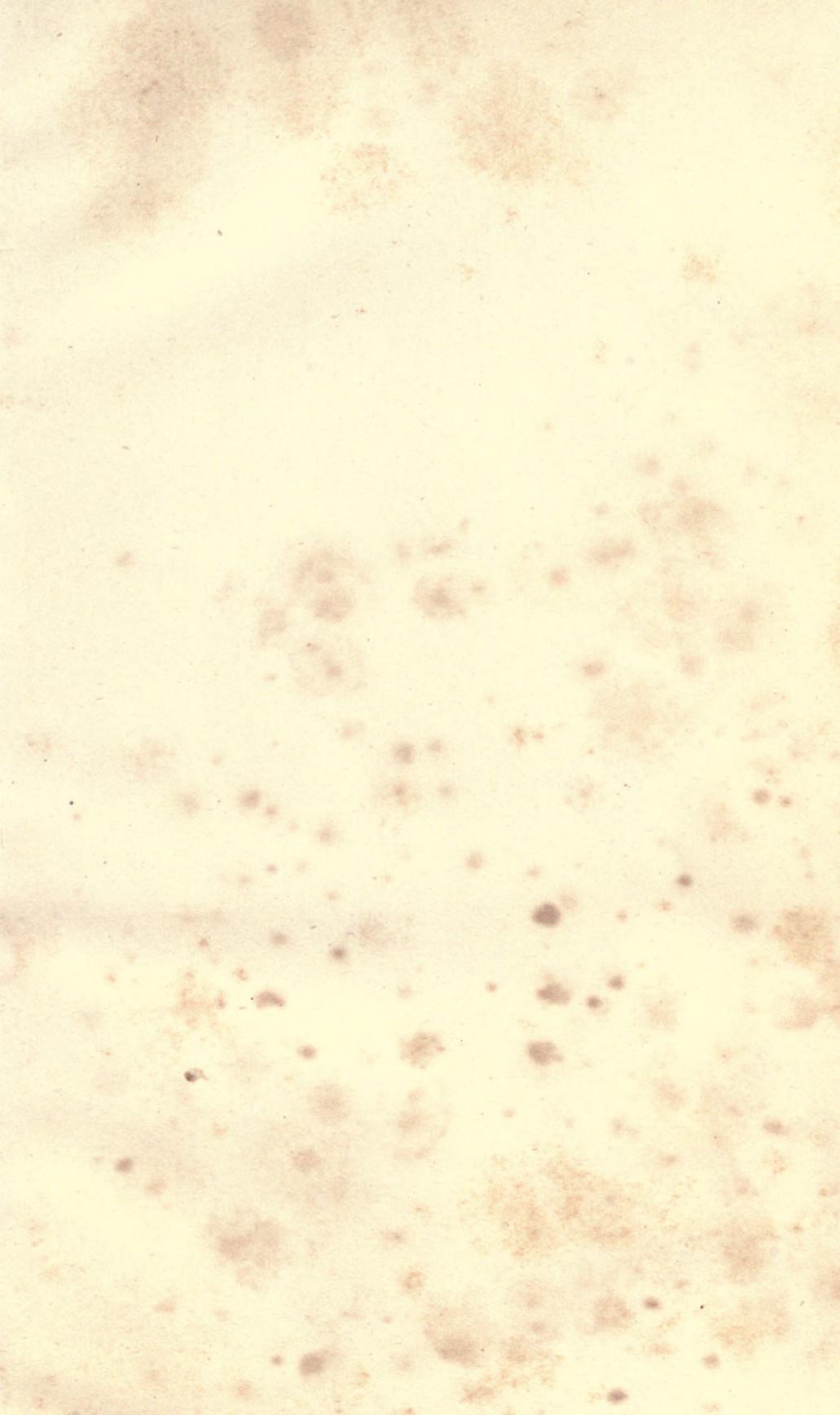


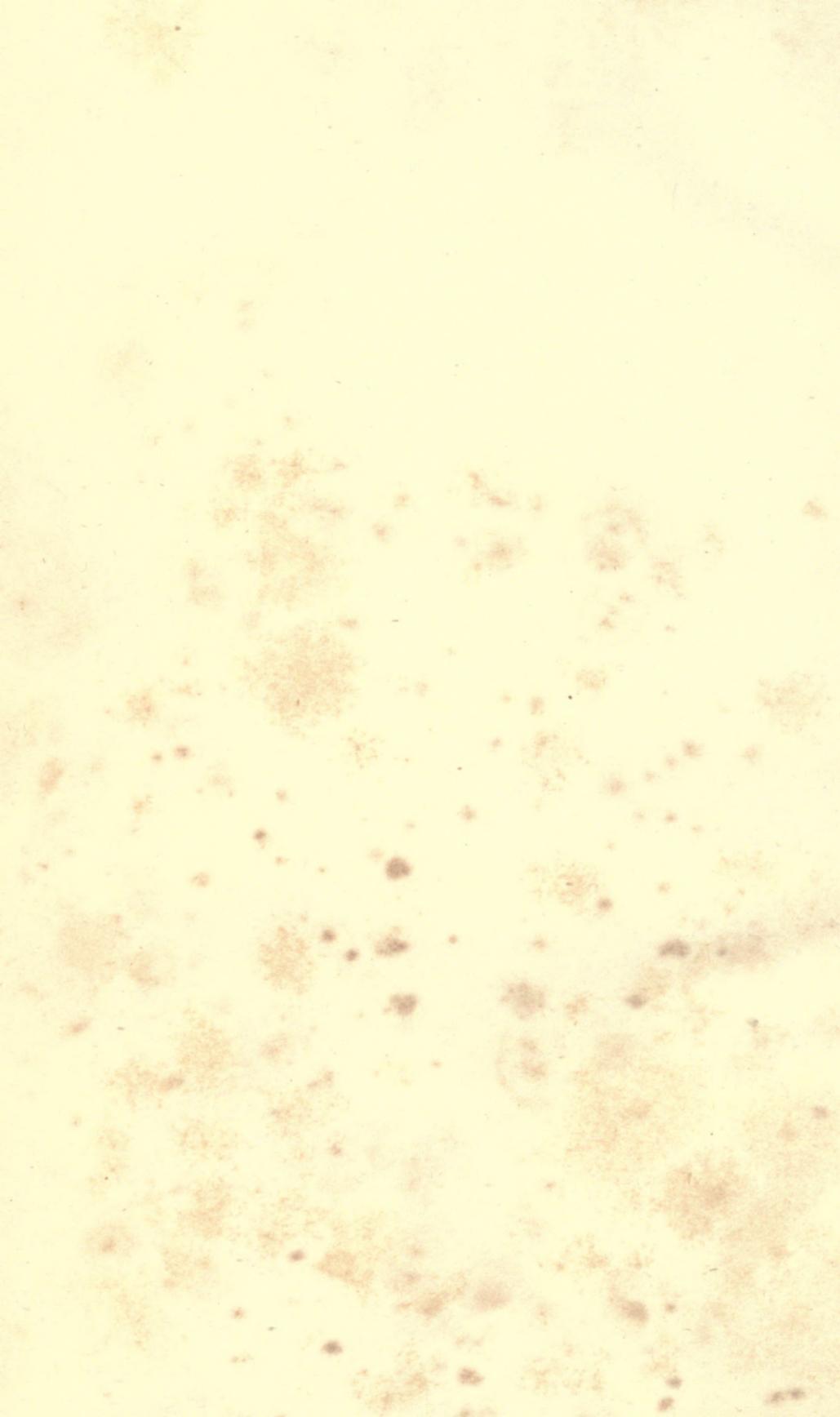


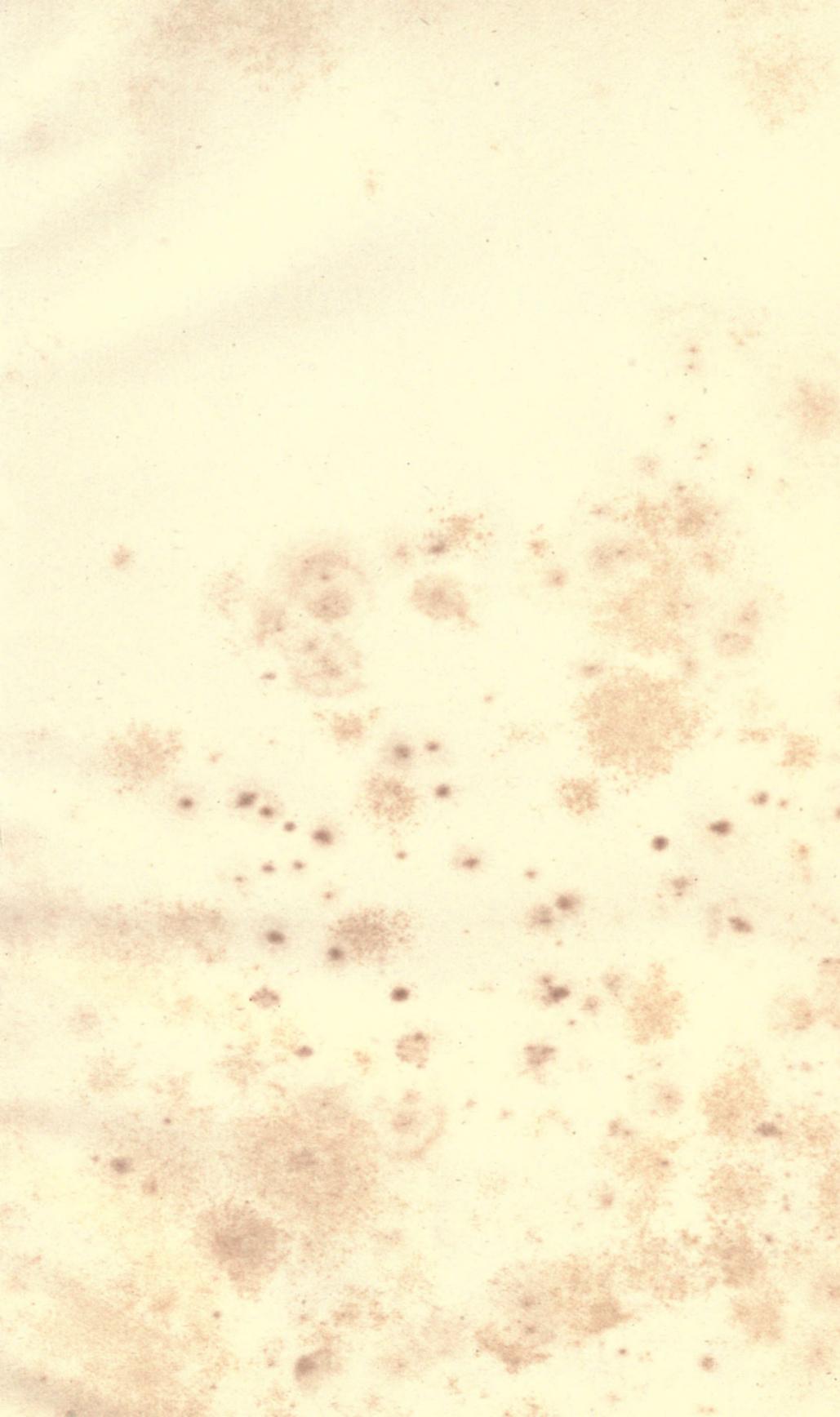
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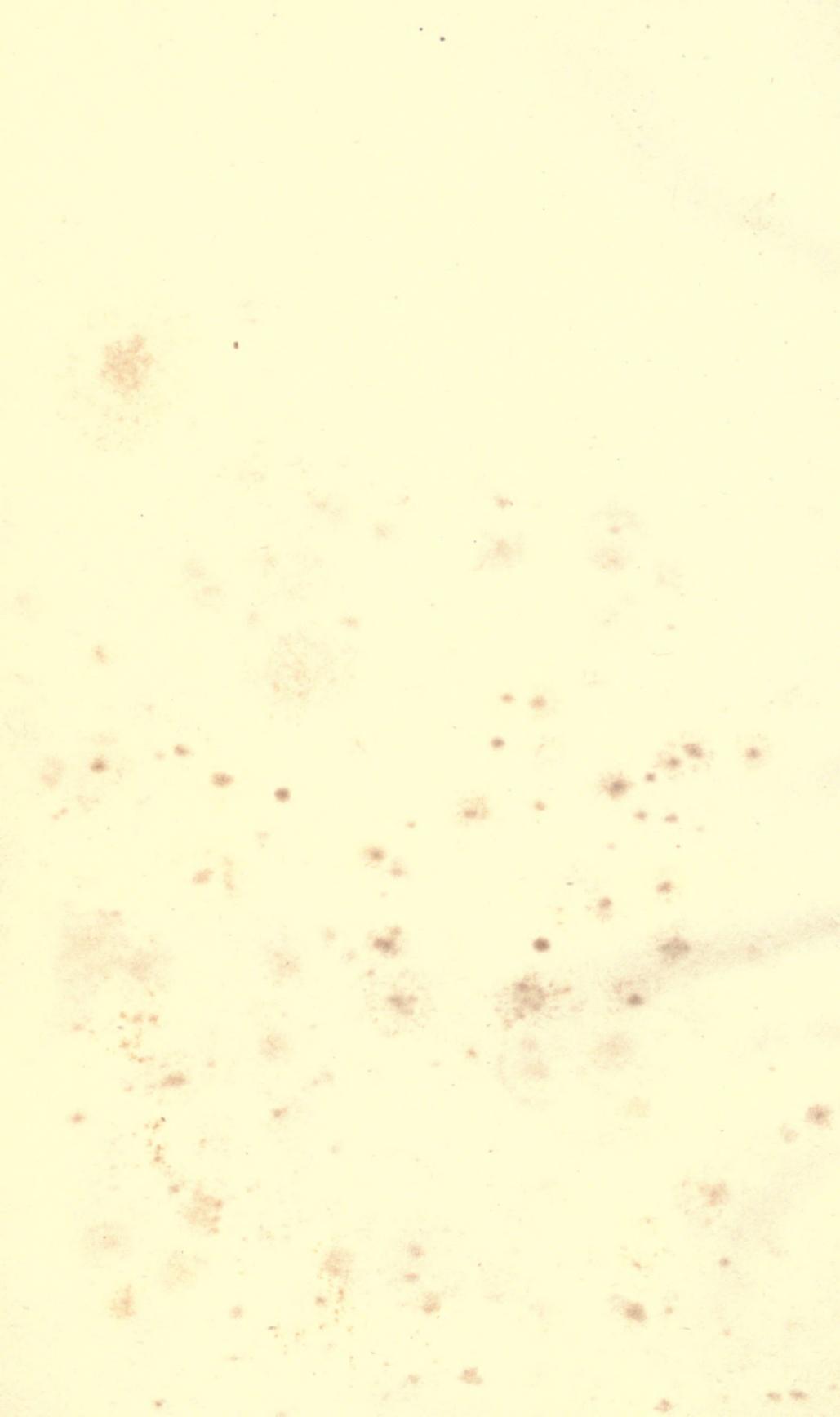


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DEER

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

THEIR HABITS AND MANAGEMENT.

BY

UNDERWOOD.

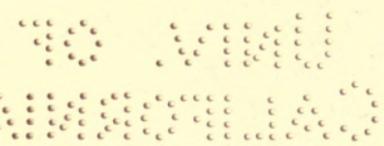
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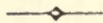
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DEER:

THEIR HABITS AND MANAGEMENT.



It has been suggested to the writer that some observations on the habits and management of deer would be acceptable to the general public, for although deer are kept by a comparatively few persons, a great many have the constant opportunity of seeing them in various parks, and feel interested in and admire them. I do not pretend to enter into the history of deer or deer parks, but would refer the reader to a work by Evelyn Shirley, M.A., recently published, wherein is a very full and interesting account of the different parks in the United Kingdom. I desire simply, as one who has passed his life in a deer park, to give the reader the result of much observation on the habits of deer, and some plain directions for their management. I speak more particularly of Fallow Deer, as they now exist in this country. They are found here in a semi-artificial state enclosed in parks ranging from 50 to 2,000 acres, and in most cases the herd of deer is maintained with success, though not without considerable care bestowed in supplying them with winter food, for after November the ordinary grass in a park is of small nutriment, and after Christmas almost worthless; moreover, in winter the grass itself is frequently covered with hoar frost or snow, and then the deer are entirely dependent on a supply of artificial food. In their natural state fallow deer are the tenants of woods, where they not only have the shelter so much needed in winter, but have also the browsings of various trees, most useful in the

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early spring of the year, when other food is scarce and of bad quality, for the bitter tonic contained in these shoots helps to sustain, especially the fawns that have lately lost their mother's milk. This has been noticed repeatedly by the writer, for in most parks the deer are carefully excluded from the plantations on account of the damage that a large number of deer in a limited space would do; but it now and then happens that a few deer will find their way into the coverts during the winter, and when that is the case they invariably preserve their condition better than those in the open park, and when they have consisted of does and fawns the latter have come out in the spring in better condition than those which have been fed artificially during the winter; of course the few deer get a large amount of browse, but deer in their natural state are spread over a large area and in smaller herds than in parks. In this country, in olden time, the forest laws respecting the preservation of vert were very strict. In a work entitled "Manwood's Treatise of the Forest Laws," published in 1717, but which had been previously published in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, it says: "'Tis the nature of the wild beasts to frequent the coverts and great woods where, in the winter, they are sheltered from the cold, and in the summer from the heat;" and again, "the coverts, woods, and trees in the forest, especially those that are accounted vert, bear several fruits which serve to feed the wild beasts in the winter when there is very little pasture for them elsewhere, for they then feed on acorns, haws, sloes, and the like, and when such wild fruits are not sufficient then those that have the charge of them cut down the branches of trees (which is called browse wood) to feed them; so that the vert is not only a shelter but the food of the deer." Vert in general is every tree, underwood, bush, and such like, growing in a forest and bearing green leaves, which may cover or feed the deer. In the New Forest there was a large quantity of holly bushes, which, until the deer were done away with, were topped in the

winter for browse, and though the leaves are so prickly the deer ate them readily, and were very fond of them. There was also a large quantity of furze, the shoots of which were kept closely cropped by the deer, affording them winter food, and at the same time keeping the bushes compact and impervious to wind and snow. I believe the quantity of hay given to the deer was comparatively small, the ivy, holly, and furze proving so valuable as food and covert.

Sir Victor Brooke, who has a deer park in Ireland with woods adjacent, allows the young deer to run in the woods, and he has remarked that a buck which had been allowed to remain till four years old has even at that age surpassed older deer in weight and fatness when killed. If the owners of large and unsheltered parks even had a good furze field conveniently situated, and allowed the rascal deer to have the benefit of it in the winter, I believe the advantage to the deer would fully compensate for the outlay of paring, burning, enclosing, and sowing a few acres, for in most parks the shelter afforded by the trees is very small, they being of mature growth. It is a matter of surprise to me that there has not been more care taken to have evergreen oaks and firs planted in clumps or belts for the shelter of the deer in the various parks. There is no doubt of the utility of it; even the coat of the fallow deer, though very close, does not appear to be capable of preserving much warmth in exposed situations; it is admirably adapted for covert, the contrast with the hill sheep's in that respect is striking. But we will proceed to speak of the deer in their several seasons, commencing with fawns; the time of their falling dates from June, but the great fall is from the 12th of June to the end of July. The period of gestation with the doe is eight months; generally there is sufficient fern; in some parks where there is a want of this it is supplied by nettles, to cover the fawns when they are dropped; it is, however, sometimes difficult for the doe to find a hiding place (this was the case in 1867, when

the late frosts cut off all the early fern shoots). When the fawn is dropped the doe, unless disturbed, carefully tends and suckles it, and after a few hours it is able to follow its mother for a little. She then retires to feed until it is time to go and suckle it again; and how wonderful is the instinct that enables her to go and find her own fawn in the midst of fern abounding with other than hers. For the first fortnight the fawns lay up a good deal in the middle of the day; in the morning and evening they may be seen sucking the does or frolicking about among themselves. After this time they are found more or less with the herd, and opportunity must be taken to kill off the fawns belonging to the oldest does. If this is neglected, in a hard winter the old does die and their fawns too; whereas, if the fawn is destroyed, the doe will most likely get fat, and be good venison in the ensuing season. All the fawns dropped after July should be killed, as those bred late seldom thrive; this is true, I believe, of almost all animals. I may mention here as a fact, that in a certain park, though the deer killed were generally fat, they were small, and the owner having, from the loss of his keeper, to get another, the incomer at once adopted the practice of carefully selecting early fawns to leave for stock, as well as taking care to leave any particularly fine buck for an extra season, and in six years the weight of the bucks increased from 90 lb. to 120 lb. There is an opinion that the late fawns are dropped by young does, and some persons have condemned the practice of killing them, but careful observation will show that the late fawns are as frequently dropped by old does, and in that case should certainly be killed. Where it is desired to kill many does the requisite number of fawns must be killed, always reserving a large proportion of the male fawns for stock, as the buck venison is the most valuable; of course sufficient female fawns must be left to retain the herd. In large parks the readiest way of killing them is from horseback with large shot. This requires a

steady horse. When it is wished to bring up a fawn by hand it is better to take it away from its mother as soon as possible after it has been dropped; it will soon take to the bottle with a quill through the cork, and a piece of wash leather over it for the fawn to suck at. The fawn should be fed at least five times a day, giving it a small quantity of new milk; care should be taken to feed early in the morning; it has been found a good plan to put a very small quantity of spirit in the milk occasionally if it does not thrive well. Some persons are able to bring them up without difficulty, the trouble being repaid by the pleasure which the grace and beauty of the little animal afford, especially where children are allowed to have a pretty pet to follow them in their rambles.

As the bucks are now coming into the natural season we will go on to speak of them for venison; they are now in fine condition, looking splendid, many of them with their full-grown horns completely covered with what is technically called "velvet," and is very like velvet in its appearance and touch; this soft covering completely envelops the horns till they are full-grown, and it appears to be a protection to the blood-vessels that rise from the head, expanding in a tree-like shape over the horns, supplying the material for their growth and formation; if a hard-shed horn is carefully examined the lines formed by the blood-vessels on its surface will be visible; at any rate, the velvet appears to be a temporary and all-wise arrangement for the development of the horn, for soon after the horn is complete it gradually hardens, and the velvet peels off—to speak more at length, the horns of the fallow buck vary considerably, being larger or smaller in different parks. The forest bucks (now nearly extinct) have a peculiar horn, the palm, unlike that of park deer, divides from the top, so making a large and broad branch and division in the palm; this distinction is known only to the few who have seen the heads of forest bucks; the horns are shed every year

in the spring. During the first year the fawn has no horns, but at the commencement of the second year the male puts up two small spikes, and he is called a pricket; these spike-like horns are shed in the following spring, and two longer ones appear with a branch immediately over the brow, which is termed the brow antler, and he generally has another small branch antler higher up on the horn which denotes him a "sorel." At the end of the third year the horns are again shed (in the technical phrase for this shedding of the horn, the deer is said to have mew'd) and a pair of larger horns very similar appear, the difference being a larger and heavier beam. The beam is the upright part of the horn from which the branches or antlers diverge, and in most cases at this age, the deer has another point or branch from the top of the horn. He is now a "sore." At the end of another year these four year old antlers are exchanged for a larger pair, which are dissimilar to those of previous years in that they now present a broad palm, that is the top part of the horn flattened out as it were, the front part being stronger than the back, and the latter generally broken into rude points called "spellers." The horns in this the fifth year may be said to be complete, for although in the two following years they are larger and heavier the general appearance of the horn is the same. It has been said that the age of the buck may be told by the number of points on the horns, but this is only true to a limited extent, as we have seen there is one spike in the second year, a horn with two points in the third year, and one with three in the fourth year. Even this is not to be relied upon, for frequently a buck in the fourth year shows more points with signs of palm, but as a rule the horns are not palmated till the fifth year; this will distinguish the buck from the sore or sorel. After the fifth year the number of points varies so much that they are not a perfect criterion of the age of a buck, but to a practised eye the size of the palm, the brow, and beam antler, with

the size of the deer himself, will reveal the age; breadth of forehead is an unmistakable sign of an old buck; breadth of palm has exceptions. Bucks occasionally being "stag-headed," and in the case of a very old deer there will often be found very inferior horns. This falling off generally takes place after the eighth year, at which age bucks are seldom kept in a park. Sir Victor Brooke has in his possession a pair of horns of this description, which belonged to an old buck that had been specially reserved for stock; at the base of the horn is what is termed the "burr," uniting it with the head.

The buck venison season commences on the 5th of July, though stall fed ones are killed as early as April or May; these have been put up as soon as convenient after the rutting season, when the old bucks are low in condition, and are easily taken with a good deerhound. I will speak more fully of this in another chapter. The bucks now fat in the park demand our attention; those showing six or seven years old are the fattest and best. As Mr. Shirley has told us on good authority, the sixth year is one in which the buck increases in weight in a much larger proportion than in previous years. At the commencement of the season the herd of deer may be easily approached with a rifle, a poly-groove with a round bullet being generally used, as it would be dangerous in most parks to use a conical ball. After a few bucks have been shot they will be very suspicious, and then in order to kill one quietly, great care must be taken. When more than one is to be killed it is a good way to shoot them from horseback, and if the horse is very quiet they may be shot through the head before they are heated. In many parks the bucks may be killed by shooting them from a tree, another person, who understands driving deer, moving the herd quietly towards him. When one only is wanted the keeper, either by riding quietly round the herd will shoot one from his horse, or he will stalk one, taking care not to let the deer get the wind of him;

the sensitiveness of deer in this respect is very astonishing. I have seen them in Scotland when crossing a hill that myself and a companion had passed over nearly half-an-hour previously, suddenly come to a halt, and then the leading hind with head erect and every sense alive to danger, gradually led the herd by a circuitous path, avoiding as much as possible the tainted track; and though in parks it is deer stalking on a small scale, yet here the herd seem to object even less to the sight of a stranger than to the smell of one. As the bucks are always shot in the head, presenting but a small mark to the rifle, it requires much practice and skill to be successful, and those who are unacquainted with the subject, would be astonished to see a buck go away after having had a couple of bullets through his head just missing fatal parts. But we will suppose a fine seven-year-old buck to have fallen to the crack of the rifle, and lying dead at our feet, a noble creature, and as we say sometimes, it seems a pity to kill him; however, it is taken off in the cart or across the horse to the venison house, after having been properly blooded, when he is skinned, and this is an operation that requires much care, as the venison fat, or bark, abounds on the outside of the meat and is very tender, so that the appearance of the venison is spoilt if the skin is not carefully removed. Great attention should be paid to the dressing, or "breaking up" as is the keeper's phrase, in order to secure the keeping of the meat. The weight of the deer varies much according to the quality of the land of which the park is composed; but fourteen or fifteen stones is a good average weight for a grass buck, reckoning 8lb. to the stone. Buck venison is never better than at the end of July or beginning of August; about the 16th of August the velvet begins to peel off; this is termed burnishing, and about a month from this time the bucks gradually show symptoms of the approach of the rutting season, the first symptom being a drowsiness which is often noticed at the end of August or

the beginning of September. I remember on one occasion a buck being so fast asleep that I drove close to him in a cart, the man driving, exclaiming, "There is one buck dead!" but as I was in quest of a fat buck I immediately alighted and shot him as he laid asleep, and a fine fat buck he was. The buck venison is not out of season till the 26th of September, at which time their necks will be much enlarged, and they will rapidly lose their fat. The rutting season may be said to commence from the 10th of October, and lasts about a month. In 1868 the deer were in full rut on the 4th of October; this may be accounted for by the peculiar dry season as well as by the early fall of acorns. During the rutting season, the bucks make a remarkable noise, called "treating," or "groaning," in the early morning and evening there will be a regular chorus among the herd while numerous fights are going on in the rutting ground, a portion of the park that is set apart by the deer themselves, and annually resorted to; there will be observed here a great number of shallow pools, which the bucks make with their feet, and when they are tired they will lie down in these shallow pools; probably the cool, wet earth is grateful to their heated bodies, and these holes too, retain water for a short time, so that they frequently answer the purpose of a drinking trough; the fact of the deer regularly making one portion of the park their rendezvous during this season is very remarkable, as also the wonderful order of nature exhibited in the habits of the deer at this season. Until now the buck's manner and behaviour towards the does has been marked by coldness and severity, while at this time their gallantry is most observable, and the oldest and strongest headed bucks collect each a small herd of does which they attend to day and night, themselves groaning continuously and chasing with great earnestness any doe that attempts to desert them, such desertion however is easily effected when the separate herds are near each other, the buck who

loses a doe does not chase her after she has gained the harem of his neighbour, as a battle would be the consequence, during which each would lose a large portion of the females; as the oldest bucks become exhausted (which they soon do from the fact of their scarcely taking any food at this time), the next in age present themselves, and sometimes with scarcely any opposition but frequently with a furious fight they obtain the much coveted position and the elder is driven off. In some instances a buck will become very much enraged at the desertion of a doe, and has been known to stab her badly. Sir Joseph Banks has left on record a peculiar case, which he thus describes:—"In the beginning of the rutting season I observed from the window of a house a doe apparently much exhausted pursued by a buck, who, as often as he overtook her, stabbed her with his horns. The park-keeper was sent for, who said that he had observed the circumstance of the buck having pursued the doe three times round the park, and that part of her entrails were hanging out of her body. Orders were immediately given that the buck should be driven off, and the miserable wounded animal released from its pain. Three or four servants set out to execute this order, but as soon as they came close up and attempted to drive away the buck he attacked one of them, who saved himself from the stroke of his horns by climbing up a thorn tree which was near him. The other persons who were near and behind the buck struck him on the haunches, and he soon fled. The doe was immediately killed, and she was pierced by hundreds of thrusts from the antlers of the buck." He adds, "This is the only instance I ever met with of an untamed fallow buck attacking a man." By the 10th of November all the old bucks will have become very much reduced in condition, and then is the best time for taking up all those intended for stall-feeding. As I have before remarked, a good deerhound or buck dog is required for this, and, in order to accomplish it well, there should be at least

two persons on horseback, one to ride out the buck from the herd, and the other to slip the dog, and when the buck is caught they can strap his legs properly. All dogs that are perfect at their work will let go their hold as soon as the buck is secured by the keeper, although a keeper well understanding his business, with a good buck dog, can accomplish all this single-handed; still it is always better to have help to prevent the dog seizing the deer when he is cast on the ground for strapping. A well-trained dog will not run after a buck till he is told, but will run by the side of his master's horse, and when the buck is pointed out to him he follows the buck hard at the rear, who, finding the dog close up to him, quickly turns round and, if possible, receives the dog on the points of his horns. A good dog will go straight at the buck's ear the moment he turns, and will not let go his hold till his master has safe hold of the deer. If the dog hesitates, as sometimes young dogs do, he is likely to get stabbed, for it gives the buck time to watch and parry his attack; it is always, however, wise to run a young dog with an old one until he gets confident. The buck is easily thrown by one person by his taking hold of one hind leg with his right hand and with his left lifting the flank till his hind legs are off the ground; then, by a sharp downward pressure the buck is floored, his hind legs strapped, and he is taken off in a cart to a shed or paddock. As many as eight bucks have been taken in one day in this way with a good single dog—"a great feat." If the bucks are not caught till after Christmas, which sometimes happens, they will be very probably harder to catch, for many of them are recovering their condition, and then they will not turn and bay a dog until quite blown, and the dog must be very fleet and strong to run up by the side of the buck and get hold of the ear, though this is frequently done; but a dog will not take more than two or three in a day in this way; possibly one of my readers may have been present at buck-taking in one of the parks; and can

bear witness to the good sport it affords ; though the chase is short it is exciting and very amusing to see the gallant buck try and defend himself ; to those witnessing it, it is a desperate time for the dog, for after he has seized the ear the buck will give a tremendous thrust, and try and throw the dog on the earth ; even then if the dog is a good one he will not leave go, unless, as is sometimes the case, a portion of the ear is torn off in the struggle ; there is little fear of the keeper being hurt unless the dog leaves go ; this occurs sometimes, when he must be ready to seize the horns as the buck comes at him, or he may get the antlers into him : a wound caused by a stab is a very difficult one to heal. I have several times seen the buck charge the keeper's horse when he was encouraging a young dog ; upon one occasion the buck's horns just hit the stirrup iron as the keeper wheeled his horse round to escape the thrust. If a buck is hard pressed by a dog, and near to water he will take to it, and will not easily quit it. At Blenheim Park formerly they often caught their bucks by running them into the water, and then securing them with a boat, but it requires a very good boatman to do this. Red deer will often take to the water when pressed, and an old stag will lower his head as much as possible, only just leaving his nose above water in order to elude his pursuers. A remarkable fact can be vouched for by the writer of an old stag having accidentally caused his own death in this way. The stag had been chased for some time, and a good deal blown when he went into the water ; a horseman being near, he immediately lowered himself, but was not careful enough to keep his nose above water, and in an instant he was choked, the water going in upon his laboured respiration, and the horseman, riding into the water, dragged the deer into the shallow with one of his bridle reins. Where there is much water it is most desirable to have a dog under good command, otherwise, he may drown the buck if he follows him into the water. When sufficient bucks have been taken

to fill the fattening pens, some more may be taken for the paddock, where they can be taken special care of during the winter, and have the advantage of the better pasturage the paddock may afford in the spring, most parks having more or less bad land in them. In cold poor land parks there will be little grass before June, unless artificial means are resorted to, and the bucks won't be fit before August, whereas the paddock deer will be ready at the commencement of the season. In stall-feeding there are many plans, and the bucks generally feed remarkably well; the writer has found from experience that a brace of bucks in a small convenient shed to do as well or better than in any other way, and probably the most convenient sheds are under a span roof with a passage through the centre of the building, the doors opening into the passage on either side. This is convenient when it is wished to move a buck from one shed to another without handling him; the feeding troughs also pull out into the passage, which has a door at each end under lock and key; sufficient light is admitted by glass tiles in the roof, so that the bucks cannot be seen or their food trifled with by any one who has no authority to do so. There is a close iron window on the outside secured by a padlock to admit of the shed being cleaned out, and through which the buck may be shot. When deer are put into sheds the horns should always be sawn off close to the "burr." Swede turnips with hay is the best food to begin with, unless the bucks are very poor, and it may then be advisable to give them some beans, maize, or oats, but I have found them generally thrive well on turnips and hay. After January you can begin to force them with corn; nothing fattens faster than beans and peas, but I am inclined to think that beans harden the meat; it certainly does if sheep are fed much on them. The locust bean with maize and oats is indeed excellent feeding, and as cheap as anything I have found. Oil-cake is used by some people with success, others recommend Thorley's food; but the truth is, if the animal

feeds well and lies quiet the weight which goes in at his mouth will soon show on his back. A good stall-fed buck will weigh sixteen or eighteen stones; the oldest deer generally fatten the fastest; they need only to be fed once a day, and that in the morning, and the quieter they are kept the better, letting them have plenty of clean litter. Stall-feeding deer will be much helped by giving them green meat with their corn as soon as it is to be had, such as rye or tares, before the grass is sufficiently grown to cut for them.

The season for doe venison begins on the 13th of November, and this is a part of the economy of a deer park that requires skill and experience. The does fit for venison are those that have had their fawns killed in the summer and are dry; but to an inexperienced person the does look all alike, and if anything, the wet ones, those which give milk, look the best. A good doe should look as nearly as possible like a pricket; that is, the male of a second year, the back and belly being straight, the neck comparatively short, and head also. The wet does are always more or less ewe-necked; the neck sinking into a deep bend before reaching the shoulders, and there is this peculiarity noticeable in the dry or barren doe, that the head looks round and full. These are all fine points; and it is necessary that a man should be brought up to it from his boyhood to be able to discriminate. When the deer are in herd and disturbed, the does and fawns get so mixed that there is no link to guide the keeper as to a dry fat doe, and his eye must be well practised or he will make mistakes. In large parks it is difficult to get at the does without a horse. If many are required in one day, as is frequently the case, the keeper will be obliged to shoot them from his horse as they run by him through the head or neck, and if his horse is well trained to the gun, it is a pretty sight to a looker-on from a distance. If the doe is shot behind the shoulders at the third rib, the venison will not be injured at all, and in bad weather that will be the

point aimed at, for if in shooting at the head the keeper should happen to break the jaws of a doe, she will probably give him a great deal of trouble, with a chance of losing her. A small bore rifle is the best for shooting does, as the ball does not tear the flesh so much, if shot behind the shoulder, as a large bullet might do. It is very good sport in hard, frosty weather, when the ground is dangerous for riding, to walk after the herd and shoot the does through the head or neck. This is often practicable at such season, as the does dislike running on the hard, uneven ground, and so may be more easily approached than in mild showery weather, when it would be difficult in a large park to get at more than one or two. Although good sport, it is hard work, but it is repaid by the very pretty shots that are often to be had in this way. Sometimes a brace may be killed by enticing the herd with cut turnips or acorns, but after a shot or two the does are wide awake, and it requires an experienced person to kill does in this way, for passing in quick succession there will be very little time to look at them; a good doe will weigh from eight to ten stones. Doe venison is held in high estimation by some; it is never so fat as the buck, but at this season of the year it can be kept, and the fine flavour makes it exceedingly good. The oldest does are the best at the beginning of the season, those not so old preserve their condition better in bad weather. During the doe season, and for three months after the 17th of January, which closes it, the herd must be carefully looked after; if severe frost or bad weather prevails, they should be well fed and sheltered. In many large parks there are pens enclosed by posts and rails to keep off any cattle that may be running in the park. In these pens are sheds for shelter and racks for hay; of course it will depend much upon the situation and extent of the park as to how many are required so that all the herd may come in for a share. In all my experience I have never found anything equal to acorns as food for deer in the

open park; they will fatten the bucks in the stall, but if used in any quantity they will make the venison hard. In feeding with hay, it is a good plan to spread some on the ground in little locks, so that all may get some, otherwise the old bucks will keep off the rascal deer from the racks. In large cold parks, it is a good plan to have an inner pen with roller bars like those used for lambs, so that the fawns may go in and feed separately; these fawn gates will stop the male deer from going in. This practice is much required on cold poor land: in parks where few deer are kept, and the land is good, they do not require so much care. It is the same with deer as with sheep in some seasons, early spring grass with white frost takes them off very quickly. The best thing to prevent this is giving the fawns, particularly, beans or maize early in the morning, as soon as it is light; this will prepare for foraging about in the afterpart of the day, when what they pick up does them good upon the dry food given in the morning. Swede turnips are probably the best roots to be given to deer, if cut in the same way as for sheep with Ransome's cutter, and thrown out of a cart with a shovel, spreading them over a large area that all the deer may get some. A ton of swedes cut up in this way, and given to a herd of 500 deer, will help them very much in dry frosty weather when there is nothing for them to get but hay; the water must also be looked to, and the ice broken night and morning; animals require much water in dry frosty weather. It is bad economy to starve deer in winter, and all owners of stock have found that if animals are worth keeping at all they are worth keeping well. Under good management a small herd of deer will not cost much to keep up, and noblemen having deer parks do not look to it as a source of profit, but rather as characteristics of dignity, and formerly no nobleman was without one, and many a small grievance on the part of a neighbour or tenant has been drowned in the gravy of a haunch of venison. Moreover, in the "good old times" it was a graceful

way for the landowner to show his appreciation of any little act of kindness or service which had been rendered him by the farmers around to give them a "venison feast." This is still kept up in some places, and surely it is one of the links that help to bind men of different stations in a loving brotherhood.

The habits of deer are more to be observed in large parks, I think, than in small ones, for certainly the less they are confined the more natural will be their habits; this is particularly observed by their lair varying according to the different quarters from which the wind blows, also the different divisions of the herd at the various seasons of the year. It is worthy of notice that the bucks and does, rather the antler and rascal deer, herd separately in the buck venison season, and the warmer the weather the closer the bucks herd together, when their horns are in velvet, and they are so sensitive at that period that they fight with their fore feet by standing on their hind legs. As soon as they begin to burnish or shed the velvet, which generally commences about the 14th of August, they make use of their horns, and about a week after that time, if you are in their vicinity at night, you will hear them sharpening their antlers against some post or fence; this they take much delight in. There seems to be no rule for the colour of the fallow deer, for in parks where the prevailing colour has been black for many years there will be an occasional white one or two crop up, as there will be what are called "bald-faced deer," the bodies a very dark grey or black and the face of the animal white. There is an impression that the black deer are the hardiest, and acquire fat more quickly than others; but I do not think much importance is to be attached to that. The heaviest park buck I ever killed was a "menill" one; I killed him early in September, and he weighed over 17 stones. It has been noticed that a buck which has died particularly fat and good has been observed to be quiet in his habits, and this leads me to the question which has often been discussed as

to whether fat can be produced on the outside of the meat without a corresponding increase of lean; this I know, that very old bucks, especially forest bucks, are often very fat without appearing to be full of flesh, and yet this has been asserted to be at variance with science. The opinion of Mr. Grove, who has had great experience in venison, is that the fat is not always in due proportion with the lean, the former being frequently superabundant; of this I am quite certain, that deer, like other animals, put on fat in various ways—I mean that they are fatter in some parts than other deer, which in the aggregate are equally fat and heavy. I may mention here, too, the fact which perhaps is not generally known, that deer have no gall bladder on the liver which sheep and other animals have. The opinion of a renowned professor was asked upon this point, but he confessed himself unable to throw any light upon the subject. It is certainly an interesting thing to notice in connection with deer. The humble reasoning of the writer previous to his asking the question was—that deer living naturally a good deal upon browse, and travelling a distance for their food, or rather getting it in small quantities, did not require the extraordinary provision of a gall bladder. Venison may now be had at all seasons of the year, it having become a general practice to make what are termed “haviars,” that is, castrated deer. Mr. Shirley tells us something about a drunken keeper having in one of his fits made an operation, which, having proved successful, has been handed down to us by sheer accident. The writer believes this is a mistake, as his grandfather, who was at Petworth about the year 1780, when the celebrated John Hunter was a constant visitor to the house of the Earl of Egremont, where many experiments were made, and by whom has been handed down to him the best method of making “full heads” or “haviars,” more particularly in parks having paddocks for this description of venison. Where there are no paddocks, the old plan of castrating the fawns is the best, as the bucks

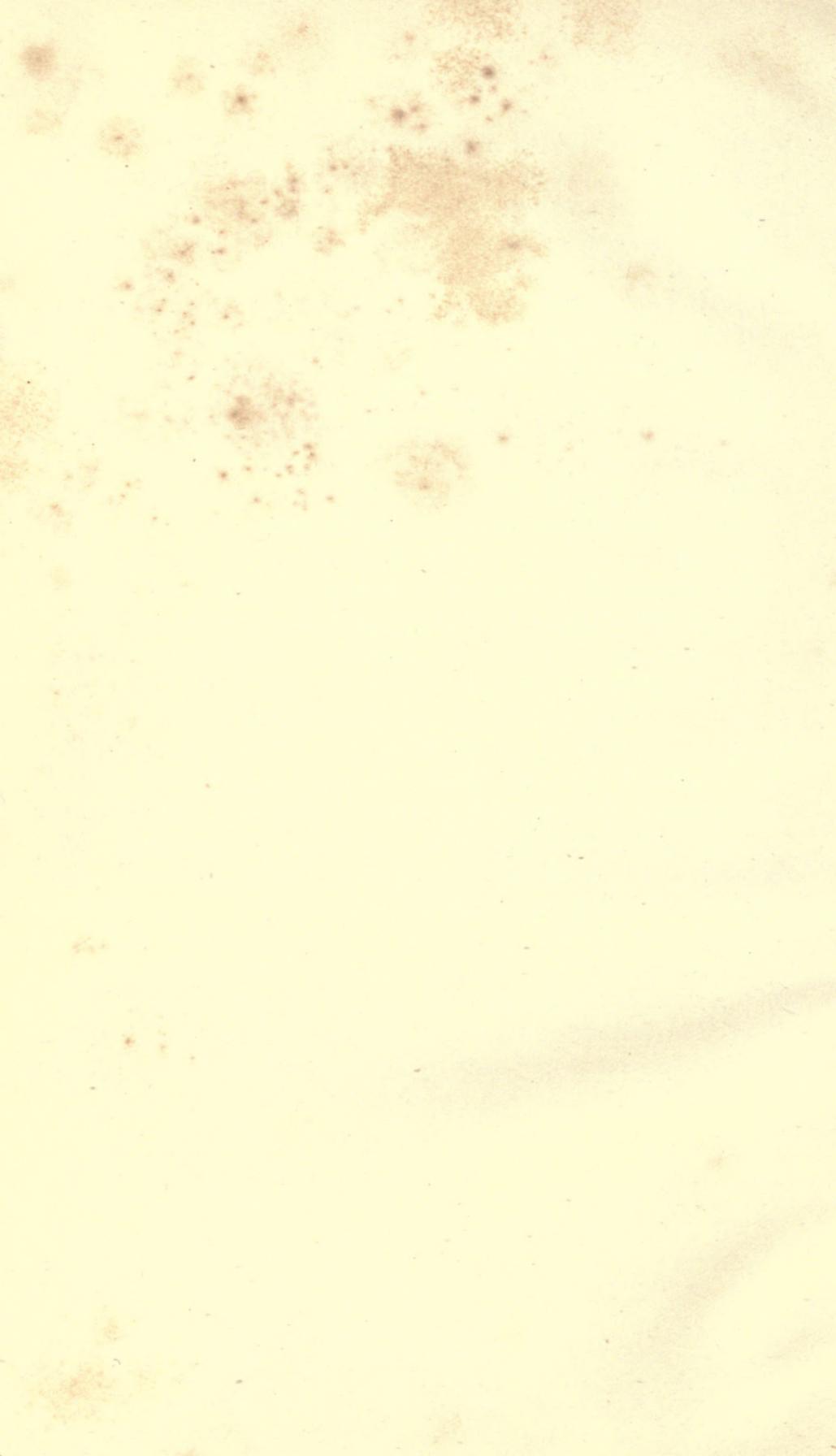
do not drive the polled haviars, so they keep up their fat, particularly in a good acorn year, while the full heads are driven about very much by the bucks, and they lose fat very fast in consequence; the polled ones are longer in coming to venison, and are not usually so large as the others. This is a very interesting subject, for it displays such a mysterious sympathy between the different members of one organism; for instance, an injury to the testicle from any cause will generally manifest itself in the malformation of the horn, and even a broken or injured leg will almost always give rise to a small and deformed horn on the head of a buck. Sir Everard Home, who was serjeant-surgeon to George IV., experimented upon a full-head by boring a hole into each of his horns, and inserting a tube thermometer, the heat was found to be 84 deg.; he then divided the nerve between the eye and the horn, one side of the head only, and in less than a quarter of an hour the temperature of the horn was reduced 10 deg., and some time after, when the deer was killed, in 1825, Sir E. Home appended the following lines to the preserved head:—

A votive offering here these horns I've placed,
 Since 'twas in them the source of heat I traced.
 From ganglionic nerves that it's derived,
 I proved upon this head while yet it lived;
 Both horns exactly stood at eighty-four,
 One, when 'twas nerved, lost ten degrees or more.

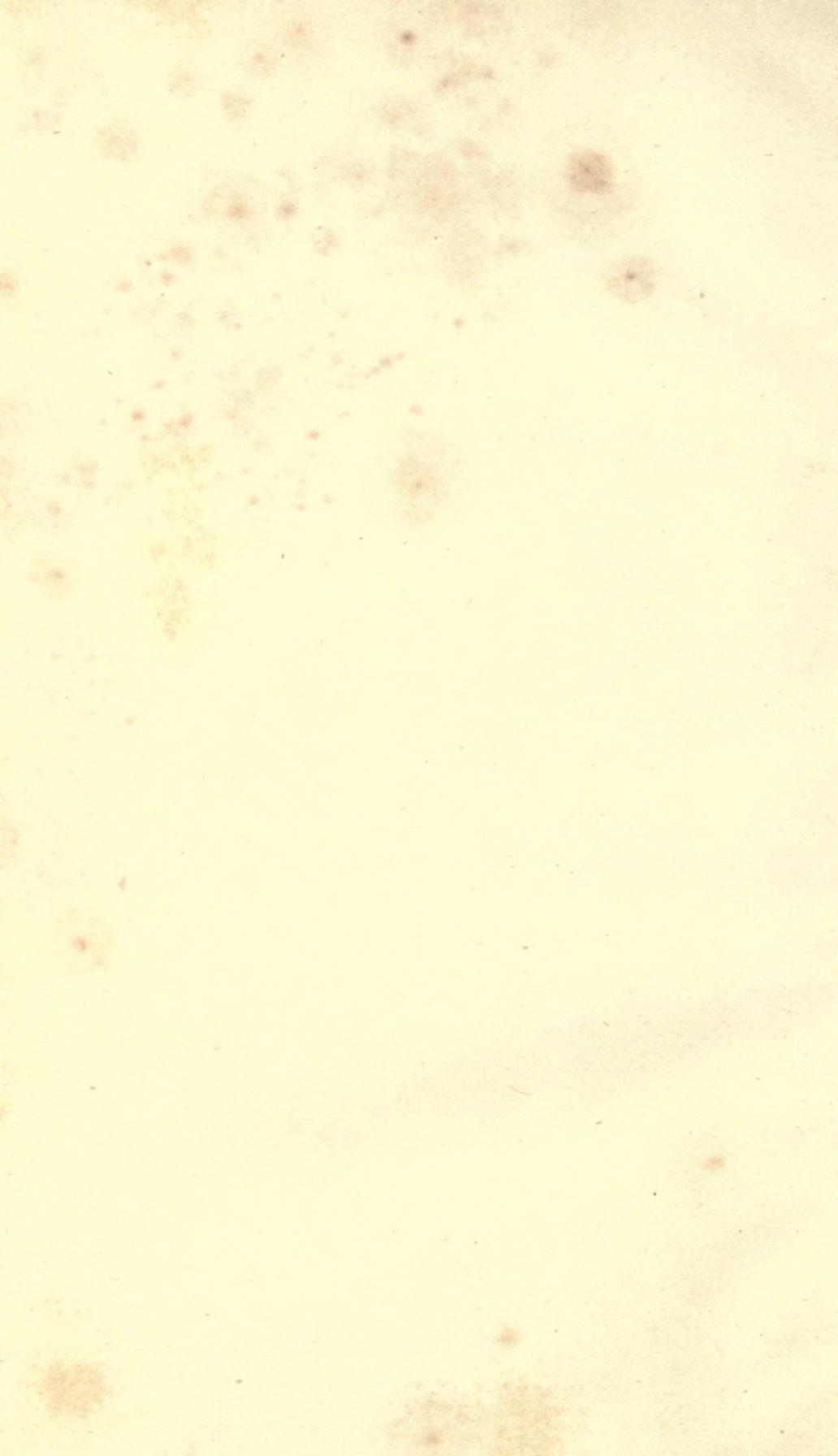
I have a horn before me which was shed on the 17th of April from a five-year-old deer that I castrated at four years old. The end of March in the previous year he was caught and operated upon as he showed strong symptoms of going rotten; in fact, he was what we technically term "green single," and fit only for the purpose of experiment at that time. After being operated upon he was put into a shed and fed upon dry food for a few weeks. He was then let into the park, when he put up a pair of well formed horns, which,

curious to relate, retained their velvet till the end of November, when it peeled off, and the horns are as near as can be like a buck, only there is no burr to the horn, and the base of it presents the same appearance as if it had been violently snapped in two. This deer was castrated with the view of making him a hard-headed full-head, and consequently it has been a most successful experiment. It has been noticed that hard-headed full-heads are finer in their coats, fatter in the fore-quarter and altogether more like a buck in the carcass. It is the belief of the writer that this mode of castrating bucks is peculiar to his family, and it originated in the idea that the nearer these artificial practices could be brought to the nature of the animal, sufficiently to retain the venison without venery, the better. The undermentioned fact has been furnished by Mr. Sawyer at Dalkeith Park. An old buck caught in winter and castrated for a full-head was put into a pen, as is usual after the operation, and he shed his horns in about fourteen days from that time, when he put up a pair of horns of average growth; these he shed in April and put up another pair, making three pairs of antlers in two seasons. This is the only instance I have heard of. This full-head was killed a fat deer in the following autumn. The object of making haviars is to have venison at all seasons of the year. They are remarkably sensitive, and lose the natural courage of the buck. When hard run by a dog they seldom bay but spend their last breath in endeavouring to escape, and have been found to give a pack of harriers a famous run.











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