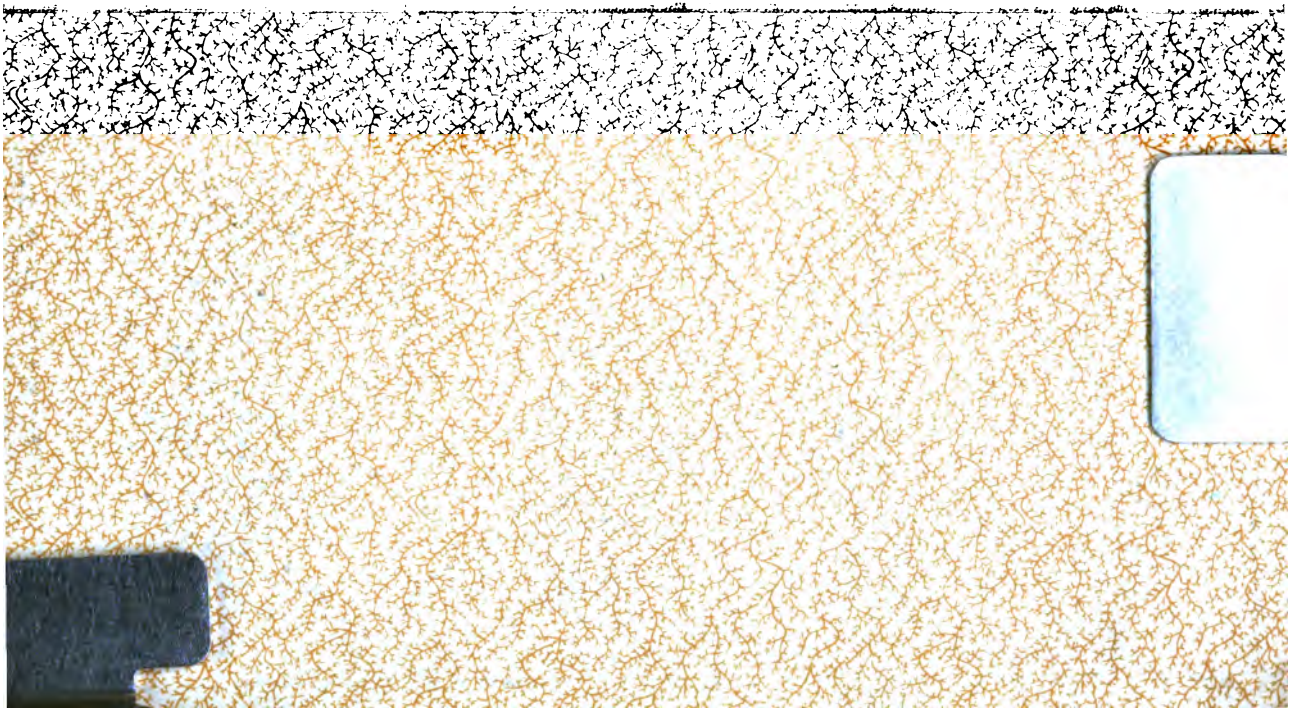


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THE GAMEKEEPER'S

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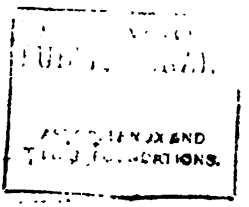
AND

Wild Fowl Shooting.

A. Kirkwood

THE

GAMEKEEPER'S DIRECTORY:

CONTAINING INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE

PRESERVATION OF GAME,

Destruction of Vermin,

AND THE

PREVENTION OF POACHING,

ETC., ETC.

SECOND EDITION.

BY T. (Thomas) B. JOHNSON,

AUTHOR OF THE SPORTSMAN'S CYCLOPÆDIA, SHOOTER'S COMPANION, ETC.

LONDON:

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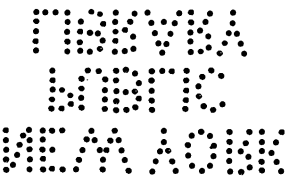
PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE GAMEKEEPER'S DIRECTORY was written by my late father, whose name is not unfamiliar to the Sporting World. The First Edition sold rapidly. My father's death, and other circumstances, prevented a Second Edition being published some years ago. It is now, after having undergone a careful revision by myself, respectfully offered to the Public as a practical book of instruction for the class to which it is particularly addressed, as well as to Sportsmen in general.

JOHN B. JOHNSON.

August, 1851.



CONTENTS.

THE GAMEKEEPER'S DIRECTORY.

GENERALLY speaking, the duty of a gamekeeper is to preserve, rather than to shoot, those animals which come under the description of Game; but shooting is the main object of his ambition; and a gamekeeper may be justly regarded as one of the happiest of mortals, since his employment affords him the greatest possible gratification. It is a business which he follows, not merely from choice—he is prompted to solicit the office from the most anxious feeling, the most eager desire to fill it.

It should be impressed on the mind of keepers, however, that their first duty is to *preserve* the game (and to kill it only when they receive orders); and it is the purpose of the present publication to point out and describe the best and the most eligible modes of accomplishing that object. With this view the breeding season very naturally first

presents itself; I shall, therefore, commence with a few distinct observations on it.

GROUSE.

THERE are three varieties of this bird found in Great Britain: the most noble and the largest of the grouse tribe, distinguished by the name of the cock of the wood, or capercali, is found in Sweden, Denmark, and the northern parts of Europe; and has lately been introduced into Scotland by the Lord Breadalbane, with every prospect of success: in size it approaches the turkey. That beautiful bird, the black cock, with the female, called the grey hen, and both coming under the general description of black game, are found in some parts of England; as, for instance, in Devonshire and some parts of the west; in the New Forest (if not become extinct) Hampshire, in Staffordshire, and Derbyshire; and in some of the northern parts, particularly Cumberland. In Scotland they are much more numerous; they are found plentiful in many parts of the Lowlands, as on the moors belonging to the Duke of Buccleugh, in the neighbourhood of Nithsdale; while in many parts of the Highlands they may be said to abound. Generally speaking, their young will be on the wing about the latter end of May.

The red grouse, or moor game, are found in the parts we have mentioned in the preceding paragraph; they are numerous on the hills of Yorkshire and the north of England, while in many parts of Scotland, and particularly in the Highlands, they are far more numerous. Red grouse are to be found in some parts of Ireland, as well as on the mountains of Wales. The breeding season of the red grouse takes place about the same period as that of the black game. There is this difference, however, that while the black cock is promiscuous in his intercourse (like the pheasant), the red grouse pair like the partridge.

White grouse or ptarmigan are found in all the colder regions of the north of Europe and America; but, I believe, are nowhere to be met with in the United Kingdom, except in some of the loftiest regions in the Highlands of Scotland. They are rather less than the red grouse, and not much sought after, since it is a most laborious and wearisome task to ascend those rugged heights, where alone these birds are to be met with. There are other varieties of the grouse, which, however, need no further notice in this place.

In regard to the preservation of grouse during the period of producing and rearing their young, the keepers should, in the first place, allow no dogs to be trained or broke till the young brood is strong on the wing, since such a practice can-

not fail to be injurious to pairing, nestling, incubation, &c. There are few dogs (young ones in particular) which, on finding the eggs of grouse, will not eat them; while many of the young birds would not fail to be chopped, if dogs were suffered to range the moors before they were well on the wing.

On moors where sheep are pastured numbers of eggs are destroyed by shepherds' dogs. Nor is there much help for this; a gamekeeper in such a locality will do well to keep on the best possible terms with the shepherds, and will find his interest in so doing in an increased stock of game. From being constantly on the look out after their sheep, they cannot fail frequently to meet with nests, the situation of which being known will enable the keeper to protect them.

Hawks, of which various kinds are uniformly seen on the moors, are destructive to young grouse, and to the old birds also, when they are able to catch them. The large hawk, or moor buzzard, breeds in the immediate neighbourhood of its depredations; and its nest, therefore, should be diligently sought and destroyed; the old birds caught also by means of the trap, or killed with the fowling-piece; the former being the preferable method. The merlin also breeds on the moors, forming its nest on the ground in a bunch of ling. I have frequently observed a smaller

brown hawk on the moors, and have many times observed it kill small birds; I never saw it strike a grouse, though I have witnessed its exertions for that purpose. Once in particular, in the year 1821, August 14, as I had in the morning reached the top of a very steep hill, called Constitution (on my way to Bollyhope Fells, Weardale, Durham), and was descending the other side, my attention was arrested by a large old (a cock, most likely) grouse, which passed before me, pursued by the smaller brown hawk just mentioned; the birds were flying down the wind, the distance, every instant, perceptibly increasing between them, till the hawk completely abandoned the chase, and the grouse flew completely out of my sight. Yet little doubt can be entertained that this same brown hawk occasionally succeeds in his purpose with the old birds, and is very capable of making havock among the young broods.

I have noticed the hobby, too, upon many of the mountains in England; in the rocky parts of which it produces its young. The hobby, though not very large, is nevertheless strong, fierce, and swift on the wing—of course destructive to grouse. In fact, the hawk tribe, generally speaking, as they are destructive to game, should be assiduously destroyed. Various kinds of hawks appear on both the Highland and Lowland moors, and

also the raven, the carrion crow, &c.: for the most eligible modes of destroying which the reader is referred to the articles, HAWKS, RAVEN, CROW, &c.

Animals of the weasel tribe are met with on some of the grouse mountains; for the destruction of which we refer to the articles, POLECAT, WEASEL, &c.

THE PHEASANT.

THE order of succession brings me to the pheasant.

At the pairing season the younger part of these birds are apt to stray from the place where they were bred, and indeed from those parts which they have constantly haunted, and where they have been regularly seen. The reason is the following:—On the approach of the breeding season the old hen-pheasant drives away the young birds, which she has hitherto attended with so much care; battles ensue, and the birds become scattered. At this period the gamekeeper should frequently go round the very limits of his preserves, for the purpose of driving in these unsettled birds, or he will be in danger of losing them altogether. The cock pheasant is no doubt promiscuous in his intercourse with the females; but

there are instances where these birds seem to pair. I have repeatedly observed a cock and hen pheasant (birds bred the preceding season, no doubt) stray to a considerable distance from the preserve, form a nest, and breed. I have further observed that the cock, during the period of incubation, continued in the immediate vicinity of the nest; and even when the young were hatched and followed the hen, he very often appeared in their company.

Pheasants seek strong covers for nestling; they not unfrequently select clover fields for the purpose, particularly where they are situated close to a wood. They should be constantly disturbed from such situations, or the nest will most likely be mown over before the young emerge from the shell, and perhaps the old bird destroyed also by the stroke of the scythe. They are also apt to form their nests at the bottoms of dry ditches—very dangerous places in case of sudden rain, which, by filling the bottoms for only an hour or two, will effectually destroy the eggs. The pheasant generally hatches about the middle of June, varying a week or two, according to the mildness, or otherwise, of the season.

As the pheasant generally chooses a stronger cover than the partridge for depositing her eggs, and frequently forms her nest in woods and

plantations, she becomes, on this account, exposed to the depredations of the wild cat, the martern, and the smaller vermin, which seek the shelter of such places; but is perhaps better protected from what may be called *feathered vermin*, as, for instance, the raven, the crow, the magpie, and the jay; any of which will greedily devour the eggs, though they might not attack the parent bird.

The pheasant, when absent from her nest, does not, like the partridge, cover or hide the eggs; and, in consequence, when they happen to be deposited in a more exposed situation, are often discovered by the mischievous birds just mentioned.

In pheasant shooting the hen is generally spared, and it frequently happens that an insufficient number of cocks are left; the consequence is, a number of addle eggs the following season. Corn fields (wheat, for instance) present the best situations for the nests either of these birds or the partridge.

It sometimes happens that an old hen pheasant will assume a similar plumage to the cock; in which case they should, if possible, be killed. When this circumstance happens they become barren, and very much annoy the younger breeding females. They may be known by their inferior size to the cock, as well as by their colours being less vivid and less beautiful.

THE PARTRIDGE.

WHAT has been observed respecting the pheasant breeding early or late, according to the season, is equally applicable to the partridge. However, it may be remarked, that the general hatch of these birds takes place about the 20th of June—a week earlier perhaps in the southern, and a week later in the northern parts of the kingdom. For the purpose of nestling, the partridge seeks clover and grass fields, early sown wheat, the bottoms of hedges, &c. She carefully covers her eggs whenever she has occasion to leave the nest (unless suddenly driven away), as if to hide them from the observation of the predaceous birds enumerated in the preceding article. Like the pheasant, when her eggs happen to be deposited in clover or grass, they are liable to exposition by the scythe, while she risks her own life into the bargain; as it is a well-known fact that both the pheasant and partridge will at times sit so close, particularly when near hatching, as to suffer themselves to be cut to pieces by the mower.

If it so happens that the breeding season be early, a similar influence is felt by the vegetable kingdom from the weather; the grass is ready for the scythe at an early period, of that the nests of

the pheasant and partridge seem always liable to be mown over. Under such circumstances, the next object of consideration is to provide for the hatching of the eggs from which the bird has been either driven or taken away, which must form the subject of another article.

If after the pairing season a superabundance of male birds remain, they generally associate in small covies or packs, and are called *old bachelors*. They do not seem to interrupt the breeding birds, but, in the shooting season, never *lie* so well as a regular covey.

Very old hens of partridges and pheasants should, if possible, be killed, in order to promote good breeding.

MODE OF HATCHING THE EGGS OF PHEASANTS OR PARTRIDGES WHEN THE PARENT BIRD HAS BEEN KILLED, OR THE NEST FORSAKEN BY HER; AND ALSO OF REARING THE YOUNG, WITH OBSERVATIONS ON THE BREEDING OF GAME IN GENERAL.

UNDER this head I shall proceed to show that the eggs of pheasants and partridges may be very easily hatched, and the young reared with much less trouble than is generally supposed, by means of a foster-mother. I am well aware that, from the numerous failures which are constantly occur-

ring in hatching and rearing these young birds when deprived of their parent, it is regarded as of difficult accomplishment. This arises, however, merely from ignorance of the proper mode to be pursued; hence, any undertaking may become difficult where the method of effecting it is not understood.

When eggs are mown over, or otherwise deprived of the attention of the female, they should be carefully removed. And it may not be amiss to state, that eggs upon which the bird has sat but for a short period are much more liable to destruction by removal than when they are near hatching. If at the former period they are *shook* they are destroyed; a good plan, therefore, is to place them in bran or saw-dust, by which means they may be safely conveyed from one place to another. I need scarcely observe, that as little time as may be should be wasted in the business; though when the eggs are near hatching they appear to sustain little or no injury, even if a considerable period should elapse from the time of their exposition till they are again placed in a state of incubation. The eggs thus removed should be put under small bantam hens, a few of which may readily be kept sitting in anticipation of any casualties. When the young are hatched they should be placed, with the hen, in a small hutch, which, while it protects the foster-mother

from the inclemencies of the weather, will admit of the egress and regress of the young birds. A fence, of a foot in height and about six feet square, should surround the hutch, to prevent the chicks from rambling away before they acquire sufficient strength; and a net may be thrown over the whole if danger be apprehended from birds of prey. When the birds become strong they may be removed into a field of standing corn, and the further services of the hen dispensed with. Should it so happen that a hen willing to sit cannot be found, by pulling a few feathers from her belly, and stinging her bare skin with nettles, she will be induced to seat herself on the eggs without further trouble.

The situation chosen for the business should not of course be in the poultry yard, as the young partridges or pheasants would be killed by the domestic poultry, or otherwise destroyed. The hutch should be placed in an orchard, or some such place, where there is grass, as the insects which adhere to the blades and bents of grass are greedily eaten, and constitute good food for the young birds, whether partridges or pheasants. In gentlemen's parks and grounds there are generally to be seen small places, where several trees perhaps are enclosed, with posts and rails: such are good situations for the purpose; where the hen will sit and hatch in security, and where

the young birds will find insects as well as grass, upon both of which they feed. In addition to which, however, ant's eggs should be procured for them, or maggots, or both; or, if these cannot be had, eggs boiled hard and chopped small will answer the purpose. But as at this season of the year ants' eggs are very easy of access, and maggots also, a variety, or mixture of food, is by all means to be recommended. In a state of unlimited freedom, young partridges and pheasants feed upon grass, insects, and ants' eggs, and maggots,* when they can find them. Consequently, by adopting this system of diet, we are providing the birds with what nature intended for their use; and they will not fail to thrive upon it.

But the maggots should be prepared for them, and indeed may be produced also. Expose a piece

* "The pheasant," observes Goldsmith, "seems to feed indifferently upon everything that offers. It is said by a French writer that one of the king's gamekeepers, shooting at a parcel of crows that were gathered round a dead carcass, to his great surprise, upon coming up, found that he had killed as many pheasants as crows." The evident inference in this case is, that the pheasants were feeding upon the carrion; it forms a striking example of the incorrectness of closet naturalists, and points out the propriety of receiving their accounts with the utmost caution. The fact is, the pheasants had approached the carcass in search of maggots.

of carrion in the open air, and it will soon produce maggots in abundance; which, in the first instance, will appear dark coloured, and are covered with a sort of husk. If given to the birds in this state they will be found injurious, as they purge excessively; therefore, when the maggots are taken from the carrion, they should be placed in bran; in the course of about twenty-four hours the husk will have been scoured off, they will become white, and may be freely given to the young brood.

In the course of a short period crumbs of bread may be given them, and even corn as they grow larger. As to insects, these they will seek for themselves amongst the surrounding grass, and they will, at the same time, eat some of the grass also. To show the fondness of these birds for insects, place a few flies before them, and they will be greedily devoured. Should insects be found numerous on the bents and blades of grass (which will be the case when showers frequently fall, or when the atmosphere is lowering or what is called heavy), the young birds, it will be perceived, will feed much less greedily on the ants' eggs, or other food which is offered them, in consequence of their devouring great quantities of the insects in question. It will easily be perceived when the young birds are in health, from the bright appearance of the eye; also, the feathers will grow fast, and ap-

pear smooth and glossy. Young partridges, when very healthy, will be observed to twitch or move their little tails very often. Place some sand or light earth near them, in which they may bask.

They may be called together by whistling; but as they become strong and are able to fly well, they begin to ramble away from their foster-mother, and at length provide for themselves, if not previously removed. However, they never depart to any great distance; and, therefore, where many pheasants and partridges are thus hatched, they will always be found in the immediate domain or neighbourhood.

It is a general remark, that a dry spring and summer are favourable to the breeding of game, which is undoubtedly a fact; but the subject may be thus divided: if very little rain falls during the months of May and June young pheasants and partridges will be found very numerous; and if, after this period, frequent light showers descend, the young broods will be healthy and thrive very fast, since the winged insects will be pressed to the earth, as it were, by the state of the atmosphere, and their favourite food will in consequence be found in abundance. A heavy thunder shower will, however, frequently cause great destruction of young birds in a short time.

It would appear that for the first three weeks after hatching the young birds do not require

water. By way of experiment, I this year allowed four young partridges, which had been hatched under a domestic hen, to drink as much water as they pleased—they all died. I took one of the same brood entirely away from the hen into the house when it was five days old, and fed it as already described. At three weeks old it had become a strong bird. I then allowed it to drink water freely, and occasionally indulged it with milk, of which it is very fond. It ran about the house during the day, and at night was placed in flannel warmed for the purpose, where it reposed till the morning. It became uncommonly familiar. It will follow me into the garden or homestead, where it will feed on insects and grass, and I occasionally observed it swallow large worms. Of all things, however, flies appear to be its favourite food. Before he was ably to fly, I frequently lifted him into the window, and it was truly amusing to witness his dexterity in fly catching. He had been named Dick,* to which he answers as well as possible. Dick is a very social being, who cannot endure being left alone; and if it so happen (as it occasionally does) that the bird finds every person has quitted the room, he immediately goes in search of some of the family; if the door

* This bird was eventually killed by accident, by a servant opening the parlour door.

be shut, and his egress thus denied, he utters the most plaintive noise, evidently testifying every symptom of uneasiness and fear in being separated from his friends and protectors. Dick is a great favourite, and on this account is suffered to take many liberties. When breakfast is brought in he jumps on the table, and very unceremoniously helps himself to bread, or to whatever he takes a fancy; but, different from the magpie or jackdaw, under similar circumstances, Dick is easily checked. He is fond of stretching himself in the sunbeams; and if this be not attainable, before the kitchen fire. On being taken into the house he was presented to the view of the cat, the latter at the same time given to understand that the bird was privileged, and that she must not disturb him. The cat is evidently not fond of Dick as an inmate; but, though jealous, she abstains from violence. I have seen her, it is true, give him a blow with her paw, but this only occurs when the bird attempts to take bread, &c., from her; and not always then, as she frequently suffers herself to be robbed by him. Dick has also made friends with my pointers. He sleeps in my bed-room, but is by no means so early a riser as his fraternity in a state of nature; however, when he comes forth his anticks are amusing enough: he shakes himself, jumps and flies about the room for several minutes, and then descends

into the breakfast room. Dick is a healthy strong bird, and has never been more than two yards from my elbow during the time which I have occupied in writing his biography.

Young partridges and pheasants are tender for some time after they are hatched, but when three weeks old may be considered as out of danger.

If hatched under a hen, and she at liberty, and suffered to lead them into the yard or elsewhere, they will all die in a very few days.

Pheasants are fond of white peas; and when it becomes necessary to feed these birds when grown there is nothing better, especially if steeped in treacle: of raisins also they are very fond, but this is an expensive food, and not always to be procured. They are fond of sugar in any form.

It is generally supposed that grouse do not breed well in a dry season, but are found more numerous when it is moist; but the observations which I have just made respecting pheasants and partridges are equally applicable in this case also. In a dry season grouse are supposed to suffer from a want of water; while I am decidedly of opinion that, if they do suffer in a dry season, it is rather from a want of food than lack of water. The food of young grouse consists principally of insects; if, therefore, the state of the atmosphere continue to be such that insects are enabled to keep out of their reach, the young birds may

perhaps perish by hunger, not from thirst. I have visited the moors for a considerable number of years, and have uniformly found grouse more abundant in a dry than in a wet season; and I am of opinion that if those persons acquainted with the moors would reflect on the subject, they would come to the same conclusion. As far as relates to incubation, we well know that a certain degree of warmth or heat is indispensably requisite to produce a satisfactory issue; and, therefore, a wet season cannot be otherwise than highly injurious. It is equally evident that continued wet must be very detrimental to the young brood, particularly for the first fortnight after it is hatched.

In respect to hares, as far as my observations will enable me to form an opinion, it would appear that they are very little affected by a wet breeding season. These animals sometimes suffer from a disease called the rot, which makes its appearance not during the breeding season, but in winter. It principally affects hares which lie on low marshy grounds, but is not of frequent occurrence.

OF VERMIN.

UNDER this head may be placed two distinct classes of vermin—namely, the four-footed and the

winged. The former includes the wild cat, the martern, the polecat, the weasel, the stoat, &c.; in the latter we may enumerate the whole of the hawk and the owl tribes, the raven, the carrion crow, the rook, the jackdaw, the magpie, and the jay. The hedgehog is destructive to the eggs of game almost beyond conception; nor am I altogether without suspicion of the snake and the adder, as will be seen hereafter. I shall treat each of these under a distinct head, to which the following may be considered as a sort of introduction: —

The four-footed vermin above mentioned hunt the greater part of the night, seldom venturing out in the day time, unless compelled by hunger, when they may sometimes be seen running along the bottoms of the hedges, to the imminent danger of the sitting hare, the pheasant, and the partridge; and particularly to the young of these birds. "It is supposed by some that the quantity of game destroyed by polecats, &c., is too trifling to deserve the attention of the sportsman; but I am fully persuaded that he must be a good shot indeed who will bag in a fortnight more game than is killed by a polecat in the space of a year; or, rather, in the breeding season, for this is the time that these animals commit their most extensive depredations. From the moment the young hares and rabbits are brought forth, and the hen

pheasant and partridge commence sitting on their eggs, until the former are six weeks or two months old, and until the young covey and nide are able to skim far above the highest corn and cover, polecats, stoats, and weasels are making daily and nightly havock among them; sucking the eggs, seizing the old birds on the nest, and the young ones when their callow pinions are unable to carry them out of the reach of jaws which never quit their hold: these rapacious animals destroying in a few minutes whole litters of hares and rabbits, which might one day have afforded many a see-ho and good run, or steady point and neat shot, to some greyhound or pointer-loving sportsman. Nor will the polecat during the autumn and winter rest satisfied with the humble fare of mice and small birds, but will often seize the wounded hare and winged partridge.

"As some proof of the extensive depredations of the polecat, I will relate an instance that occurred to myself while snipe shooting near Dell Quay, about two miles from Chichester. I observed my old dog, Dash, very busy in the bottom of a hedge which bordered upon a large piece of rushy marsh; he was surrounded by the feathers and wings of birds which he had just scratched from a sort of small cave under the bank, and upon my encouraging him he began to scratch afresh, and in a few minutes had brought out as

many semi-decayed wings, legs, heads, &c., of birds as would have filled a bushel basket. Among the least decayed exuviæ I distinguished the wings of moorhens, coots of a golden plover, and of a number of larks, and (although very early in November) of three or four snipes. It was not long before I found the track and excrement of a polecat, and, from the quantity of spoil discovered, it is probable that this vampire of the fields had kept his head quarters in this spot for a considerable time."

The weasel tribe, I am inclined to think, pursue their prey, for the most part, by scent. Their speed is not sufficient to follow the hare or the rabbit with success. They may surprise these animals on the seat, it is true; but in this case they are led, I think, to the spot by the sense of smell. At all events, I have seen them repeatedly pursue the rabbit; and the moment they lost sight, owing to the intervention of a fence or other obstacle, they uniformly put their noses down and flung for the scent like a hound. Further, I have seen a rabbit, after having run some scores of yards (gaining a considerable distance from its enemy), sit down and allow the weasel or polecat to reach it; as if conscious that its enemy could and would follow it even into its burrow, and that therefore escape was impossible.

THE WILD CAT

Cannot justly be said to exist in this country; and therefore those wild cats which are not unfrequently met with, particularly in extensive woodlands, have either strayed from some house in the vicinity, or have been bred from one which had previously quitted its domestic abode, and assumed the original habits of the tribe.

It is always a very suspicious circumstance when a cat is observed prowling or watching in the fields or hedges at a considerable distance from her abode. In this case she is sure to destroy game. I have known several cats of this description that would catch young hares, as well as partridges, and bring them home; and such cats are generally held in great estimation by their owners. They are easily caught by placing a baited trap in their way. The trap should be considerably larger than those generally used for rats; and perhaps the best bait is a small bird—a sparrow, for instance. Valerian possesses a sort of fascinating attraction for cats; and therefore, if thought necessary, the trap may be rubbed with it; they are, however, easily caught without it. It might be hastily supposed the gun would be the more expeditious, and the

more eligible way of accomplishing the object; but in this case the circumstance becomes known most likely to the owner, who, in revenge, will perhaps resort to some species of retaliation. The trap makes no noise: the occurrence, therefore, even if suspected, is not easily ascertained; and consequently the stimulus to revenge will not be so strong.

The hutch trap may be used for catching the wild cat (see the next article, MARTERN).

When a cat has become completely wild, and brings forth young in the woods, she becomes more active in depredation, in order to provide for her kittens; and these, too, soon adopt the same predaceous course. The gun may here be freely used, and the trap called into action also, or the havock amongst the game would amount almost to extirpation.

THE MARTERN, OR MARTIN.

THIS animal is met with only in some parts of Great Britain. It is found, however, in many of the woody parts of this country, particularly in Yorkshire and the north; and is not uncommon in the fells of Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire.

The martern lives in the woods; and in winter

will very often shelter itself in the nest of a magpie or crow. It will also take possession of the habitation or dray of the squirrel; killing the original possessor if he happens to be at home. It breeds in the hollows of trees, and produces from four to six young ones at a time; which are brought forth with their eyes shut, but thrive rapidly, and soon arrive at a state of perfection. As the female has but a small quantity of milk, she compensates for this defect by bringing home eggs and living birds to her offspring; which she thus habituates to a life of plunder and carnage. The feathered tribes, whenever they perceive their enemy, the martern, testify every mark of animosity and terror; and afford the keeper a tolerable idea where to look for this destructive animal.

There is a similar animal, called the "Pine Martern," which is sometimes, I believe, though very rarely, seen in England. It is not uncommon in Scotland and some parts of Wales.

The martern feeds on game and birds; and will also, it is said, eat rats, mice, &c. This animal seizes the pheasant when roosting.

When the haunts of the martern are known, it may be taken with a steel trap, baited with a small bird, or a piece of a pigeon or pheasant. They may be taken in the box trap (such as are used in warrens), which should be baited with a bird in

the centre, and the feathers strewed through the trap, from one end to the other. But a more certain way of taking them, it is said, in a cover paled in, is the following:—As they constantly run the pales and posts to dry themselves in the morning, a groove should be cut in some of the posts where they run, sufficient to contain a large rat trap. The trap must be set in the groove without a bait; and in leaping upon the place they are sure to be caught. The trap should be made fast to the post by a small chain.

THE POLECAT.

This animal is known by various names or local appellations. In some parts of the country it is called a fitchet, in others a foulmart, in others again a fillemark. The polecat is larger than the ferret; which, however, it very much resembles in appearance and disposition.

The polecat, like the fox, avoids as much as possible the human countenance; and, like the fox too, possesses the most undaunted courage. However, in comparing these two animals, though they happen to agree in the two particulars just mentioned, yet they are enemies to each other, or, in other words, the fox will not fail to kill the polecat whenever they meet; in fact, the fox may

be regarded as the unrelenting enemy of all the smaller vermin. Reynard will kill and eat the wild cat, or any other cat or rat which might happpen to come in his way.

Polecats evince an insatiate thirst for blood, and are very destructive to all kinds of young game; and if it is not openly so to that which is full grown, it is because it is not so easily caught. It will surprise hares on their seats, will seize partridges or pheasants on the nest, and is incredibly destructive in a rabbit warren. It will, like all the other animals of the weasel tribe, kill much more than it can devour; in fact, so fond are these animals of sucking the blood of their victims, that, in a place like a rabbit warren, or wherever their food is presented in such abundance, the polecat (and the same of the weasel and stoat) would continue destroying, if undisturbed, merely for the sake of the blood.

Their retreat is generally in banks well sheltered with brambles or underwood, or amongst brakes or woods, or other similar situations. They burrow in the ground, making a tolerably large hole, about two feet deep, which may be easily known by any one who has once noticed the hole of a polecat. In winter they will frequently approach houses or dwellings, and will rob the hen roost, the pigeon house, or even the dairy when pressed by hunger. On these occasions

they contrive to form a retreat in or under some of the walls, and if they are unable to secure an asylum of this sort they will make their way under the corn stacks; and, whenever this happens to be the case, all the rats in the immediate vicinity remove to a greater distance. The polecat is a deadly enemy to the rat, and of this the latter is very well aware: and yet it would appear that the polecat (from its size) is unable to follow it through its burrows or runs; and the rat, as if conscious of this incapacity in the former, removes no further from the presence of its enemy than what may suit its convenience. The writer witnessed an instance where a great number of rats were found in a stack of wheat; but all of them in the upper part. For several feet from the ground not a rat was to be met with, which excited some surprise; but the circumstance developed itself on reaching the bottom, where it was found an enormous polecat had taken up its abode.

The female brings forth her young in the spring, to the number of from four to six. To "stink like a polecat" is a common observation in some parts; and indeed so impregnated does every part of the animal appear to be with a very offensive fetid matter, that even the fur, which is soft and warm, can scarcely be divested of it. Whenever the polecat happens to be killed, the fetid matter just mentioned issues from the pores of its body

in great quantities, forming a very unpleasant effluvium; which is perceptible even at some distance.

There are farmers to be met with, who, whenever a polecat approaches their barns, buildings, or houses, afford it every possible protection on account of its enmity to rats; but as its chief propensities are in direct opposition to the views of the sportsman, so gamekeepers should be careful to destroy it wherever it is to be met with.

The polecat is seldom seen during the day, unless compelled by hunger to quit its retreat; but as soon as night sets in it leaves its hole in quest of prey, when it may be pursued and killed by terriers. In the midland counties hunting the polecat by moonlight forms a diversion for schoolboys and the younger branches. After nightfall, when the polecat rambles abroad, its hole (if known) is stopped; the terriers are thrown off; one of which, upon whom the greatest dependence can be placed, has a small bell fastened round his neck, in order that the hunters may know where the dogs are questing. When they hit upon the scent the terriers give tongue; and as soon as the polecat finds himself pursued, he makes directly for his hole, which, if stopped, he cannot of course enter, and is compelled to seek some other retreat, during which he is perhaps killed. If run to ground, he is very unceremoniously dug out and

worried on the spot: it being a general opinion among the rustics (in Leicestershire, for instance), that whenever or wherever a polecat is run to ground, they have a *right* to dig him out.

The above method, however, is not the mode in which I would recommend gamekeepers to destroy the polecat; for the accomplishment of their purpose they can go a much shorter and surer way to work: this animal seems possessed of little cunning, and is trapped with little difficulty. The steel trap is generally used for this animal, but it may be taken in the following manner:— Box traps may be set in the bottom of ditches, or under walls or pales, with the ends of the traps fenced up to for four or five yards aslant, and two or three yards wide at the entrance, with earth, bushes, or broken pales, so that the animal cannot pass without entering the trap. A trail of red herrings, half broiled, should be drawn from one trap to another; and the traps should be baited with the same material, with which also the ends of the traps may be rubbed. By having both ends of box traps painted white, and rubbed with herrings, or the entrails of any animal, hares will be deterred from entering. This mode is well calculated to catch the wild cat, or indeed any kind of quadrupedal vermin. Therefore, when any of the traps are sprung, a bag sufficiently large to admit an end of the trap is to be pro-

vided and slipped over it, and by rattling at the other end of the trap the creature will spring into the bag; for without some such precaution, should a wild cat be caught, the moment the light is admitted it will fly in the face of the person opening it. This is the method generally adopted by warreners.

The steel trap, however, is by far the best and surest method of taking the polecat; and, indeed, the best method of catching all kinds of vermin. It is more portable, more easily prepared, and very rarely fails in its operation (see the article TRAPPING).

THE STOAT.

THIS animal is much less than the polecat, but larger than the weasel.

The stoat is frequently found white in Great Britain during the winter season, and is then generally called the "White Weasel."

The stoat is uncommonly destructive to game, and extremely mischievous in a rabbit warren. It will, like the polecat, seize pheasants and partridges on the nest, will destroy their eggs; and, in fact, on the score of depredation, has scarcely an equal. It will surprise hares on the seat, and though the hare may move off, her deadly enemy

clings with the tenacity of a leech, and never quits its hold unless disturbed by the approach of a dog or a human being; and even then it abandons its prey reluctantly. Like the polecat, where it can obtain a sufficient supply, it will merely suck the blood, and leave the carcass untouched. It will pursue the hare or rabbit like a hound. The hare or the rabbit has no enemy more fatal than the stoat; it will follow and terrify them into a state of absolute imbecility, when they yield themselves up, making piteous outcries, particularly the hare. The stoat seems bolder and more courageous than the polecat. Like that animal, it seizes its prey near the head; the wound is very small, but said to be mortal; since, if a hare or rabbit be liberated after having been bitten by a stoat, it lingers for some time and dies. Such, at least, is the general opinion, and most likely the correct one.

The stoat will enter the hen roost and destroy all the chickens; but it seldom attempts the cock or the hens. It will kill all the smaller kind of birds which it is able to surprise, and devour their eggs also.

However, inasmuch as it will kill rats and mice, it is sometimes not molested by the farmer—at least for some time; though the latter, in the end, generally pays dearly for its protection. Some years ago while shooting, at no great distance from my home, a heavy shower came on,

and I sought shelter in the house of a highly respectable farmer whom I very well knew. On going forth again, on the weather becoming fine, I observed a stoat near the gate leading into the yard, and the animal more than ordinarily bold. I was in the act of pointing my gun towards it, when the farmer, perceiving my intention, earnestly entreated me to desist; observing, that he would not on any account have the animal destroyed, as it kept his premises free from rats. Some time after, when I passed that way, I enquired if the stoat still kept the rats away, when I learned that the remedy had become worse than the disease: the stoat destroyed all the eggs within its reach, and ultimately attacked the younger tribes of poultry; and was therefore killed.

The stoat pursues rats very fiercely, as I have repeatedly witnessed; and as it can follow them into their holes, they have little chance of escape from it. Mice it will also kill if it meets with them; but it cannot pursue them into their retreats.

If the stoat had strength equal to its fierceness and courage, it would be a very formidable animal indeed. I recollect, when a school-boy, in passing over a place called Guel's Moor, in Leicestershire, I observed several stoats collected together close to a small pool. I had a very stout large terrier with me, which immediately ran at the stoats;

while they, far from offering to retreat, boldly met the dog's onset. The battle lasted for some short time; but at length the dog succeeded, but not without difficulty, in killing or completely disabling four of the stoats—one or two others got away. I have sometimes seen dogs that were accounted good rat-killers that would not touch a stoat. This animal, when irritated or killed, emits a very fetid effluvium.

The stoat burrows in the ground, like the polecat, making, however, a smaller hole; but when it approaches houses or buildings it generally forms its retreat under or in some of the walls: nor is it so shy of human contact as the polecat.

The stoat is not difficult to trap, and may be taken in the same manner as the polecat. Some rub the bait with musk, of which all animals of the weasel kind (and I include the martern and polecat in the number) are supposed to be fond. The musk will have the effect of attracting them from a greater distance, on account of its strong scent, and that is all; but the business may be very well and very easily effected without the aid of this powerful perfume. Those, however, who feel inclined to try the experiment may easily procure a little essence of musk from any druggist, and sprinkle the bait with it.

Is less than the stoat, as I have stated in the preceding article. The weasel may be said never to exceed seven inches in length from the nose to the tail.

The motion of the weasel consists of unequal bounds and leaps; and in climbing a tree it gains a considerable height by a single spring from the ground. In the same precipitate manner it jumps upon its prey; and, as it possesses great flexibility of body, it easily evades the attempts of much stronger animals to seize it. We are told that an eagle having pounced upon a weasel mounted into the air with it, and was soon after observed to be in great distress: the little animal had extricated itself so much from the eagle's hold as to be able to fasten upon the throat, which presently brought the eagle to the ground, and gave the weasel an opportunity of escaping.

The activity of the weasel is remarkable: it will run up the sides of a wall with such facility that no place is secure from it. It always preys in silence; and never utters any cry except when it is struck or pursued by a dog, when it expresses resentment or pain by a rough kind of squeaking.

This animal brings forth its young in spring, to the number of three, four, or five; and takes great pains for their accommodation by preparing a bed for them of moss, or some soft warm material. The young are brought forth blind, but soon acquire sight and strength sufficient to accompany their dam in her excursions.

The weasel sleeps in its hole during the day, and issues forth in the evening for the purpose of depredation; in fact, its manners and habits are so very similar to those of the stoat that one description might serve for both of them. Like the stoat, the odour of the weasel is strong, but most offensive in summer, or when irritated or pursued. Like that animal also, it will destroy eggs, enter the hen roost and kill the chickens: nor has the hare or the rabbit, the partridge or the pheasant, a more deadly enemy. It is to be caught in the same manner as the stoat. When the nest of any of these animals is suspected in any part, no pains should be spared for its discovery and destruction.

The three animals just described demand the gamekeeper's utmost attention. Whether they are susceptible of being rendered serviceable in the destruction of rats and mice, and thus become a substitute for the domestic cat, might be a subject worth consideration. When taken young they are easily tamed.

THE HEDGEHOG.

THIS animal is found in most parts of England. It abounds in the coppice woods of the north-western part of the kingdom; and it is, in the breeding season, very destructive to the eggs of game. In the county of Hereford, on one occasion, as many as twenty to thirty eggs were found together, carried from various parts by this animal, and stored for future use. The hedgehog is sometimes found in spring or autumn by the shooter or dog-breaker. Most dogs will point it as they will a partridge; and often when a steady point has been made at a dry bank, the dog has been blamed for making a false one, when very little search would have discovered a hedgehog close to his nose, rolled up, and resembling a bunch of dried leaves. It ought never to be spared. It is not much seen in the depth of winter; it may be torpid during that season, for aught I know to the contrary, but it is active in summer, and is occasionally caught in the weasel traps. If its print be seen, a trap should be set in the track. The best method of catching it, however, is with a dog (a terrier), trained to hunt dry banks, in spring and autumn. When discovered it may be destroyed by drowning; few

dogs being equal to the task of breaking into its prickly covering.

THE SNAKE AND THE ADDER.

These reptiles are generally held in detestation and abhorrence. They prey upon frogs, field mice, &c., and destroy the unfledged young of winged game whenever it comes in their way.

It might be hastily supposed that young partridges, being so swift of foot, would easily run away from the snake; but before we come to such a conclusion we must look at all the circumstances of the case, and particularly consider the mode in which reptiles of this kind secure their prey. It has already been seen that the weasel tribe are able to overtake the hare or the rabbit, notwithstanding their very inferior speed. The wretched animal which forms the object of pursuit is so terrified that it may be said to be literally frightened to death. The same may be said of the prey of the serpent tribes, though they resort to a very different mode of accomplishing their object. Serpents of necessity move very slowly; and therefore may be said rather to wait for than pursue their prey. When they perceive an object for their purpose, they open their mouth to its greatest possible extent (and it is astonishing to

what a width they can distend their jaws, as I have witnessed), and glaringly fix their eyes upon it. The animal becomes paralyzed, as it were, or at least unable to make off, and after making a few turns, and uttering plaintive cries perhaps, approaches its deadly and glaring enemy; who, as soon as its victim comes within reach, darts at it, seizes it fiercely, and ultimately swallows it. If the creature which the serpent has killed be difficult to swallow, the latter covers it with a sort of mucus or saliva, and at length draws, or rather sucks it down its throat; though the operation may perhaps employ a considerable time, during which the reptile's eyes appear ready to start from the sockets from the violent straining which they seem to undergo. When the prey is fairly swallowed the reptile becomes completely sluggish and inactive; and as the process of digestion is remarkably slow, they will remain for some time before their activity returns; and they again seek, or rather lay wait for prey.

Many accounts have been given through the medium of the press of the great size or bulk of animals which the larger tribes of serpents have swallowed, and the peculiar mode in which they have seized and swallowed them.

The singular power in the serpent tribes of rendering their prey unable to escape, from glaring upon it with distended jaws, has been called fasci-

nation; but the term is incorrect, since the victim is rendered incapable of escape, from terror.

In this country there are but two varieties of the serpent tribe—the "Snake" and the "Adder;" the former of which is larger than the latter, and is at the same time destitute of the fangs, which clearly shows that it is incapable of inflicting a poisonous wound. The snake is more elongated than the adder; its head and jaws are narrower, and its tail tapers more to a point. I have frequently seen the snake a yard in length, or more; the adder is seldom more than two-thirds as long.

The adder is, above all, distinguished from the snake by its fangs, which project from the upper jaw and hang outside the lower lips. It is more dusky coloured than the snake, and altogether more ugly. Its young are formed in eggs in the womb, which, however, burst the shell before they are brought forth, and are thus produced alive. If an adder be met with in a very advanced state of gestation, is killed and opened, eggs will be found containing living young, which, on being liberated from the shell, will make off—at least, if they are sufficiently advanced.

The adder is frequently found on moorlands, fens, and in low situations; the snake in old dry walls, banks, &c. The bite of the latter (though when caught by the hand it seldom, I think, attempts to bite) is attended with no ill conse-

quence; that of the former is highly dangerous, and has often proved fatal, though it would appear to me not difficult of cure, as the following case will show:—

Some years ago, while out in search of young wild ducks, upon a fenny marsh, in the month of August, my dog was bitten by an adder on the point or end of the nose, which immediately swelled to a frightful size. I made my way to the nearest house (distant at least a mile), and procured some sweet oil, which luckily was in the house. I applied it to the part, which I continued to rub for a considerable time, and I had the pleasure of perceiving the swelling to abate. I continued at intervals to rub the oil upon the part for two hours, when the swelling was so much reduced that I went home, but applied sweet oil again several times during the afternoon; the swelling entirely subsided, and the dog appeared in his usual good health and spirits the following morning.

I am inclined to think that most of the *vegetable* oils, if not the whole of them, would have the desired effect. Animal oil, I am of opinion, would not answer, though I never had an opportunity of experimentally ascertaining this point.

From a consideration of this subject altogether, it is highly advisable for gamekeepers to destroy these reptiles whenever opportunity offers. They

continue in a dormant state during the winter in their holes; they creep forth as the warm weather approaches, and are the most active and most dangerous during the heat of summer.

THE RAT.

RATS are very destructive to game of every kind, as well as to the spawn of fish. They increase very fast.

During summer they reside principally in holes on the banks of rivers, ditches, and ponds; but as winter comes on they approach the human habitations, and very often take up their abode in barns, corn stacks, &c.

They will bring forth three times a year, and produce from ten to fifteen at a birth. They are numerous in most large towns; and, though they seek the fields on the approach of summer, it generally arises from a diminution of food about farmhouses, &c., as well as from the insecurity which they feel from the removal of the corn stacks, the clearing of the barns, &c.; at the same time that plenty of food is presented abroad in the fields. When a colony of these animals happens to take possession of a field of standing corn they make dreadful havock.

These animals will attack young poultry, and

even the old, if pressed by hunger; and their voracity is such that they have been known to fasten on the fatter parts of living swine. Nor are infants in their cradle always free from their attacks; indeed, the rat may be regarded as a general marauder.

Rats become uncommonly bold from impunity, but they are easily destroyed or driven away when the proper means for that purpose are adopted. There are various methods of taking or destroying these creatures; the most effective of which will be detailed.

The weasel tribe pursue the rat as fiercely as the hare; but the rat, unlike "the poor timid hare," does not resign itself to its fate. It is interesting to see the small weasel attack a large rat; the latter will get away if possible, but finding escape out of the question, it turns upon its invincible assailant, and fights while it is able, crying out all the time. From the active motions of the rat in this contest, as well as from its evident superiority in strength, a spectator might suppose that the business must end in the defeat or destruction of the weasel; but, after a time, the efforts of the rat evidently grow languid, while the weasel may be perceived sticking like a leech, its teeth fast hold of the rat about the head or neck. The battle lasts no great length of time, for when once the weasel has got hold, all

the efforts of the rat are not sufficient to dislodge it.

The ferret, it is well known, is in general use for the destruction of rats, assisted by the terrier; and this was a kind of business or employment followed by numbers throughout the country. These professed rat catchers, however, have very greatly diminished in numbers, as well as in repute, since it was often found that premises which they had visited, and had been paid for clearing, were seldom long without a fresh colony. The fact is, the men thus employed were suspected of turning down rats upon the premises, for the purpose of obtaining employment. But professed rat catchers are still to be met with, particularly in seaport towns.

The rat is both a very bold and a very cunning animal, but aware, from hereditary instinct, that he is the object of general persecution; and, as if conscious of the varied and superior means which man employs for his destruction, he becomes the most suspicious animal in nature.

My residence is in the country, and I have periodical visits of rats, and adopt the following mode of ridding myself of these uninvited and unwelcomed guests. They come at the end of autumn or beginning of winter, and at first are very shy; however, finding themselves unmolested, they soon become bold, even to an impudent

degree. As soon as I perceive they are reconciled to their quarters, and have made one or more regular runs, I procure a handful of newly ground malt, with which I mix a handful of good sweet oatmeal, and an ounce or an ounce and a-half of arsenic.* I make the whole into a dough with water, and then into pills about the size of a pea or horse-bean. These pills I drop or throw into their holes, *in a seeming careless manner*, taking care thus to place them out of the reach of poultry, dogs, pigs, and indeed of every living thing but the rats. The rats never refuse it. It would appear to create thirst, as the animals leave their holes in search of water, and on these occasions seem incapable of much exertion: they will suffer a person to approach and kill them.

The secret in this case, as in the other, is the deception, though in a different manner: in the first case their suspicion subsides, from feeding for some time in security, and they are thus deceived; in the second case the pills appear as if they had dropped in their way by chance. If you put the pills upon a plate near the mouth of their holes, or in any other formal manner, it is ten to one if a rat will touch them; but when the rat finds them, as it were, accidentally dropped into his hole or his run, he will eat them greedily.

* If too much arsenic is used it will produce vomiting, and the rat will recover.

The quantity of malt, oatmeal, and arsenic which I have mentioned will make pills sufficient to destroy hundreds of rats. It may happen that all the rats are not killed. Be this as it may, should any of them have escaped the pills, they will not fail to quit the premises; and, indeed, if constantly served in the same manner, it would appear that their visits would be less frequent. For some years I had more visits than one from rats during twelve months; these visits afterwards became annual; and it is now two years since a rat was seen about my premises.

On one occasion, by way of experiment, I allowed the rats to remain unmolested for a considerable period: they made their way under all the floors about the premises; they bred most numerously; one very large female burrowed into the ground immediately underneath one of my wooden dog kennels, to which a pointer was generally chained, and there formed a nest. My colony of rats appeared very flourishing; and the animals grew audaciously bold from impunity. It is true, the cat killed a few of them; but they did not seem to take much alarm from this: and, in fact, the cat, after being severely bitten, testified but little inclination to meddle farther in the business, as if overfaced by the numbers and audacity of the rats. I have seen them, towards evening, not only approach the door, but come into the

kitchen, three or four at a time. They made their way through the floor of the pantry; they might be seen in the horses' mangers, claiming their share of oats; they ascended to the pigeon loft: and I prepared some pills. On the third day after the pills had been placed in their holes not a living rat was to be seen about the premises. Every one of them, however, could not have been killed, as I had not used a sufficient number of pills—not, perhaps, for one-half of them. This is the easiest method with which I am acquainted of getting rid of rats. It requires no preparatory feeding; I have tried it many times, both on my own premises as well as on those of my neighbours, and never knew it to fail. Good sweet wheat flour mixed with arsenic will answer the purpose, but as newly ground malt emits a very fragrant smell, of which rats seem to be fond, I think it preferable to wheat flour. But neither the one nor the other will answer the purpose unless placed as already directed, that is to say, *in a seeming careless manner*. At the same time, let it be duly impressed upon the mind that it should be so placed that nothing can reach it but the rats. Mice may be destroyed in the same manner, but the pills should be made smaller.

Should there be one hundred rats about the premises, I firmly believe half that number of pills would be quite sufficient to clear them. There

would not be a pill for each, it is true; but those which escaped the poison would not fail to take the alarm, and would immediately decamp: further, they will not very soon return. I never used more than fifty pills, I think, to the largest colony of rats I ever encountered. This is, as I have already observed, decidedly the easiest, the most speedy, and the best way of getting rid of rats. If employed on board ships at sea, the rats, when some of their fellows are poisoned, cannot quit the vessel. This amounts to nothing, as a few pills can be placed as long as any rats remain alive, and they will not fail to take them. If malt be not procurable, sweet wheat flour, or sweet oatmeal, will answer the purpose.

If a pill or two be wrapped or twisted in a bit of paper, and carelessly thrown in the way of the rats, they will rarely fail to be thus deceived.

A very worthy friend of mine (now no more), employed a professed ratcatcher to clear his premises of these vermin, which the man accomplished; but in effecting this desirable object he poisoned a pig, three pea fowls, and an old favourite wild duck.*

* My friend resided at a short distance from an extensive marsh much frequented by wild ducks. He kept tame ducks, and was surprised one evening to observe a wild duck amongst them in the yard. The wild duck attached itself to a young drake, they paired, and bred regularly. It

The steel trap and wire cage are used for catching rats, but seldom with much effect. If one happens to be caught you will rarely catch a second, unless the trap be immediately removed. On one occasion a number of rats were in the habit of making a passage through my yard, in Spool, from one of the main sewers to some corn warehouses at the back of the premises. The path generally chosen by them was up an open drain at one side of the yard at the foot of a wall. I dammed up this drain so as to obtain a depth of five or six inches of water, and placed a common spring trap underneath the surface, hanging, by way of bait, a piece of red herring some six or eight inches up the wall. My first experiment was in the evening, and in a few minutes after I had set my trap a rat was caught; the stratagem was perfectly successful. The animal had no suspicion of the hidden danger; and if he did not bite at the bait, he stopped to smell at it, rearing up with his hind legs on the bridge of the trap. I removed my first captive immediately, and replaced the trap; still watching within hearing. In a few minutes another was caught, and afterwards another. The next evening I again set the

resigned its unlimited liberty for love, and became quite tame; it had continued four years in this state of domestication, when it was unfortunately poisoned by the rat catcher.

trap, and in a short time a rat fell into the snare; but, being called away by business, I was compelled to let him remain untouched several hours. I afterwards set the trap, but never again could induce another rat to go near it. I have not the least doubt that had I continued to remove the captives as soon as they were secured, that the rats would have gone on to the trap without suspicion or hesitation so long as a single one remained about the place; but the deception was discovered, and, though my yard was still made a road from the sewers to the corn warehouses, a different track was chosen, and the course of the drain carefully avoided.

If a rat be caught and his skin singed so as to cause considerable pain, and he be turned into his hole again, he will make much lamentation, and the rest will forsake the place.

Rats are so voracious that there is scarcely anything which they will not devour; they have been known to attack human beings when confined in a dungeon, and to kill and devour them. It is very well known that rats have been met in numbers, and, so far from giving way, have compelled the passenger to fly before them.

A gentleman of my acquaintance, who resides in a neighbouring town, and who is extensively concerned in the wine and liquor trade, was about sixteen years since very much infested with rats.

Upon his premises there was a kind of apartment, made of brick, arched, with a large aperture at the top. This was converted into a rat-trap, by placing a small board in such a situation that when a rat reached the end of it, where the bait was fastened, the centre became overbalanced, and the rat was precipitated into the vault below. The board, disencumbered of the weight of the rat, righted again; and thus, in one night, forty-three rats were caught. In the morning, when the vermin were observed, one of the servants, a son of the sister island, immediately volunteered his services to despatch them. A ladder was placed for his descent, which the man desired might be drawn up the moment he reached the bottom. He had armed himself with a shillaleh and descended with the utmost alacrity, quite pleased with the business he had undertaken; the rats in the meantime had gathered themselves together at one end of the place. The ladder was drawn up; but no sooner did the poor fellow move one step towards the rats, than, setting up their backs and squeaking loudly, they flew at him with the utmost fury. The man was almost petrified with alarm; he was deprived of the power of using his cudgel, and those above lost no time in getting him out of the place. He was speechless for a short period; the poor fellow was killed a few weeks afterwards by a fall from an upper story, but during the short time

which elapsed he did not recover from the effects of the fright, such an effect had it made upon his mind. A terrier bitch was lowered into the vault, and the rats did not fail to attack her as soon as she approached them; she went to work, however, and killed the whole ultimately, but such labour did it appear, that she paused, and even lay down for a few seconds, as if for wind, before she had completed the business.

Notwithstanding the fierceness and courage of the rat, when he becomes captive he loses his spirit. Men are occasionally seen with a number of rats in a wire cage, into which they will unceremoniously put their hands and take hold of the rats with impunity. It has been supposed there is some secret in this; and so there is, it is the following:—The man puts his hand into the cage with confident firmness; the rats have lost their spirits with their liberty, and make no attempt to bite. However, should a person attempt the same manœuvre in a hesitating or timid manner, the rats will resume courage from such timidity, and will not fail to seize his hand.

If when a rat is at large he be seized firmly with the hand and grasped very strongly, he will not bite; in fact, he is thus deprived of the power.

Rats are numerous in London; and as their retreats are for the most part under ground in the

sewers, large and small, they are not easily destroyed, or, at least, they would be very difficult to exterminate. Some few years since, several criminals made their escape from one of the prisons in London by contriving to get down into one of the main sewers* which emptied itself into the Thames. After they had pursued their subterranean route for some little time, their progress was opposed by rats, which appeared in such numbers, and attacked the culprits so fiercely, that they cried for help, and were at length taken up through one of the gratings, and conveyed back to prison.

It is, however, in the fields, and at a distance from any human habitation, that the rat becomes the object of the gamekeeper's especial care. Rats are to a certain extent gregarious, and generally take up their abode near to a pond or rivulet. In such a situation the destruction of the whole colony may be insured in the following manner:—Select a place some three or four feet deep, and steep-to the side, with an overhanging tree or bush; fix pegs of wood in the bank or side of the pond or brook, so as to support a common spring trap about two inches beneath the surface of the water; suspend, about six inches above the water, directly over the trap, a piece of herring, a bird, or indeed any ani-

* The main sewers are, I believe, sufficiently large for a man to stand upright, or nearly so.

mal substance; the rat will not fail to go to smell at it, and to do so must rest its hind legs upon the trap, and will thus be caught. However, as I have previously stated, if the trap be suffered to remain with its captured victim exposed to sight for any length of time, and as it is impossible that a gamekeeper can watch one particular colony of rats, some plan is necessary to conceal the trap the moment it has done its office. This it is that renders a depth of water necessary; the rat in its struggles will throw the trap from off the pegs fixed to support it, and it will sink to the bottom. It need scarcely be said that a string, proportionate to the depth of water, must be attached to the trap and fastened to a peg fixed *under* the surface of the water, to enable the keeper to recover it. I have adopted this plan frequently, and always with complete success. I have recommended it to others, and never knew it fail. It is worthy the attention of the farmer, as well as the gamekeeper. It is less trouble than any other method that can be adopted for the destruction of this loathsome vermin. The traps may be visited and reset at convenience; and the drowned rats are not altogether without value, as they become the food of the pike or eel.

THE FOX

Is esteemed as one of the most sagacious and most crafty of animals, but perhaps erroneously so. He is certainly very suspicious, well knowing that man and most, if not all, creatures are against him; in fact it must be admitted that, as the fox makes war upon all animals, so all animals manifest their dislike of him. Dogs hunt him with the greatest eagerness; while birds, who know him to be their mortal enemy, attend him in his excursions, and give each other notice of the approaching danger. The crow, the magpie, &c., hover over, loudly expressing their anger, and thus occasionally enable the huntsman to recover the chase. He is an enemy to game, it is true; but not to the extent which is generally supposed. And he possesses qualities or propensities which ought, in some degree, to relieve the deeper shades in his character: he kills and devours the polecat, the stoat, and the weasel; the wild cat, rats, field mice, and serpents; and, where rabbits are within reach, he will give himself little trouble about either winged game or leverets. The rabbit is sure game for him; this animal he can pursue with success, and dig it out of its burrow when necessary. And as a proof that the fox is much

less detrimental even to pheasants than is generally supposed, I can very honestly assert that I have often seen abundance of pheasants where foxes have been plentiful also. I once saw a fox found by the hounds of Mr. Meynell in a small cover at Radnor, near Derby, from which pheasants got up literally in abundance whilst the hounds were drawing it. I could give many similar instances. As to the depredations of the fox upon the farmer, the damage amounts to a mere bagatelle. I lived ten years in Leicestershire, in what might be called the centre of the Quorndon hunt, where there was no lack of foxes, and I can honestly and fearlessly assert that the loss sustained by farmers from foxes, if divided equally throughout the hunt, would not amount to *sixpence* each farm. I have made inquiries on this subject in Northamptonshire, Derbyshire, Shropshire, Yorkshire, &c., &c., and have uniformly had reason to draw the same conclusion. If you inquire of a farmer, indeed, respecting the depredations of the fox, you will be told he is a most mischievous creature among poultry, geese, and lambs. Continue the inquiry, and ask him how many lambs, geese, &c., he has lost by the fox for the last seven years, and he will answer not one; though, perhaps, he lives in the immediate vicinity of a strong cover containing earths and every other attraction for foxes. If geese are

left in the fields in a careless manner the fox will sometimes make free with one; if a hen be allowed to sit upon eggs in the bottom of a hedge at a little distance from the house, renard may perhaps make her his prize. These are circumstances, however, which do not often occur; and as to lambs, there were not six destroyed by foxes on Charnwood Forest in the course of ten years. Charnwood Forest may be regarded as the nursery of foxes for a considerable part of the Quorndon hunt, and, at the period to which I allude, it was not enclosed, but pastured by many thousands of sheep.

At the same time, let it not be forgotten, that the fox affords the best diversion in the world; all other field sports sink almost to nothingness in the comparison. Fox-hunting is indeed worthy of a Briton, and is attended with much collateral good; amongst which may be noticed the very superior breed of horses which it greatly tends to promote, to say nothing of a hundred other less important benefits.

If in countries which are not hunted by fox-hounds it be thought necessary to get rid of foxes, they should be taken in a hutch trap and sent to a fox-hunting country.

The fox produces from three to six at a litter, and generally brings forth under ground. These can be easily caught and removed.

THE KITE.

We now come to a tribe or list of creatures which are as destructive perhaps to game as those already enumerated, though they seek it in a different manner; the former pursue their prey by scent, these by sight.

The kite may be regarded as the largest of the predacious birds known, or, at least, which breed in this country. And it may be observed, that all birds of the hawk kind are furnished with a large head and a strong crooked beak, notched at the end, for the purpose of tearing their prey; they have strong short legs, and sharp crooked talons for the purpose of seizing it. Their bodies are formed for war, being fibrous and muscular. The sight of such as prey by day is astonishingly quick; and such as ravage by night have their sight so fitted as to discern objects in the gloom of evening with astonishing precision.

Thus formed for war, they lead a life of solitude and rapacity; they inhabit, by choice, the most lonely places, and the most desert mountains. They make their nests in the clefts of rocks, in trees, on the ground, in mouldering ruins, &c. Whenever they appear it is only for the purposes of depredation, and they may be regarded

as gloomy intruders on the general joy of the landscape.

They are fierce by nature, and this fierceness extends to their young, which manifest a disposition for carnage from the earliest periods. Other birds seldom forsake their young till they are able completely to provide for themselves, and are nearly full grown; the hawk tribe drive them off at a period when they should protect and support them.

All animals that by the conformation of their stomach and intestines are obliged to live upon flesh and support themselves by prey, though they may be mild when young, soon become fierce and mischievous by the very habit of using those arms with which nature has supplied them. As it is only by the destruction of other animals they can subsist, they become more furious every day; and even the parental feelings are overpowered in their general habits of cruelty.

Another effect of this natural and acquired severity is, that almost all birds of prey are unsociable and solitary. Like the wild cat and the weasel tribe, they lead a lonely life, and are only united in pairs by that instinct which overpowers for a time their rapacious habits of enmity. Except at certain periods, they usually prowl alone, and enjoy in solitude the fruits of their plunder.

All birds of the hawk tribe are remarkable for

one peculiarity which seems to distinguish them not only from the rest of the feathered tribes, but perhaps from the whole of animated nature: all the males of these birds are less and weaker than the females.

The kite may be distinguished from the rest of the rapacious tribes which infest this country by his size and his long-forked tail. He appears to use very little exertion in the act of flying, and, with a low sailing motion, seems ever on the wing. As almost every bird of the air is able to make good its retreat from him, he may be said to live upon accidental carnage. He may, therefore, be considered as an insidious thief, who only prowls about; and when he finds a bird wounded or disabled instantly seizes it, and, like a famished glutton, is sure to show no mercy. Kites will pounce upon young chickens, young ducks, and young geese, whenever an opportunity offers, and are very destructive to game; they not only destroy the young of winged game, but the old birds also if they can catch them, as well as rabbits, young hares, &c. I never saw them attack an old hare; though I have no doubt if they found one wounded or disabled they would not fail to seize it.

The kite—called in some parts the glead and the ring tail, and, erroneously, the goshawk—appears larger than the buzzard, but is not so in reality; it has a much longer tail, a greater ex-

panse of wing, but does not weigh so heavy. It is of a brown grey colour, and is altogether a handsome bird. Its sight, like the whole of the tribe, is remarkably quick; and, though a bird of very slow flight, it will dart down upon its prey with the rapidity of lightning, as I have many times witnessed. It is found in woods, but more commonly seen upon forests, downs, moorlands, marshes, and fens. When shooting ducks, &c., upon marshes or fenny places, I have known these birds attend the sportsman, as it were, and if a bird happened to be so wounded as to get beyond the reach of the shooter, it was pursued and made prize by the kite. In fact, the kite is a general prowler, to whom scarcely anything seems to come amiss; I have watched them for hours (particularly on Charnwood Forest); I have seen them sail round and round a flock of geese where there were small goslings, and, watching their opportunity, they have seized one and borne it away.

However, as these birds are for ever on the watch for their prey, so are they also for their enemies, as if knowing themselves to be thieves, and that they have no friends, they will not suffer the approach of the shooter, unless by accident; and, therefore, other means than the fowling piece become necessary for their destruction. They form their nest upon the ground, amongst rushes, &c.; and I have known them to trim up the old

nest of a crow, and deposit their eggs in it. Their nests should be sought, and the eggs or the young destroyed; and, perhaps, an opportunity may be offered for killing one or both the parent birds.

To secure this marauder, set a few traps in his regular beat, baited with a small rabbit or a bird, and he is sure to be taken. In champaign countries *bird-bushes* should be made half a mile asunder. What is meant by this expression is, a large stake is to be driven into the ground, and left seven feet high; bushes and boughs are to be laid round this post, and kept hollow at the bottom to the extent of ten yards, for the partridges to run under. Many coveys will be driven into these bushes by the kite, who will fly round the bushes for a few turns, and then alight on the post, where there must be a trap let in ready to receive him, such as described for the martern.

There is no better trap than the common warren iron trap; it should be about eight inches square, not round, as a square trap will catch with much more certainty than a round one. For the kite, set the trap against a bush which extends a little, so that you may place the end of it against the bush, and that the trap may be somewhat flanked by the bush, that he must walk on to it.

Bury the trap lightly, and fasten a piece of bullock's lights, a piece of rabbit, or almost anything of a similar kind, not to the bridge of it, but

beyond it, so that he may walk on the trap; then scatter about two handfuls of feathers round and over the trap: the feathers will allure him down from a great height, he supposing some bird lies there killed. See the article TRAPPING.

THE BUZZARD.

THIS bird (called also the puttock), as I have observed in the preceding article, appears scarcely so large as the kite, nor is it so handsome. Its prevailing colour is brown. It is by no means uncommon in this country; it is found on the open downs, on the moors, in the fens, and in the woodlands. It is very common in the woods of Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire, &c., where it may be frequently seen hovering over them for hours together. It keeps sailing slowly in circles at a great height, seeming as if it did not move its wings, precisely after the manner of the eagle.

The buzzard has been very erroneously described by those who have written on the subject; he is represented by them as "a sluggish, inactive bird, that often remains perched upon the same bough for whole days together; and more resembles the owl kind in countenance than any other rapa-

cious bird of day." The fact is, the buzzard, like all carnivorous birds, when once he has made a good meal, becomes inactive till the cravings of his appetite return; but those who see this bird will have some difficulty to trace much resemblance betwixt his countenance and that of the owl.

The buzzard brings forth its young in trees, and generally in the old nest of a crow, which it repairs for the purpose. The nest is never found at the extremity of any of the branches, like that of the rook, but generally placed on or near the butt of the tree, where the branches fork off or divide. They seldom lay more than two eggs, sometimes only one, which is nearly as large as that of a hen, but rounder; of a dusky white colour, marked with red spots. I have frequently taken the eggs from the nests of these birds, as well as the young; and when the nest contained young, I have often found food in it also: I have found birds, and parts of birds, and also rats.

The buzzard found on the moors, &c., is a variety of the same tribe, which forms its nest on the ground, and is scarcely so large as the buzzard of the woods. They have similar habits and manners, however, and are destructive to game. Like the kite, they are unable to overtake the grouse or the partridge by rapidity of flight, but they con-

trive to surprise them; they destroy many leverets, and are altogether very fierce and very mischievous.

They are easily caught with a young rabbit for a bait. He may be taken with a middle-sized square steel trap, baited with fresh bullock's lights, a pigeon, small bird, &c.; he may, in fact, be taken in the same manner as the kite, which I have already described.

THE SPARROW-HAWK.

This bird is the swiftest and the fiercest of the hawk tribes which generally breed in England. The male sparrow-hawk is about twelve, and the female fifteen inches in length.

The sparrow-hawk is not only very destructive to game, but will make great havock among young poultry of all kinds; it will commit its depredations in the most daring manner, even in the presence of man.

These birds form their nests in high rocks or lofty ruins; and they are often found in the woods in this country, where they trim up the old nest of a crow or a magpie for the purpose. They lay four or five eggs.

The nest of this bird should be diligently sought

(and so, indeed, should the nest of all birds destructive to game) and destroyed, shooting the parent birds first, if possible. It is very easy to shoot the female while sitting; when, however, there are young in the nest, the destruction of both the old birds may perhaps be accomplished. If one be killed the other will come to feed the young, and thus afford opportunity for the object in view. It may be remarked, that the sparrow hawk does not feed its young nearly so often as the crow, the magpie, &c., but it gives the food to its young in much larger quantities at a time; and this is the case with the kite and all the hawk tribes. The old birds, for instance, after having satiated themselves become inactive, however fierce and vigilant at other periods; and as they devour a considerable quantity at a time, so the calls of hunger are delayed, and this delay will be found in proportion to the quantity of food which the bird has eaten.

I have frequently taken young sparrow-hawks from nests which I have found in the woods in the midland counties, on which occasions the nests generally contained parts of birds. I once found part of a wood pigeon lying by the side of three young sparrow-hawks—the remainder of the wood pigeon lay at the bottom of the tree. It is tolerably evident that a sparrow-hawk could not carry so large a bird as a wood pigeon, and this

seems to account for the circumstance of part of the latter being at the foot of the tree.

I have repeatedly seen a sparrow-hawk knock down a partridge; if on such occasions the hawk be approached too soon, the partridge will fly away. The former when he pounces upon the latter holds it fast, when on the ground, with his talons; he plucks away the feathers from the back or belly, and begins to devour his victim alive; so that if approached while the partridge remains strong, as its wings have not been touched, it will fly away.

I once observed a hawk strike an individual bird of a covey which I had sprung; I made for the place, and was lucky enough to kill both the hawk and the partridge, one with either barrel. The partridge rose on the wing stoutly, and on picking it up I found its back stripped of the feathers.

The abstinence, or rather the mode of feeding, of all the tribes of hawks may be very well understood from the following observations:—A friend of mine for several years kept an eagle (the small brown eagle, such as are frequently seen in the Highlands of Scotland), and was in the habit of giving it fowls for food. When the bird felt the calls of hunger it would seize a fowl, which was thrown to it, with the utmost fierceness; and

after having gorged itself would become inactive, and would doze away a day or two, or perhaps more, before it again testified any inclination for food.

The sparrow-hawk may be trapped, but not so easily as the kite or the buzzard; he is more active, and more choice in his food than these birds. The trap used for the sparrow-hawk need not be so large as for the kite or the buzzard; it should, however, be properly concealed, and for the bait a sparrow or a lark is to be preferred. See the article TRAPPING.

THE HOBBY.

THIS bird is scarcely so large as the sparrow-hawk, but very rapid on the wing. They are seldom seen in the south of England, nor are they numerous in any part of it, though they breed in the northern counties. I have repeatedly met with them on the moors, where they make great havoc among the young grouse. They may be trapped in the same manner as the sparrow-hawk.

THE MERLIN

Is the smallest of the hawk tribe seen in this country; though small, being not much larger than the thrush, it yields to none of the tribe in fierceness. I have seen it strike snipes repeatedly; nor would it, I am persuaded, hesitate to attack a partridge. In crossing one of the moorlands of Staffordshire, some dozen years since, I observed a merlin on the ground by the side of the road, which, on my approach, took wing, but after flying about a hundred yards again alighted; and this the bird repeated several times. At length, on approaching it for the last time, the hawk suddenly turned round and struck a snipe. The snipe was on the ground when struck by the merlin, and the latter made the utmost efforts to carry off the prize. It rose with the snipe in its talons, but flew with great difficulty. Being on horseback I pursued; the merlin dropped its victim several times, and again seized it with the quickness of lightning, till at length it became completely tired, and was forced, very reluctantly, to relinquish the snipe altogether.

The male and female of the merlin are perhaps more dissimilar in plumage than any of the hawk tribe. The male is a dark-blue or slate colour,

with yellow-spotted breast; the female is not unlike the male sparrow-hawk. They breed on the fells in Westmoreland, and the north of England on the ground, making their nest in a bunch of heath, with an entrance to it, resembling a small rabbit hole. They may be trapped in the breeding season, by concealing a trap in their passage to their nests, or they may be shot at the same season; the latter, however, is no easy matter, for such is the rapidity of their zig-zag flight when disturbed from the nest, that the best shot in the world can never make sure of his object.

THE KESTREL.

This bird is very common, and consequently very well known in this country. It is about the same size as the sparrow-hawk; its prevailing colour is spotted brown; and it is distinguished for that stationary poise in the air which, in some parts of England, has procured it the appellation of the *wind-hover*. It preys upon frogs, field mice, lizards, &c., upon which it darts from above. It seems, however, to prefer birds, when it can procure them. I have seen it pounce upon larks; I have seen it pursue a wounded partridge, and I have no doubt it would strike a small leveret.

Like the sparrow-hawk, the kestrel forms its

nest in rocks, lofty ruins, and more frequently perhaps uses the old nest of a magpie or a crow for the purpose of bringing up its young. It lays four or five eggs—larger than those of a pigeon, more obtuse, and of a dusky white with red spots. The hawk tribe in general lay large eggs, of a rounder form, too, than those of any other birds which have fallen under my notice.

The kestrel may be destroyed precisely in the same manner as the sparrow-hawk. They are however, neither so bold nor so swift as that bird, and are therefore less destructive amongst game.

Some years ago I picked up a young kestrel which had fallen out of the nest, which was in the ruins of a chapel. The bird was well-fledged, but not quite able to raise itself on the wing. I placed it in a small room where it received its food; but, being suddenly called from home, the bird was forgotten, and remained without food for four days. I then presented a sparrow to him, which he greedily devoured; nor did he, in fact, take much pains in plucking it, he swallowed most of the feathers, and all the bones. And it must be here remarked, that hawks in general are not very nice in this respect. When they swallow any indigestible substances they are thrown up some time afterwards, rolled together in the form of a quid.

My kestrel became docile; I gave him his full

liberty; he flew about the premises, and would come when called. He would eat bread when very hungry, but preferred birds to any other kind of food. I placed a young living partridge before him, which he instantly seized, tore in pieces, and devoured very greedily. I have frequently held a small bird in my hand (a sparrow for instance), and have been as often astonished at the dexterity with which he flew and seized it. When supplied with food, he never attempted to meddle with or seize the small birds about the house and garden, which had, in fact, grown familiar to him; but being neglected, he was constrained by hunger to procure food. I observed him kill several small birds; he began to absent himself, and at length flew quite away.

THE WHITE OWL.

THERE is a great variety of the owl tribe to be found in different parts of the world; but the white and the brown owl only are known as natives of this country. All birds of the owl kind have one common mark by which they are distinguished from others; their eyes are formed for seeing better in the dusk than in the broad glare of daylight. As in the eyes of cats, there is a quality in the retina that takes in the rays of light

so copiously as to permit their seeing in places almost dark, so in these birds there is the same conformation of that organ; and though they cannot see in a total exclusion of light, yet they discover their prey with the utmost facility when such objects are in no wise recognizable by human vision. These birds, no doubt, see the best in twilight or the dusk of the evening. The pupil of the eye in owls is capable of opening very wide or shutting very close; by contracting the pupil the brighter light of the day, which would act too powerfully on the sensibility of the retina, is excluded; by dilating the pupil the bird takes in the more faint rays of the night, and thereby is enabled to spy its prey, and catch it with greater facility in the dark; besides this, there is an irradiation on the back of the eye, and the very iris itself has a faculty of reflecting the rays of light, so as to assist vision in the gloomy places where these birds are found to frequent. Those nights when the moon shines are the times of their most successful plunder.

The white or barn owl is well known in this country; it is called also the screech owl, from the hideous hooting which it makes in winter, particularly in severe frosty weather. The plumage of this bird is elegant. A circle of soft white feathers surrounds each of the eyes. All the upper parts of the body are of a fine pale yellow,

variegated with white spots; and the under parts are entirely white. The legs are feathered down to the claws.

These birds frequent ruins, barns, &c., where they breed. They lay four or five eggs, and the young are a very considerable time before they are able to fly and provide for themselves. During the night, while the young are in the nest, these birds (both the old and the young I imagine) emit the most disagreeable snoring noise I ever heard; and those who have heard it will not soon forget it.

In many places these white owls are protected by the farmer, on account of their destroying mice, to which if they confined their depredations they would not have found a place in this little work; but they prey indiscriminately upon mice, birds, &c., and at times find their way into the dove-house, where they make great havock among the young pigeons. In the breeding season they are destructive to game. This bird quits his hiding place in the twilight, and takes a regular circuit round the fields, skimming slowly and silently along in search of food. Should any young partridges come in its way they are sure to suffer.

They are very easily destroyed. When their retreat is known they may either be caught or shot without difficulty, since they are to be found

at home during the day, which they will not leave unless forced from it.

Though so stupid in appearance during daylight, they are nevertheless a very fierce bird. I kept one of these birds for several years. I procured him from the nest before he was half-fledged, but experienced no difficulty in rearing him. Whenever, in the daylight, he was placed in the middle of the room, he immediately made for some dark corner, a strong light being evidently disagreeable to him. I pinioned him and placed him in a barn, where he continued, but never appeared susceptible of any attachment. He passed the day in the darkest recess he could find, in a sort of dull, moping stupidity; but on the near approach of evening he sallied forth lively and active, and his manners were evidently as fierce as any of the hawk tribe. In seizing and carrying off his food he manifested great strength. However, there is very little that is interesting in what may be called a domestic owl. He was ultimately killed by a ferret.

THE BROWN OR WOOD OWL.

This bird is about the size of the white owl (a foot in length), but much more destructive to game.

It is brown, spotted with black on the head, wings, and back.

This is a very fierce, rapacious, and destructive bird. During the day it remains concealed in the darkest and most gloomy recesses of the wood, in the hollow of some old tree, or amongst ivy, which is frequently found (in some parts of the country at least) very thickly matted round the butts of trees. On the approach of evening, when hares and rabbits come out to feed, and about the time when partridges are collecting together for the night, this bird issues from its retreat, and destroys an astonishing number of the young of the animals just mentioned. They will also enter the dove-cote, particularly if it happen to be situated at a short distance from the house, where they make havoc amongst the young pigeons: they are not scrupulous, however; and therefore, if they do not meet with young birds, they will seize the old pigeons. I have known both the brown and the white owl (at a period when these nocturnal depredators had no young to attend) remain in the pigeon-house after having gorged themselves with their prey; when they, like the hawk tribe, become sleepy and inanimate: thus the owl takes up his abode in the midst of the most delicious fare; and would remain, if unmolested, till not a single pigeon, young or old, were left in the place. But when the owl attempts in this way to take up his

abode, the circumstance becomes known immediately from the consternation of the pigeons; and the plunderer is easily destroyed: he may either be caught in the pigeon-house or forced out and shot.

On examining a nest of the brown owl that had in it two young ones, several pieces of young rabbits, leverets, and other small animals were found. The female owl and one of the young birds were taken from the nest; the other was left to entice the male bird, which was absent when the nest was discovered. On the following morning there were found in the nest no fewer than three young rabbits, that had been brought by the cock to the young one during the night.

The brown owl forms its nest, for the most part, in the hollow trunk of an old tree, where it deposits four or five large dusky-white elliptical eggs. The young remain in the nest, if unmolested, for a very considerable period.

As these birds are so destructive to game, their nest ought to be diligently sought; when the old birds, as well as the nascent progeny, may be easily destroyed: one of the old birds may frequently be caught on the nest, and sometimes both of them. These birds have very sharp strong talons; which they will not fail to use very vigorously, as I have often experienced. They are able to maintain their hold with these natural

defences with astonishing tenacity, as the following anecdote will exemplify :—Being out shooting, I accidentally met with one of these birds, which I fired at and brought to the ground; it was winged, and had one leg fractured. I had with me a fine young black setter, two years old; and the young dog, seeing so strange a creature on the ground, was prompted by curiosity to approach it. By some means the owl contrived to get fast hold of the dog's long coat with the talons of the leg which remained unhurt—it inserted them near the dog's hind quarters; which was no sooner perceived by the dog than he moved forward, and finding he did not thus get rid of his unwelcome customer, he became terrified, took to his heels—nor could all my calling and whistling induce him to stop: on the contrary, he took a turn in the same field where I was standing; when, setting his head towards home, he made straight away, howling and yelling as if a tin-kettle had been fastened to his tail. The scene was laughable in the highest degree; arising, as it did, purely from accident. It so happened that the dog's way home was formed for the first three-quarters of a mile by a gentle ascent, the fences being low, which gave me a very good view of the business. I was astonished at the manner in which the owl kept its hold with one foot only! Fence after fence the dog passed through, and yet the bird

clung to him till he had run over several fields; and when at length the dog had got rid of the object of his alarm his fears did not altogether subside: on the contrary, he made the best of his way home, without once looking behind him!

Owls may be caught in traps; but the gun is preferable, as they are easily shot. Their destruction, however, is best effected at the breeding season.

As owls are seldom seen abroad in the daytime, and as it is generally known that their vision is defective in a strong light, so, in some parts of the country (in Leicestershire, for instance) a notion is prevalent that when one of these birds happens to be seen on the wing in the daytime, if he be forced to fly against the sun he will be so dazzled as to fall senseless, as it were, to the ground. An old owl cannot be thus forced against the broad glare of the sun, as I well know from repeated trials when a schoolboy; but if a young bird, after it has left the nest, be observed in the open fields in open day, it is no difficult matter to run it down, whether the sun be shining or not. If pursued on foot as fast as possible, it will not sustain above two or three short flights, each of which will be shorter than the preceding; when it will drop to the ground, and may be picked up with the hand.

The brown owl is not general throughout the

kingdom. I never saw one of these birds in Lancashire, or on the north-west coast of the kingdom. I have seen them in Yorkshire, as well as in many other parts of England; they will be found most numerous in the woody parts of the country. They are also common in the Isle of Man.

As, however, there are few creatures that have not some redeeming shade in their character, so it may be observed of the brown owl* that it will destroy field mice, and rats also; as I once found two rats, about half grown and partly eaten, in a nest of these birds, lying by the side of the young. The nest was formed in a deep and copious hollow in the trunk of an old and decayed ash, situated in a meadow near the village of Belton, in Leicestershire. It contained four young birds; which, with the assistance of the late Earl of Huntingdon (then a boy), I contrived to reach and draw out with a pair of tongs.

THE RAVEN.

This bird, though very well known, is not very numerous in this kingdom, and is principally found in the hilly and mountainous districts. It is frequently to be seen on the moors, as those

* In some parts of the country this bird is called the wood-owl.

who visit the grouse mountains are very well aware. It frequents the forests of this country: I have often observed it in Charnwood, in Sherwood, and in Delamere forests; but I never saw these birds so numerous as in the Highlands of Scotland, where they share perhaps with the eagle in the plunder of the hills.

The raven is an obscene bird; and, like the vulture, is fond of carrion, upon which it will greedily feed whenever opportunity offers. It may be considered, however, and justly so, as a general marauder, that will prey indiscriminately upon whatever falls in its way. It will destroy rabbits, leverets, young ducks, chickens, and young game of all kinds: it will devour the eggs of partridges, pheasants, and wild ducks. Nothing, in fact, comes amiss to it; whether its prey be living or dead, it is all the same, the raven falls to with a voracious appetite. In the northern regions it preys in concert with the white bear, the wolf, the fox, and the eagle: it eats shore fish and shell fish; with the latter it soars into the air, and drops them from on high to break the shell, and thus to get at the contents.

The raven is very suspicious, and keeps from the presence or contact of man, and on this account he is not easily killed. These birds form their nests in holes and upon ledges in the face of inaccessible rocks, and also upon high trees, where they fix it

either upon the top of the butt or the forks of the strongest branches; and, if unmolested, will annually use the same place for this purpose for ages, the raven being remarkable for longevity, and has been known, it is said, to live for more than one hundred years.

The female lays four or five eggs of a dusky green, spotted with brown. She is attended by the male during the period of incubation, who not only provides her with food, but takes her place when she leaves the nest.

When the nest of these birds happens to be formed in a tree, the eggs or young may be destroyed without difficulty, and the old birds shot also. But the case is different when the raven chooses a rock for the purpose of nesting, as it is generally so fixed in the face of it as to be quite inaccessible, except by means similar to those which are adopted by the inhabitants of St. Kilda to come at the young of sea-fowl.

Very few in this country will, however, think the destruction of a raven's nest worth so much trouble and so much danger; and after all it is ten to one if they succeed in shooting the old birds also. They may be trapped in the same manner as the kite or the buzzard. They may be poisoned also; but I must confess I am not fond of the use of poison where it can be avoided*.

* See the article POISON.

In some parts of England they are seldom seen; and are perhaps, after all, much more injurious to the shepherd than the sportsman. They will pick out the eyes of sheep whenever an opportunity offers, such as the sheep being held by its wool by a briar or other thing; and they also destroy young and weakly lambs.

When the raven is taken young and domesticated, he becomes very familiar, and possesses many qualities that render him highly amusing. Busy, inquisitive, and impudent, he goes everywhere; affronts and drives off the dogs, plays his tricks on the poultry, and is particularly assiduous in cultivating the goodwill of the cook, who is generally his favourite in the family. He is a glutton by nature, and a thief by habit. He does not confine himself to petty depredations on the pantry or the larder; he aims at more magnificent plunder—at spoils that he can neither exhibit nor enjoy, but which, like a miser, he rests satisfied in having the satisfaction of sometimes visiting and contemplating in secret. A piece of money, a tea-spoon, or a ring, is always a tempting bait to his avarice: these he will slily seize upon, and, if not watched, will carry to his favourite hole. A gentleman's butler having missed many silver spoons and other articles, without being able to account for the mode in which they disappeared, at last observed a tame raven that was kept about

the house with one in his mouth; and, on watching him to his hiding-place, discovered there upwards of a dozen more.

The raven, when brought up in a domestic state, will imitate the human voice better than any other of the feathered creation which breeds in this country; nor is this all, as it will imitate the voice of animals, and in these respects is fairly entitled to be ranked next the parrot. A carpenter, at the village of Sheepshead in Leicestershire, kept a tame raven which would imitate not only the human voice, but also the snarling, growling, and barking of the yard dog; it would, moreover, run after children which came into the yard, bark at them, and bite them very severely. A tame raven, indeed, ought never to be kept where there are children.

THE CARRION CROW.

This bird may be regarded as a smaller kind of raven, as it is similar in colour, in form, manners, and habits; but not much above half the size. The carrion crow is well known all over the kingdom. These birds live chiefly in pairs, form their nests in trees in the woods, and also in trees situated in the hedgerows. The female lays four or five eggs, like those of the raven, but smaller;

and, like that bird, is fed by the male while sitting. These crows feed on putrid flesh or fish, as well as on worms, insects, and various kinds of grain. They will, like the raven, pick out the eyes of sheep or lambs; and, as they are much more numerous, they consequently do much more mischief. They will kill and devour young rabbits, young hares, and young winged game. During the time that game is breeding they are for ever on the look-out for the nests of the partridge and the pheasant; the latter of which are frequently destroyed by them, as the pheasant does not, like the partridge, cover the eggs when she leaves the nest. The nest of the wild duck also they will rob if they can find it. Further, I have known these birds to destroy the eggs of a turkey which happened to be sitting at a short distance from the house.

Chickens and young ducks do not always escape their attacks. On the northern coast of Ireland, a friend of Dr. Darwin's saw above a hundred crows preying upon muscles: each crow took a muscle up into the air; and letting it fall, the shell either broke or opened, and the bird thus obtained the prize.

There are at present more of these birds bred in England than in any other country of Europe. In the reign of Henry VIII. carrion crows had become so numerous, and were thought so preju-

dicial to the farmer, that they were considered an evil worthy of parliamentary redress; and an act was passed for their destruction, in which also the rook and the jackdaw were included. Every hamlet was ordered to destroy a certain number of crow's nests for ten successive years; and the inhabitants were compelled to assemble at stated times during that period, in order to consult on the most proper and effectual means of extirpating them.

The following are singular modes adopted in some countries for catching these birds: A living crow is fastened on its back firmly to the ground, by means of a brace on each side at the origin of the wings. In this painful position the animal struggles and screams; the rest of its species flock to its cries from all quarters, with the intention probably of affording relief; thus presenting an opportunity of firing at a number of them.

Crows are also caught with cones of paper baited with raw flesh: as the bird introduces his head to devour the bait, which is near the bottom, the paper, being smeared with bird-lime, sticks to the feathers of the neck, and he thus becomes hooded. Unable to get rid of the paper, which covers his eyes, the crow rises almost perpendicularly into the air, till, quite exhausted, he sinks down near the spot whence he rose, and is taken.

If a crow be put into a cage, and exposed in the

fields, his calls generally attract the attention of others that are in the neighbourhood, which flock round their imprisoned brother; and thus a shot is afforded at a number of them. Strong bird-lime twigs may be laid for them, at such a period, round the cage.

The carrion crow may be trapped, like the hawk or the raven. These birds are best destroyed during the breeding season, when the old birds may be shot, and the eggs or young taken. They may also, as well as all vermin, be destroyed by poison.—See the article POISON.

Willoughby says the carrion crow may be taught to articulate several words with tolerable distinctness.

THE ROOK.

THIS bird is about the size of the carrion crow, but its plumage is more glossy. It also differs in having its nostrils and the roots of the bill naked; in the carrion crow these are covered with hard bristly feathers. It is not quite so carnivorously inclined as the carrion crow; but it will, nevertheless, feed on putrid carcases when more choice food cannot be obtained; and it is very destructive to game. As it is not so generally destroyed as the carrion crow, it is consequently much more

numerous; and its depredations upon the eggs of game are consequently much greater. If the mowing season happen at an early period, and thus expose the eggs of the partridge or pheasant, they are almost sure to be devoured. They can see the eggs on the ground from a very considerable height; and if they perceive the partridge or the pheasant on the nest, it is ten to one if they wait till she leaves it. I have seen two or three rooks approach the nest of a partridge together; and, after driving off the sitting bird, have fought stout battles amongst themselves for the eggs.

The rook is less inclined to seize leverets, young rabbits, or the young of winged game, perhaps, than the carrion crow; but is not to be trusted in this respect. Those who keep rookeries, therefore, may fairly calculate on having game destroyed by these birds; and, as they take extensive flights, so the game of the neighbourhood will not fail to suffer.

In regard to the farmer, the question of the good or the evil of rooks seems by no means decided. They devour many grubs, &c., &c.; they destroy much corn also. About the time that oats and barley are sown, rooks are feeding their young; and as they have generally four or five to provide for, and these everlastingly craving for food, the old birds are kept very busily employed. On these occasions they will be observed to visit

fields newly sown; and at such times I have repeatedly shot one of them as he flew on his way back to feed his young. It must here be observed that the rook is able to carry a considerable quantity of food at one time by means of a kind of bag situated at the base of the bill, and which is not observable except when thus distended. When the rook has filled this receptacle or bag it is easily seen at a distance, whenever, at least, the bird is within gun-shot. This may be justly regarded as a distinctive peculiarity in the rook, which has not been sufficiently pointed out by naturalists, or those who have written on the subject.

But to return. I have found the bag in question filled with various kinds of grubs, together with a quantity of oats or barley, as the field which they visited happened to be sown with either the one or the other. In fields planted with potatoes these birds will dig up the sets; and they will also make havoc amongst ripening corn, as well as after it is cut. In fact the rook is, after all, a general plunderer; whose good qualities, I am inclined to think, are overbalanced by his mischievous propensities. At all events, he is the most destructive bird of all others to the eggs of game, and indeed to any other eggs which he is able to discover; because, as he is a kind of privileged being, and much more numerous than

either the carrion crow or any of the egg suckers, his havoc consequently is more extensive. Rooks, however, take alarm at the sight of a gun; the use of which they seem to understand. A consciousness of danger from mankind is much more apparent in the rook than in most other birds; and many of the country people are of opinion that they can *smell gunpowder!* Their olfactory organs may be acute enough; but it is the sight of the gun, and not the smell of the powder, which alarms them.—See the article HEREDITARY INSTINCT.

The rook is a gregarious bird; and seems to be fond not only of the society of his own species, but admits others of the feathered tribes into his community. Thus we frequently see the jackdaw and starling in his company; to the latter of which he forms a protector. I saw a starling, in the autumn of the year 1824, pursued by a hawk. The race was highly interesting. The starling made the best of its way towards a great number of rooks that were flying in a sort of circles in the air, screaming all the way, the hawk vigorously pursuing; the one struggling for life, the other eager for a supper. The hawk gained upon his intended victim, and for a second or two it was doubtful whether the starling would be able to reach the sanctuary, for which it was straining to the utmost. It accomplished the object, how-

ever; and the tyrant of the air no sooner saw it enter the circle of its numerous and strong feathered friends than it gave up the pursuit. I was much pleased with the termination of the business.

The rook pursues and beats off the kite, the buzzard, and the hawk tribe in general. It sometimes, however, suffers for its temerity. In the year 1812, in the winter season, I observed a rook teazing and buffeting a large hawk; and the latter, from its size and manner, I took to be one of the falcon tribe, which, during winter, are sometimes seen in this country. The hawk bore the annoyance of his sable insulter for some time; but at length the latter fell to the ground, where he remained till I reached the spot; when I found the hawk had deprived him of one of his eyes, which was completely struck out; and though the bird did not appear otherwise injured, yet he was unable to fly.

Although the rook and the jackdaw are uniformly on the best terms of friendship, the case is widely different as relates to the raven, against which the rook appears to entertain an inveterate antipathy; and, indeed, not without cause, as the former will not hesitate to seize the young rooks in the nest for the purpose of feeding its young. Mr. Markwick says that, in the year 1778, as soon as a raven had built her nest in a tree ad-

joining to a very numerous rookery, all the rooks immediately forsook the spot. Something similar occurred at Mr. Seymer's, at Harford, in Dorsetshire: the rooks did not quit the place; but there was "no peace in the rookery night nor day till one of the old ravens was killed and the nest destroyed."

Rooks build in March, or earlier, as the season happens to be mild or otherwise; and, after the breeding season is over, forsake the nesting trees, and for some time roost elsewhere; but they return periodically during the year.

These birds generally resort to some distant part in search of food during the day, but return regularly every evening to their roosting trees in vast flights; where, after flying round for some time, with much noise and clamour, they take up their abode for the night.

Rooks may be destroyed in the same manner as carrion crows.

Some years ago, in two groves belonging to Daniel Wilson, Esq., Dalham Tower, Westmoreland, there were a rookery and a heronry; and for a number of years the rooks and herons had thus continued near neighbours and lived very peaceably. At length, in the spring of 1775, the trees of the heronry were cut down, when the herons endeavoured to effect a settlement in the rookery. The rooks opposed the invasion of their

territories; and desperate battles ensued in consequence. Many of the rooks were killed, and some of the herons lost their lives; but the latter at last succeeded in obtaining possession of some of the trees, and harmony was restored between the two communities.

THE HOODED, OR ROYSTON CROW.

This bird is called also, in some parts, the ash-coloured crow. The breast, belly, back, and upper part of the neck, is of a pale ash colour; the head and wings glossed over with a fine blue. He is about the size of the rook and the carrion crow, and his manners and habits are similar to those of the latter; but as he only visits this country in winter, and not in great numbers, his depredations, amongst game at least, cannot be extensive. These birds are very common in the Highlands of Scotland, where they breed, and where they are to be seen all the year; and it would appear as if they only left these hilly and rugged regions to visit the more southern parts in search of food, as they uniformly return on the approach of spring, or sooner if the weather becomes mild.

As they seek their food, and feed upon the same materials as the carrion crow, they may be destroyed in the same manner.

In the month of December, 1830, being upon the low lands, not far from the sea, about fifteen miles from Liverpool, I observed three of these crows hovering strangely in the air about thirty feet from the ground, and at length a partridge rose, screaming loudly, and was pursued by these birds; but being swifter on the wing than its foes, gained the cover of some strong bushes, beneath which it concealed itself. The crows soon reached the place, and each took its station on small adjacent trees, evidently waiting for their prey. They flew away on my near approach, after having continued to watch for twenty minutes; or I have no doubt they would ultimately have killed and devoured the partridge. Carrion crows and ravens will do the same when opportunity offers.

THE JACKDAW.

This bird is smaller than the rook; of the same colour, except about the head, where the feathers are paler, or ash-coloured. His head is very large for his size; and he is a very busy, inquisitive, and artful bird.

Jackdaws frequent church steeples, old towers, and ruins; where they form their nests. They also build in hollow trees, near to rookeries; and very frequently join the rooks in their foraging

parties. Like the rook, they will destroy the eggs of game; but I am not aware that they ever strike or seize on young partridges, though this is not unlikely, should they happen to fall in their way.

A gentleman who "was walking with his friend in the Inner Temple Garden, about the middle of May, 1802, observed a jackdaw hovering in a very unusual manner, over the Thames. A barrel was floating near the place—a buoy to a net that some fishermen were hauling; and we at first thought the bird was about to alight upon it. This, however, proved a mistake; for he descended to the surface of the water, and fluttered for a few seconds with his bill and feet immersed; he then rose, flew to a little distance, and did the same; after which he made a short circuit, and alighted on a barge about fifty yards from the garden, where he devoured a small fish. When this was done, he made a third attempt, caught another, and flew off with it in his mouth."

These birds feed principally on worms and the grubs of insects; like the rook, also, they will eat grain. They may be destroyed in the breeding season, or trapped at other periods; and caught in the same manner as the carrion crow or the hawk.

Jackdaws are easily tamed, when taken young; and may be taught to pronounce several words.

When domesticated, however, they become, like the raven, very great thieves; and, like that bird, are fond of carrying off and concealing silver spoons, pieces of money, &c.

THE MAGPIE.

This bird, like the jackdaw, may be taught to articulate words. In this respect, however, its powers are far superior to those of that bird. It is, at the same time, as great a thief, and, in a wild state, far more destructive to game. It is known by various local appellations. Thus, the country people of Lancashire call it the pianet; while in Derbyshire, the adjoining county, it is known by the name of the chatterpie.

In form and plumage the magpie is an elegant bird: it feeds on almost all substances, animal as well as vegetable. It forms its nest with great art; leaving a hole in the side for admittance, and covering the whole upper part with a texture of thorny twigs, so closely and strongly interwoven as to bid defiance to attack. The lower part of the nest is externally formed of thorny twigs, but these firmly cemented together by clay, and the interior well lined with soft twigs, bents of grass, &c.; on which the eggs, from six to eight or nine in number, are deposited. The situation chosen

for the nest is either in trees or hedges; it is found in the highest trees of the wood, and also in strong thorn hedges.

Although the magpie is too well known to need a particular description, it may be remarked that its black, its white, its green, and purple, with the rich and gilded combination of glosses on its tail, are as fine as any that adorn the most beautiful of the feathered tribe. At the same time it is vain, restless, noisy, and quarrelsome; it is an unwelcome intruder every where, and never misses an opportunity of doing mischief. A wounded lark, or a young chicken separated from the hen, are sure plunder; and the magpie will even sometimes strike the blackbird or the thrush. They may be often seen perched on the back of an ox or a sheep, picking up the insects to be found there, chattering, and tormenting the poor animal; and if a sheep happens to be held fast in a briar, the bird will seldom fail to pick out its eyes. They seek the nests of the smaller birds; and, if the parent escapes, the eggs make up for the deficiency. The thrush and the blackbird are but too frequently robbed by this assassin; and they make great havoc among the eggs of game, and will also seize young partridges. I have little doubt that it will kill young rabbits and small leverets. In short, it may be remarked that no food comes amiss to this bird; it shares with

ravens in their carrion, with rooks in their grain, and with the cuckoo in birds' eggs. But it seems possessed of a providence not usual with gluttons; as, when it is satisfied for the present, it lays up the remainder of the feast for another occasion.

The magpie may be trapped or poisoned (see TRAPPING—POISONING). Pains should, however, be taken to destroy the nests of these birds; and the old birds should be killed at the same time, if possible. One or both the old birds may be caught in the nest with lime twigs. The gun may also be used if necessary.

THE JAY.

THIS is perhaps the most beautiful of British birds. Its delicate cinnamon-coloured back and breast, with blue wing coverts, barred with black and white, are extremely handsome. On its forehead it has a tuft of whitish feathers, streaked with black, which it has the power of erecting or depressing at pleasure. Its voice, however, is harsh, grating, and disagreeable. In a domestic state it will, like the magpie, articulate a number of words, as well as imitate a variety of sounds.

The jay builds an artless nest in our woods, at no very great height from the ground, in which it generally deposits six eggs. It feeds on acorns,

seeds, and fruits of all kinds; and will destroy the eggs of game. Its depredations, however, are neither so general nor so extensive as those of the magpie; and, if its destruction be thought necessary, it may be easily trapped or poisoned, or destroyed in the breeding season.

THE STARLING

Is well known all over the kingdom. It is a busy, active, prolific little bird; which, however, is accused of entering the dovecote and destroying the eggs of the pigeons. It certainly possesses a very voracious appetite; and although no instance of its destroying the eggs of game has ever fallen under my cognizance, yet, if it be true that it will destroy the eggs of the pigeon, and even their young, it would scarcely hesitate to destroy those of the partridge and the pheasant also. The principal food of the starling, however, consists of snails, worms, and insects; and in this respect it is beneficial to the farmer.

THE GULL

Is not often seen in the interior parts of the kingdom; but in the neighbourhood of the coast it is

observed, with a slow flight, hovering over rivers to prey upon the small kinds of fish. It is seen following the ploughman to pick up worms. It will devour carrion, garbage of any kind; and, indeed, any animal substance. It is extremely voracious; and will destroy eggs of any kind when they fall in its way.

THE HERON.

Of all birds that are known, this is one of the most formidable enemies of the scaly tribes. There is, in fresh water, scarcely a fish, however large, that the heron will not strike at and wound, though unable to carry it off; but the small fry are his chief subsistence: these, pursued by their larger fellows of the deep, are obliged to take refuge in shallow water, where they find the heron a more voracious and more formidable enemy. His method is to wade as far as he can into the water, and there patiently await the approach of his prey; into which he darts his bill with unerring aim, the moment it comes within his reach. Willoughby says that he has seen a heron that had no less than seventeen carp in his belly at once. These he would digest in six or seven hours, and then go to fishing again. "I have seen a carp," he continues, "taken out of a

heron's belly nine inches and a-half long. Some gentlemen who kept some herons, to try what quantity one of them would eat in a day, have put several small roach and dace in a tub; and they have found him eat fifty in a day, one day with another. In this manner, a single heron will destroy upwards of eighteen thousand store carp in a single year."

The heron, though he usually takes his prey by wading into the water, frequently also catches it while on the wing; but this is only in shallow water, where he is able to dart with more certainty than in the deeps: for in this case, though the fish does at the first sight of its enemy descend, yet the heron with his long bill and legs instantly pins it to the bottom, and thus seizes it securely. In this manner, after having been seen with its long neck under water for the space of a minute, he will rise upon the wing with a trout or an eel struggling in his bill. The greedy bird, however, flies to the shore, scarcely gives it time to expire, but swallows it whole, and then returns again to fishing.

The heron, like many other birds, has various local names. In some places it is called the crane, as in Leicestershire, for instance: in Kent it is distinguished by the name of the hern; in Lancashire, the long-neck. I have repeatedly watched this very shy and suspicious bird. I had

several times, as I passed through Knowsley Park (belonging to the Earl of Derby), observed a heron on a large sheet of water; which, however, would not allow me to approach sufficiently near to satisfy my curiosity, though I was not armed with a gun, nor had I the least design on the life of the bird. Late one afternoon, in the autumn of 1829, in riding past the same place I observed my old acquaintance stationed nearly belly deep in the sheet of water before-mentioned. Intent upon his business, with his head turned on one side, as if the better to mark the approach of his prey, he allowed me to advance nearer than usual. It was not long before he struck and brought up a fish about six or seven inches long; he held it crosswise in his bill for a second, having no doubt seized it in that manner; he then, with a sort of toss or jerk of his head, completely altered its position—he thus placed it longitudinally in his bill, the head being nearest his throat, and swallowed it instantly.

The different parts of the structure of a heron are admirably adapted to its mode of life. It has long legs for the purpose of wading; a long neck, answerable to these, to reach its prey in the water; and a wide throat to swallow it. Its toes are long, and armed with strong hooked talons; one of which is serrated on the edge, the better to retain the fish. The bill is long and sharp, having

serratures towards the point, which stand backwards; these, after the prey is struck, act like the barbs of a fish-hook, in detaining it till the bird has time to seize it with the claws. Its large, broad, concave, and apparently heavy wings for so small a body, are of great use in enabling it to carry its load to the nest, which is sometimes at a great distance. Dr. Derham tells us that he has seen lying scattered under the trees of a large heronry, fishes many inches in length, which must have been conveyed by the birds from the distance of several miles; and D'Acre Barret, Esq., the owner of this heronry, saw a large eel that had been conveyed thither by one of them, notwithstanding the inconvenience it must have experienced from the fish writhing and twisting about.

The body of the heron, like that of the owl, is very small and always lean; and the skin is said to be scarcely thicker than gold-beater's skin. It is very probable that this bird is capable of long abstinence, as its usual food cannot be had at all times.

Though the heron is for the most part a solitary bird, yet in the breeding season they unite in large societies, and build in high trees. The nest is made of sticks, the thickest of which form the outside. The eggs are four or five in number, and of a dirty blue colour.

Since the decline of hawking herons have been

much reduced in number; heron hawking was formerly a favourite diversion in this kingdom, and a penalty of twenty shillings was incurred by any person taking the eggs of this bird; and, what may appear singular enough, its flesh in former times was much esteemed, being valued at an equal rate with that of the peacock.

These birds may be tamed without difficulty when taken young, but when the old birds are captured they become sulky and will not feed. A friend of mine winged an old heron; he took it home; it refused to eat; he forced food down its throat for several days, when it at length became familiar, took what was offered to it, continued about the premises several years, and was at last accidentally killed.

There are few heronries remaining in England; for as the diversion of heron hawking has given place to more modern, and certainly much superior diversion, the heron has lost that protection which it formerly received from man. It is driven from the immediate neighbourhood of the mansions of the great, where in the heronry it formerly reared its young in security. A solitary nest will occasionally be found at the present day in the neighbourhood of some marsh, which is generally robbed by the schoolboy before the young are hatched.

The heron is one of the most wary and suspi-

cious creatures in nature: aware that it is the object of general persecution, it seems for ever on the watch, in order to avoid the approach of its enemies, as well as to supply the cravings of its appetite, which, by the bye, seem almost insatiable. It is, therefore, very difficult to approach it within gunshot. If accidentally met with and shot by the sportsman, he should be careful how he suffers his dog to approach it, as if not completely killed or entirely disabled, it will be apt to strike out one or both the eyes of the dog with its terrific bill.

The depredations of the heron are entirely confined to the fish pond, and amongst the scaly tribes it is more destructive than the otter. The most obvious means which are presented to the mind for the destruction of this bird are fire arms; and, indeed, if it can be approached sufficiently near, it is very easily shot, being a large object, and having more difficulty than almost any other bird in getting on the wing. If not disturbed, the heron is a bird of regular habits, and will visit the same pond or pit while there are any fish to be obtained. If under such circumstances concealment be attainable, it is of course easily destroyed.

The heron may be hooked in the following manner:—Having discovered his haunt, procure three or four small roaches or dace, and three or

four strong hooks with wire to them; draw the wire just within the skin of the said fish, beginning outside the gills and running it to the tail, and then the fish will live four or five days. If the fish be dead the heron will perhaps not take him, unless pressed by hunger. A strong line of silk and wire should be attached, about two yards and a half long (if wire be not twisted with the silk the bird will bite it in two), and tie a stone about a pound weight to the line; but place not the hooks so deep in the water that the heron cannot wade to them. This method seldom fails. The line should be coloured dark green.

For further instructions on this head, we refer the reader to the article TRAPPING.

Like all other winged vermin, the nests of these birds should be sought and destroyed.

THE COOT AND WATER HEN.

THE two first of these birds are accused by some persons of feeding upon fish, but I think unjustly. They are found amongst the sedges of ponds and rivers, and their principal food consists of insects and vegetable substances which they find amongst them.

The water-hen is quarrelsome in the breeding season, and will not suffer any birds it can master

to come near its nest. Should partridges nestle near its abode it will not fail to attack and drive them away.

OF WATER BIRDS IN GENERAL.

Of these birds in general, the greater part only visit us on the approach of winter, and remain during the rigour of that season. As a dainty for the table they become an object of pursuit; but in regard to the depredations upon the finny tribes it amounts to nothing worth consideration in this place. The gun is the instrument generally used for the capture of them; but as there are other means of taking them, we refer the reader to the article TRAPPING, &c., where he will find those means pointed out and explained, with every requisite instruction.

THE OTTER.

This creature seems to form that link in the chain of gradation which unites terrestrial and aquatic animals, and is uncommonly destructive among fish; it presents the form of the quadruped, but resembles aquatic animals, in being able not only to swim with great speed, but also in possessing

the power of remaining for a considerable length of time under water. The otter, however, properly speaking, is not amphibious; he is not formed for continuing in the water, since, like other terrestrial creatures, he requires the aid of respiration; also, if in pursuit of prey, he gets entangled in a net, and has not time to cut with his teeth a sufficient number of meshes to effect his escape, he is drowned.

The usual length of the otter from the tip of the nose to the base of the tail is twenty-three inches, of the tail itself (which is broad at its insertion and tapers to a point) sixteen; but one, drowned by being entangled in a fisherman's net near Bath, in 1805, measured, if we are to believe the account (which appears more than suspicious), upwards of *six feet!* The weight of the male is from eighteen to twenty-six pounds; that of the female from thirteen to twenty-two pounds. The head and nose are broad and flat; the eyes are brilliant, though small, placed nearer the nose than is usual in quadrupeds, and situated in such a manner as to discern every object that is *above*, which gives the otter a singular aspect, somewhat resembling the eel: but this property of seeing what is above gives it a particular advantage when lurking at the bottom for its prey, as the fish cannot discern any object *under* them, and the otter, seizing them from beneath by the belly,

readily takes any number with little exertion. The ears are extremely short, and their orifice narrow; the opening of the mouth is small, the lips are capable of being brought very close together, somewhat resembling the mouth of a fish, are very muscular, and designed to close the mouth firmly while in the action of diving, and the nose and corners of the mouth are furnished with long whiskers. This animal has twenty-six teeth, six cutting and two canine above and below; of the former the middlemost are the least. It has besides five grinders on each side in both jaws. The legs are very short, but remarkably broad and muscular, the joints articulated so loosely that the otter can turn them quite back, bring them in a line with its body, and use them as fins; each foot has five toes, connected by strong webs, like those of water fowl. Thus nature in every particular has attended to the way of life allotted to an animal whose food is fish, and whose haunts must necessarily be about the waters. The otter has no heel, but a round ball under the sole of the foot, by which its footmark is easily distinguished, and this is termed the *seal*. The general shape of the otter is somewhat similar to that of an overgrown weasel; its colour is entirely a deep brown, except two small spots of white on each side of the nose, and one under the chin.

The otter shows great sagacity in forming its abode, burrowing under the ground on the banks of some river or lake, and generally making the entrance of its hole under water, working upwards towards the surface of the earth, and forming several holts or lodges, that in case of high floods it may have a retreat (for no animal is more careful to repose in a dry place), and there making a minute orifice for the admission of air; and even this aperture, for greater concealment, is frequently made in the middle of some thick bush. Sometimes its retreat is made in the hollow trunk, or upon the top, of a willow pollard that leans over the water. The otter is very cleanly, depositing its excrements, or *spraints*, in particular spots. Upon the least alarm, it flies to the water, where, by its rapidity in swimming and diving, it generally escapes from its pursuers.

In rivers the otter is always observed to swim against the stream to meet its prey; and, in very hard weather, when its natural food fails, the otter will kill lambs, sucking pigs, and poultry; and one was caught in a warren, where it had come, it was supposed, to prey on rabbits. The otter will also devour vegetables of different kinds, and gnaw the bark and twigs of young trees.

As the otter frequents ponds near gentlemen's houses, litters of young have been found in cellars, soughs, and drains. The cubs have been known

to have been suckled and brought up by a bitch; near South Molton, in Devonshire, this happened, and the young otter followed his master with the dogs, but seemed to have no inclination for the water.

There are many instances of the otter being tamed when taken young, and becoming so domesticated as to follow their master, answer to a name, and to employ their talents in fishing for him.

William Collis, of Kemmerston, near Wooler, Northumberland, had a tame otter which always attended him, would fish in the river, and when satiated return to him. In Collis's absence, his son took the otter out to fish; but it did not answer the boy's call, and was lost. The father being near the place where it was lost, after several days' search and calling by its name, it came creeping to his feet, and showed many marks of firm attachment.

When properly taught, the tame otter will bring the fish which it catches to its master, and immediately dive for more.

The most curious instance of the otter's being tamed is that where a person suffered it to follow him with his dogs, with which he used to hunt other otters; and it was remarkable that so far were the dogs from molesting it, that they would not even hunt an otter while it remained

with them. Upon this account, although the otter was useful in fishing and in driving trout and other fish towards the nets, the owner was obliged to dispose of it.

The manner of rearing otters to become domestic is to procure them as young as possible, and to carefully feed them at first with small fish and water; as they gain strength, milk is to be mixed with their food, the quantity of their fish provision lessened, and that of bread and vegetables increased, until at length they may be fed, if necessary, wholly upon bread. The mode of training them to hunt for fish requires both patience and assiduity. They are first taught to fetch and carry in the same manner as dogs are instructed; but, not possessing the same sagacity or docility, the operation of teaching them is rendered much more tedious and perplexing. It should be performed by accustoming them to take a truss made of leather and stuffed with wool, in the shape of a fish, into their mouth, and to drop it when ordered; to run after it when thrown forward, and bring it to their master. From this the process is to real fish, which are thrown dead into the water, and which they are taught to fetch to shore. In a short time living fish are made use of instead of dead ones, till at length the education of the animal becomes complete, and he readily obeys his master. Tedious as the process

is, the labour is amply repaid, as an otter thus taught will catch fish not only for its own use, but to sustain a whole family.

The otter is very destructive in a fish pond or river, and will at times kill more than he can devour. If fish be plentiful he will devour only the choicer parts, and on such occasions many fragments will be found about his lodging.

Otter hunting was once much followed in this country; and, although it has for many years been much on the decline, it is not altogether extinct. It is, however, but a sort of apology for diversion; it always appeared to me something like a superior duck hunt.

Where waters are infested with this animal he may be taken by means of a large steel trap, but very often not without some difficulty. His haunts may be easily ascertained by his *seal* (the print of his foot), as also by his *spraints* (excrement), which will be voided on large stones, and other similar eminences. The trap (or traps, as more than one may be used) should be placed in his track if possible, so that he may walk over it, and a bait may not be necessary. If, however, a bait be placed for him (a fish, for instance), it should not be placed upon the bridge of the trap, but so that he walks over the trap to get at it. The trap should be slightly buried, and the mould or sand so scattered over it that it may appear as

like the surrounding earth as possible; at the same time the bait should be fastened so as to cause the otter a tug or two to disengage it, and while he is in the act of tugging he should stand, as it were, upon the trap, in which case he is sure to be taken. Again I must refer to the article TRAPPING.

The otter may be shot if a good look out be kept for him. This animal possesses uncommon strength in his jaws; he bites very fiercely, and clings to his hold with the utmost tenacity.

TRAPPING.

In the course of the preceding pages mention has been repeatedly made, under the various articles, of the modes of catching vermin, both birds and quadrupeds, by traps; I now come to speak of trapping in a general sense, yet it is directly applicable to every individual case. The present chapter, therefore, merits the particular attention of those who wish to acquire a knowledge of it, since it will be found to explain, describe, and simplify the very art and mystery of the whole business. In the first place, whatever animal it is wished to capture or destroy, the habits, manners, and nature of the creature should be considered, and we thus may be said to accomplish half

the undertaking at its commencement. For instance, animals of the weasel kind, such as the polecat, the stoat, &c., will not manifest half the suspicion and distrust which are shown by the rat in avoiding the trap. This at the first glance of the case might seem strange, but on consideration is easily accounted for or explained. The weasel and rat are very different animals, but they may be said to be equally fierce and equally courageous; and, were the rat armed in the same manner, the contests between them, instead of being so certainly and so easily decided, would become doubtful, if the result would not be completely reversed. However, the rat is a creature much better acquainted with human nature than the weasel: it lives in the same dwelling; but, existing as a plunderer and a thief, to whom mercy is never extended, it is more suspicious of the fraudful power of man than the weasel, and is consequently more difficult to trap. If, for instance, you place the most tempting bait under a leaning door, so contrived as to give way and fall upon the rat, it is a thousand to one if the latter will go near it; at all events, you cannot either with oil of rhodium or any other fascinating drug induce the rat to approach the place a second time. Further, if you place a poisoned bait upon a plate, or in any formal manner, the rat will not touch it. The case is different with the weasel tribes. They are

more removed from the presence of man than the rat; and though they fly from him, inasmuch as they are less acquainted with his wiles, they are less suspicious, and consequently more easily caught or trapped. The same observations will, in some degree, apply to feathered vermin; the jay, for instance, for the reasons already given, is less suspicious than the magpie, and therefore more easily taken. It is not necessary to multiply these comparisons to any greater extent, as, from what has been stated, the meaning cannot be misconceived. When trapping is understood, those who employ it will seldom miscarry. When a knowledge of the animal is obtained, the kind of deception used for the purpose, and the mode of employing it, form the next object of consideration; and it will be found that a similar method will answer in every case, whether for quadrupeds or winged vermin. One great error hitherto in trapping has been placing the bait on the bridge of the trap, an observation which may appear strange and startling to those who have not duly studied the subject; but it is, nevertheless, quite wrong in almost every instance, if not absolutely in all cases, to place the bait upon the bridge of the trap. Let it be understood that I am speaking of the *steel trap*, not of the box or hutch trap.

Deception is of course one of the grand secrets

of trapping. If the trap be placed in the sight of the animal which you are anxious to catch, and particularly if the bait be placed upon it, his suspicions will be excited, and failure will most likely be the result; on the contrary, place the bait in a seeming careless manner and the trap out of sight, *fixed in a proper manner*, and a failure will very rarely occur. For instance, I wish to trap a magpie which I perceive has found a partridge's nest and destroyed some of the eggs, only part being deposited by the partridge; or, I may observe a magpie in the immediate vicinity of the nest, of whom I am suspicious, and therefore am anxious to catch. I prepare accordingly. I proceed with a steel trap to the place (a square trap is preferable to a semicircular one), and selecting a spot at some little distance from the nest, so that the old partridge is placed in no danger; if a hedge or a tree happens to be near the spot, with a small spade I make a longitudinal hole, merely sufficient to imbed the trap, and so as to allow a little earth, leaves, or grass, or all of these, to be scattered over it, making it level with the surrounding ground, and to appear as like it as possible. Thus the bottom of a tree or gate post, a hedge, bank, or elevation of the ground, may form the wall, as it were, or termination of the work; close to this the bait should be placed, and fastened in some degree by a small peg in a careless manner, so

that it may cause the animal which you wish to trap a tug or two. The trap should be covered in the manner already described, and placed longitudinally towards the bait—a few inches from it, so that the animal may stand directly upon the trap as it pulls at the bait. The trap being placed longitudinally, a sort of wall or hedge should be formed on each side, so as to prevent the bait being reached without the vermin passing over the trap. The fence should be wide at its commencement, and narrowing up to the bait.

However, to render the matter as plain and as evident as possible to the most obtuse perception or the shallowest capacity, I shall in some degree travel my ground over again and recur to the magpie. I place my trap a few yards to the right or the left of the partridge's nest (so that it may not catch the parent bird), but plainly in view, so that when the magpie approaches it cannot fail to see the bait. As magpies are fond of eggs, nothing can form a better bait (particularly in the breeding season) than a hen's egg, which should be perforated at each end, the contents blown out, and a small twig run through it into the ground, in order to give the magpie some trouble to get it off; and while it is endeavouring to pull it away its feet should be on the bridge of the trap, the bait being placed at the requisite distance for that purpose. The plunderer is sure to be caught.

The mere shell of the egg answers better for the purpose of a bait than if it contained its original contents, and it is thus more easily fastened to the requisite spot. I repeat that the square is much preferable to the semi-circular trap, as the latter is more apt to miss the thief, owing to its form. Also, if the trap were placed transversely instead of longitudinally, that is, across instead of straight up, it would be more likely to fail in the object. But when placed as directed the animal walks up it, and will very rarely, if ever, escape.

If an egg be not at hand, or easily obtained, a piece of raw meat will answer the purpose, and will form a good bait: a magpie is not very particular in its food.

The preceding remarks are equally applicable to the carrion crow, the rook, the jay, and the raven; the latter, however, requiring a larger trap; and, indeed, in all cases the size of the trap should be in proportion to the creature for which it is set.

If the kite or the buzzard be the object of consideration, the trap should be placed precisely in the same manner; but the bait should be a pigeon, a small rabbit (or a piece of either), or any of the smaller kinds of birds, or a piece of raw meat or liver will answer the purpose. The bait should be fastened, and if a few feathers are scattered about, it will be more easily perceived

by these birds; they will discern it, indeed, at a great distance. Kites and buzzards, though very mischievous, are few in number, and do not approach the human habitation with the same familiarity as the magpie or the crow. They are fond of being able to see a great distance around them, as if to prevent surprise; and for this reason they may be often seen, when they alight on the ground, to take their station on some hillock or eminence, on downs or other open places, whence they can survey the surrounding country. Wherever it is perceived that these birds frequent or haunt, the traps should, of course, be placed. Let it further be understood, that the application of these remarks is not intended to be confined to the breeding season. Whenever vermin of any kind are discovered, they should be trapped or destroyed. There is no mode so certain as the steel trap, *when properly prepared and set.*

The sparrow-hawk, the hobby, &c., require a smaller trap than the kite or the buzzard; which is, however, to be prepared and placed in the same manner, and baited with a sparrow, lark, or other small bird (excepting the swallow tribe, which birds of prey refuse), and a few of its feathers scattered about for the purpose of attracting the object to be caught.

But a *baited* trap for vermin of the hawk tribe

is not absolutely necessary. These birds are very fond of sitting upon an elevated post or stump of a tree, where they can command an extensive prospect; and, of late years, a circular trap (easily obtainable at a gunmaker's) has been introduced, which is so contrived as to be fixed upon the top of the stump or post just mentioned, and, being carefully concealed, will seldom fail to be effective.

In regard to quadrupedal vermin, and first of all for the polecat, it may be remarked, that when this animal is suspected of making free with the eggs of the pheasant or the partridge, the trap may be prepared for him precisely in the same manner as already described for the magpie, and he is sure to be caught; or should the track to his hole be discovered, he may be taken by placing the trap in it, close to the hole (covered, in all cases, as the most certain means of success), with or without the bait, but the latter mode is preferable; or the deception may be placed a little out of his track; and perhaps half a yard out of his track is the better method. This animal is attracted by the smell of musk, and therefore the bait may be anointed with a little of the essence of this strong perfume. But it will answer the purpose without it; and the only effect, in fact, that it has, is merely enabling the polecat to smell or scent the bait at a greater distance. A trap

placed at the entrance of the hole of the polecat without a bait will take him, if covered in the manner described in the preceding pages; but if not concealed, its effective operation will be very uncertain. With a rat it would fail: if the trap were so placed that the rat could not miss it in coming out, he would form another hole to avoid it, when the calls of hunger compelled him to leave his hiding-place. The bait for a polecat should be a rat, a mouse, a bird, entrails, or indeed almost any animal substance will answer the purpose. And what I have stated respecting the polecat is equally applicable to the stoat, and to all the weasel tribe.

The cat, as I have previously stated in a separate article, is very destructive to game, for which nothing is a more tempting bait than a sparrow, lark, &c.; and, as these animals are attracted by valerian, the bait may be rubbed with it if convenient; but it is not absolutely necessary, as a cat is easily caught without that addition. Valerian may, as well as musk, be obtained at any druggist's shop. It will be requisite, of course, to set a larger trap for a cat than that which is used for a weasel or a magpie.

The caution of rats in approaching a trap is very well known; and, in fact, those who attempt to take them in the common way uniformly fail: an odd one may perhaps be caught (and that

not often), and there the business ends. But when the trap is concealed in a proper manner the rats are sure to be caught. By way of experiment, in an outbuilding, well stocked with rats, I placed a steel trap, baited with a herring; but not one would touch it. I anointed the trap with oils of aniseed, carraway, and rhodium; yet the rats declined it. I baited a wire trap, and succeeded in taking one, something more than half grown; but I could not catch another: and yet I repeatedly saw the rats, by dozens, round the trap, towards the evening, when they came from their holes in search of food. I placed a heavy door, sloping—so contrived that by pulling a string the door would fall. Under this I placed some cheese, and killed one rat. But though I tried the same experiment three successive evenings, and used the fascinating oils also, still it would not do; the rats were too suspicious: they would not venture under the door for the bait, notwithstanding they would go all round the spot very unconcernedly. The rats being very numerous, however, I placed a few pills (as described under the article RAT, p. 58, &c.), and in two days the place was entirely free from these vermin. If one dozen pills only be put down where there are fifty rats, it will not kill them all, it is true, as the quantity is not sufficient for that purpose; it will

kill a few, and the remainder will most certainly quit the premises. There is no mode of ridding a house or building of rats so easy as this; nor, indeed, any mode more certain. I have tried it many times, and under every variety of circumstance, and yet never witnessed its failure. It may be said that those rats which are not destroyed, but which nevertheless quit the premises, will visit your neighbour, and take up their abode with him: and all I have to say in answer to this is, that your neighbour can adopt the same means to rid himself of such unwelcome company. If, however, contrary to their usual habit, the living rats continue, they will not fail to take the pills.

Let it be well remembered, that the great secret of trapping or destroying vermin is the deception or concealment of the engine made use of (see the article HEREDITARY INSTINCT).

In the preceding remarks I have confined myself to the steel trap, which will answer every purpose of destroying vermin much better than the hutch or box trap. The latter may be useful when hares are wanted to be taken alive; which, however, are much more certainly caught with the purse net.

The success of the hutch trap will be, in some measure, insured by a species of deception in preparing it, which is not so easily accomplished as

with the steel trap; and, after the ample description I have already given, it is unnecessary to say more on the subject.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE USE OF POISON IN THE DESTRUCTION OF VERMIN.

It will be generally admitted that there is something very repugnant to the human mind in the idea of *poison*; nor am I by any means friendly to the use of it, unless, indeed, where circumstances render it indispensable. But it is necessary to make a few observations on the subject, in order to render the present work as complete as possible. It has been already shewn that vermin may be effectually destroyed without the use of poison. They may, perhaps, be more easily destroyed with it, but then the lives of other creatures must be placed in jeopardy: except as regards rats and mice, as in these cases it can very conveniently be thrown or conveyed into their burrows, where neither dog, cat, nor any other animal, except those for which it is intended, can reach it.

Vermin of all kinds may be destroyed by poison, and the process is remarkably simple. If, for instance, it be wished to destroy a magpie, rook, crow, &c., by poison, nothing more is necessary

than rubbing the bait with arsenic. Take a small piece of meat, make an incision in it, and in the said incision sprinkle or rub the arsenic; place this in the haunt of a magpie, &c., and it will do the business most effectually. The arsenic being tastless is more readily taken by vermin than nux vomica, or most other poisons; further, there is very little trouble in preparing the bait with it, and the article may be obtained at any druggist's.

All four-footed vermin may be destroyed in the following manner;—Take small birds, such as the sparrow, linnet, &c., and dip their wings in essence of musk. Cut the breast of the bird open on both sides, and rub in five grains of arsenic. Place the bird about six inches from the ground, on a stick, in the paths where you observe the vermin run. In using arsenic, care should be taken not to give too much, lest it should produce sickness, when the animal will throw it up. Five grains, or as much as will lie on the point of a sharp penknife, is sufficient.

Should a jay be the object, some peas steeped in an infusion of coculus indicus will be found a more tempting bait than animal substances.

If it be necessary to poison any of the hawk tribe, or other predaceous birds, one of the smaller kind of birds, cut open and sprinkled or rubbed with arsenic, will effect the object. The arsenic should be used sparingly in all cases, as very little

of this deadly mineral will destroy life; and if a considerable quantity be taken into the stomach, it will (as I have already observed) perhaps produce sickness, and may be thus thrown up.

The same bait that answers for the hawk tribe will equally suit for the cat, the marten, the polecat, and, indeed, for all kinds of four-footed vermin. At the same time the utmost possible caution should be used in placing it out of the reach of every other animal. Once more I must observe that I do not approve of the use of poison, except in the destruction of rats.

The magpie, or, indeed, any other bird, or any vermin, may be taken by soaking the bait in an infusion of coculus indicus. This will rather produce intoxication than death, and the creatures will mostly recover. Wine lees will answer the purpose of coculus indicus.

HEREDITARY INSTINCT.

In making use of the term which appears at the head of this article, I do not wish to be understood as throwing down the gauntlet to the literary critic, but merely to give the impression on my own mind in the most intelligible and the simplest form; and those, therefore, who take the trouble to peruse this article will be able to form an

opinion how far I am correct in adopting the term *Hereditary Instinct.*

We are all very well aware that the antelope flies from the lion, even though it be the first time that the former has beheld this lord of the forest; when it could not, from experience, have known that the lion was its enemy. By what, then, did the antelope acquire this consciousness of its danger? I answer, by hereditary instinct; though it may perhaps be somewhat difficult to reason the subject to satisfactory conviction. In the first place it may be observed, that the dam of the said antelope could not impress upon its mind, in any descriptive language, the form and figure and disposition of its most formidable destroyer; and yet the antelope possesses the knowledge intuitively. Therefore we must conclude that, during the period of gestation, this knowledge must have been conveyed by sympathetic impression from the mind of the female to the tender and growing fetus. That an almost intensity of sympathy is frequently manifested in many cases of this kind is incontrovertible; and though from the very mysterious nature of the subject I find it difficult to express my meaning in a lucid manner, in any form of words; yet I trust I shall not be altogether misunderstood.

The instance of the antelope does not stand alone; since, if we look through animated nature,

we shall find that all creatures instinctively fly from what may be called their natural enemies: thus, the mouse from the cat, the rat from the ferret and the weasel, the pigeon from the hawk; and, in fact, the simile might be multiplied almost to infinity. Yet this hereditary instinct, this intuitive dread of enemy, admits of different degrees or varieties. In the *first instance* the lion dreads not the power or the enmity of man; on the contrary, he seeks, pursues, and devours the naked savage: and it is not till experience has taught him the superiority of civilized man that he flies from the presence of this lord of the creation. Thus the lion may be said to possess hereditary instinct in a surprising manner: he makes the almost defenceless Hottentot his prey at this moment, but declines the contest with the white man, even when he approaches him for the *first time!*

The object of these observations is to show that as all those creatures which I have denominated vermin possess an instinctive dread of man, so to insure their destruction we must study their nature, manners, and habits, and adopt such means as are the least calculated to excite their suspicion. It is not because a weasel or a rat, for instance, presents itself to man that it is not conscious of his power; on the contrary, by some wonderful process it acquires this knowledge in

the womb, or with life, and is thus instinctively taught to avoid its most resistless enemy. It is true, these creatures approach the human dwelling, and even take up their abode under the very roof of their powerful destroyer; but to this they are constrained by the calls of hunger—the imperious laws of nature—and are not on this account the less fearful or suspicious of him. The rat, of all the other vermin I have noticed, seems the closest and most constant inmate (if I may be allowed the expression); it thus becomes better acquainted with human nature—becomes, consequently, more cunning and more suspicious, from the very circumstances of its superior knowledge of the wiles and power of its merciless persecutor. Hence, with creatures for ever very suspiciously on their guard, we must adopt such stratagems or deceptions for their capture as are calculated not to give the most trifling alarm, not to excite the smallest suspicion, or we must not expect either complete or satisfactory success.

It has been repeatedly stated that the gun may be used in the destruction of winged vermin at breeding time; but to render the gun available it is necessary to possess a perfect knowledge of the instinct of the animal sought to be destroyed. For instance, the nest of a carrion crow is discovered; it will be impossible to shoot the old one *in* the nest, unless with a bullet, even if she would

suffer the approach of the keeper. Therefore a hut formed of boughs and brushwood must be made within gunshot of the nest, so as to conceal a man with a gun. If only one person go into the cover where the nest may be, the old bird will fly away and continue sailing round the place so long as the man remains in the cover, and will not, until she sees him go completely away, return to the nest. But as birds have not the faculty of counting, two persons must go into the wood towards the nest; one must remain, and the other retire, taking care that the old bird *sees one* leave the neighbourhood. She will return to her nest without suspicion the moment the man retiring is at what she considers a safe distance. The person remaining in the wood must have his gun bearing on the nest, so as to fire the moment she alights on the edge of it, or the opportunity will be lost. These remarks are equally applicable to the magpie and raven.

OBSERVATIONS ON POACHING, AND ON THE MEANS OF PREVENTING IT.

A POACHER generally exhibits external marks or characteristics of his profession; the suspicious leer of his hollow and sunken eyes, his pallid cheek, his wide, copious, and well-pocketed jacket—

in fact, his appearance altogether is impressively at variance with that which is manifested by any other class of the human species. He contracts habits of idleness to such a degree that he can scarcely ever persuade himself to work, even at that period of the year when there is no longer an illicit market open for the fruits of his noturnal depredations. As the month of September draws near he puts his tackle in order—he prepares his destructive net, and watches with unwearied perseverance the jucking of partridges. During the season of his culpable exertion, when the rest of the world is lulled in repose, he is busied in his nefarious pursuits amidst the noxious dews of evening, amongst which he has frequently to secrete himself till he is half perished, anxiously waiting for the favourable moment, or thus eluding the inquisitive search of the gamekeeper. He retires to feverish and uncertain repose when the more honest part of the community rise from their peaceful couches to commence their diurnal avocations. He rises at mid-day scarcely refreshed, and seeks to renew in the fumes of strong drink the exhaustion which nature has experienced from the noxious prowling of the preceding night; he thus prepares for a renewal of depredation. His habitation seems to take its tone from its wretched master; it wears a different appearance from those which surround it. His wife and children are clothed in rags;

while he, even if unmolested, dies prematurely of an accumulation of disease, the natural result of his pernicious habits.

It is perhaps among that description of persons well known by the name of *poachers* (observes a writer) that the greater number of those are trained to rapine, who infest every rural neighbourhood with their petty thefts, and whose dexterity almost bids defiance to precaution. Accustomed in the ensnaring of game to the secrecy of fraud, and committing their depredations amidst the silence of night, those horrors, and that consequent dread which frequently deter from the commission of great offences, gradually lose their effects. Solitude and darkness, which have wherewithal to appal the human mind in its first deviations into guilt, are divested of their terror in those pilfering pursuits; and the consequence is sufficiently well known to all who, in the capacity of magistrates, are called to sit in judgment on the delinquency of public offenders. It is to this initiation they ascribe their subsequent enormities.

When guilt, however venial, becomes by repetition familiar to the mind, it is not in the power of the ignorant and the uneducated to restrain its excesses; they cannot arrest their career of iniquity, they cannot chalk out the line of wrong

beyond which they will not pass. Confining their first nocturnal excursions to the snaring of hares and netting of partridges, whenever they have a less booty than usual they are tempted to compensate the deficiency by petty plunder of some kind; and the log pile, the stack, the fold, the hen roost, all in turn pay tribute to the prowling vagabond, who fills as he can that void in his capacious bag which has been left by his want of success as a poacher.

The great evil is, that a culprit of this class, feeling no compunction in the early stage of his guilt, proceeds carelessly to a state of the most complete degeneracy. Game is a species of property of which he has so indistinct a conception, that he scarcely thinks he has committed a moral injustice in the various stratagems by which he has contrived to obtain it. He sees not that the claim of another is superior to his; he perceives not whence that absolute legal right in another to that which he has taken is derived: his companions to whom he recounts his manœuvres are more likely to applaud his cunning than to reprove his crime. Thus the remorse of conscience being but slight and feeble in the outset, the wretch is encouraged by degrees to trample on the laws with greater boldness, and at length suffers as a felon.

That laws should be made to prevent the man whose family depends entirely upon his labour for support from quitting his spade or his plough to range the woods for precarious subsistence by the destruction of animals, must be conceded by all who contribute to the fund which is exacted for the support of the indigent in this country; and the writer, who paints in his closet the hardships of the husbandman in being restrained from capturing what is called game, would in his parlour be amongst the foremost to grumble at the demand of an increased rate occasioned by the families of half a dozen poachers coming suddenly upon the parish purse to which he paid.

Formerly, when deer were numerous not only in parks but in the various forests in the kingdom (most of which have been disafforested and cultivated), poaching, though marked with a somewhat different practical character, was essentially the same, essentially ferocious, essentially disgraceful. A fat buck was a tempting prize, especially when a ready market was always found at no great distance, at which the plunder could be well and securely sold; for it would seem that in all ages no idea of moral turpitude was attached to the crime of poaching, at least by the lower and the middling classes of the community, since the stolen venison was bought by the inhabitants of large towns as

eagerly as pheasants, partridges, and hares, at the present day.

Many persons suppose that the game laws are not what they ought to be; yet the public press has at times, I think, rather inconsiderately, if not absolutely, advocated the cause of the poacher, spoke of his nefarious calling in terms rather calculated to excite than to repress the future prosecution of it.

In every form poaching is a demoralizing, debasing, and disgusting profession, which seldom fails to end in the premature, and often very miserable, death of the person who follows it. From the very nature of the avocation, those who pursue it are subject to disease, from repeated exposure to the unwholesame nocturnal dews amongst which they are frequently compelled to bury themselves, either to escape observation or to insure success. A poacher becomes an infirm old man ere he attains the meridian of human life (if he be fortunate enough to escape transportation or the gallows), and dies a victim to premature decay and abject poverty.

If the deer stealer of former times killed his game, and occasionally when pursued offered battle to the keeper, he was far less guilty than the merciless blood-thirsty poacher of the present day, who, not content to confine his depredations to some distance, audaciously approaches the very

dwelling, threatening to murder the master or any person who may attempt to oppose his progress or offer him the least molestation.

Like all other sciences, *poaching* may very justly be said to have experienced the progress of modern improvement; and indeed, as far as relates to pheasants, for instance, the gun is the only instrument which is now deemed necessary; with this engine, therefore, the ferocious poacher advances for the attainment of his object, scorning to wait the more tedious process of snares and stratagems.

Formerly partridges were driven into a net by means of a horse—a tolerably sure method, but which occupied a considerable time; these birds are now much more speedily captured by the net being drawn over them.

However, in order to make myself, or rather my present purpose, perfectly understood, I must first detail the system of poaching consecutively before I explain the means of preventing it. To begin with grouse, it is generally thought impossible to net grouse; and indeed, when the manners and habits of these birds are considered, as also the nature of the places where they are found, this notion was naturally enough entertained. Grouse, it is very well known to those acquainted with the moors, are always found more separated from each other than partridges; and, moreover, being found amongst the heath, and frequently amongst

long heath, the net seemed by no means calculated for the capture of these birds. I was of this opinion till about nine years since, when I happened to be shooting on the Yorkshire hills. It so fell out (as indeed it very often happens on the grouse mountains) that rain came on, and I was driven to seek shelter at a farmhouse which happened to be situated near at hand—a circumstance which does not always occur, as farmhouses are very thinly scattered on the moors. I was received by the people of the house with all that genuine hospitality which I have frequently experienced in Yorkshire. The rain continued; I drew forth some cigars, and, having a well-stored flask of brandy, I made myself as comfortable as possible with my best Havannah and real Cognac. I offered the master of the house a share of my enjoyments; he accepted the latter, but preferred his own pipe to a cigar. He was a man of unassuming manners, intelligent for his station in life, and I passed an hour or two very pleasantly. The rain continued to descend, and I began to lament that I should have to return almost "bootless home and weatherbeaten back," having only bagged one bird. As my host had become very communicative, he at length informed me that he could furnish me with three brace of these birds if I wished it. I had not the most remote wish to become the possessor of the birds, though in the

hilarity of his feelings he offered them as a present. But I had no objection to know by what means he became possessed of them; and, after some little circumlocution, he said he had caught them the preceding evening. To come to the point, the following was this man's system:—He watched the birds on the approach of evening, when they collect for the purpose of passing the night. Grouse, if undisturbed, will sleep as near the same spot as possible for many nights in succession; and the spots of ground which they occupy during the night, like those which the partridge occupies for a similar purpose, will be remarkable for a quantity of *droppings*. As a preliminary measure, the man by this means marked the place in the day, and thus it might be said that half the object was accomplished; at nightfall he watched the birds to their place of rest, and after all had been still for some hours, he, accompanied by his wife, proceeded to the spot, and covered the birds with a net. The net which the man used for the purpose was similar to the drag-net used by poachers for catching partridges, and they drew it something in the same way, but more slowly and more cautiously. This system, however, could only be successfully practised by those who reside on, or by the side of, the moors. The man said that he was not aware any other persons besides himself were acquainted with, or practised,

this method of taking grouse; and he had only known it two years. One evening, he said, returning home, he happened to observe a brood of grouse taking up their abode for the night, when the thought crossed his mind that they might be covered with a net; hence the man became a poacher. The gun is the engine used by poachers for these birds, and for black game also; of course in the day time.

The grouse poachers, indeed, in the north (where they may be said to abound) frequently go in gangs of from six to a dozen. They spread themselves at the distance of forty or fifty yards from each other, each man preceded by a dog, and thus cover a very considerable extent of ground. Few birds can escape them; and on these occasions they bid defiance to keepers and watchers. They may be frequently seen singly also. I have often met with them on the Yorkshire, on the Westmoreland, and on the Durham mountains, on the 12th of August, and have repeatedly been offered game by them for sale. Many attempts have been made to put a stop to the depredations of these men by the owners of the mountains, but hitherto very ineffectually. They are all lead miners, who have passed their lives among the mountains and moors, are well acquainted with the ground, and, although they might be partially repressed, can never be wholly subdued. A man of the

name of Armstrong rendered himself very celebrious on the mountains of the north of England about ten years since. I saw this man on Stainmoor; he was dreaded as a desperado by the watchers, though

"No giant form set forth his common height.' '

Armstrong, from his appearance and demeanour to casual observation, would have been set down as a civil, inoffensive man; yet he had frequently beaten and escaped from the clutches of three or four watchers.* He was, however, at length secured and placed in a strong room, through the roof of which he made his way, was pursued, and, coming to a river, he boldly plunged into the stream without being able to swim; and, in consequence, was taken out in a drowning state and safely lodged in gaol. What ultimately became of him I never heard.

Most of these men are good shots, though some of their fowling pieces are but clumsy-looking instruments, similar to what are frequently seen in the hands of the Highlanders. In the year 1824 I happened to be shooting on Stainmoor, near Bowes, on the 13th of August; it was about noon, and I was sitting by the side of a small stream of water, when one of these miners approached with

* Men appointed to prevent trespassing and poaching on the moors, but who do not, like gamekeepers, carry a gun.

his gun and his dog, and very unceremoniously seated himself at the distance of two or three yards. He asked me what sport, and I answered very indifferent. He then observed that he could accommodate me with any quantity of birds at four shillings a brace, which I declined. He requested me to give him a little gunpowder for the purpose of priming, that which he used being of a very coarse quality, such as is used in the mines for the purpose of *"blasting"* or blowing up the rock or ore. There was a tone of civility about the man, and I did not hesitate to comply with his request; he took his departure, directing me to a part of the moors where in the afternoon I obtained good diversion. I have frequently exchanged a few words with these men on the moors, and always found them civil, though in appearance they are anything rather than prepossessing. Nor is this surprising, as the nature of their employment in the bowels of the mountains gives to their countenances a most pallid and cadaverous hue; and when the shooting season approaches, like spectres they emerge from their dark and dreary abodes, and expose themselves to all kinds of weather, and almost all kinds of hardship, in the pursuit of grouse. When the game becomes wild they contrive to kill it when no other persons could come near it. When snow covers the mountains they put a shirt over their

clothes, and make themselves altogether as near the colour of the moors as possible; and they thus generally succeed in their object. They possess the great advantage of an intimate knowledge of the ground, and also of the haunts of the birds; they pursue them early and late, and can imitate their call so well as to bring them within reach when they are unapproachable by any other means—this particularly at the latter end of the season, when they make havoc among the cocks by imitating the call of the female. The celebrious Siddall informed me that he had frequently been on the mountains in hard frosty weather many hours before the dawn of day, and that on such occasions he had crept into some temporary hut or shed, waiting till he had been nearly frozen for daylight, when he had shook the ice from his legs and garments, and sallied forth as soon as he could discern the flight of a grouse. On one occasion this same Siddall was taken by the Bishop of Durham's watchers, and conveyed to a publichouse in the village of Chapel-in-Weardale, preparatory to his being taken before a magistrate and committed to prison. Here he remained for some hours—till such time, in fact, as his associates had collected, when they beset the house, compelled those who had the charge of the prisoner to make a very precipitate retreat, and carried off Siddall in triumph.

Poaching in what, for the sake of distinction, may be called the enclosures presents a different character; and, indeed, a more desperate—a more detestable character. Of late years it has arrived at a most alarming height, and particularly since pheasants became so numerous and so general in this country. The pheasant is a tempting prize; it is easily captured, sells high, and finds a ready market.

The principal intention of the present article is to point out the means generally adopted for the destruction of these birds under less terrific circumstances than those to which we have alluded, as well as to describe the most effectual means of counteracting or preventing them. There are various modes by which pheasants may be taken, either by day or night; as the pheasant, of all other birds, has perhaps the least sagacity in avoiding danger. These birds may be taken with snares placed in their runs; as, if little disturbed, they will frequent the same places; but this method is by no means infallible, and seldom (if ever) resorted to by the professed poacher. Pheasants do not take to roosting in the trees till the leaves fall; in fact, it may be remarked that pheasants sleep on the ground till such time as there is little cover upon it, when they take to the trees; and this is the harvest for the poacher. It may be very easily perceived in the daytime upon

which trees the pheasants perch, from the droppings or dung which may be observed under them, and they will continue to occupy the same places unless much disturbed. They are plainly perceptible sitting on the branches at night, not merely by moonlight, but the night must be very dark indeed which does not afford sufficient light for the purpose of shooting them: in the estimation of the poacher the night can never be too dark—the darker the better, he will tell you. Further, if the wind blows it is in favour of the poacher: an old and an inveterate poacher once observed to me, that "if the wind blew he could not lie in bed." The birds on such occasions will not move: fifty of them will suffer themselves to be shot, one after the other, without a single bird offering to fly away. At the same time the poacher is better concealed from the observation of those who may be on the look-out for him, as well as enabled to elude pursuit more easily.

As to the plan of burning brimstone, fixed on a pole, under the nose of the pheasant, for the purpose of suffocating him, it is a plan which will not often succeed. In the first place it becomes a very difficult matter, and frequently quite impossible, to place the burning sulphur in the requisite situation, as pheasants often roost so high as to render a much longer pole than ordinary requisite in

order to reach them; to say nothing of the intervention of boughs, and other unforeseen circumstances: the wind, too, must be completely hushed. Similar observations will apply to a pole with a noose at the end of it for the purpose of putting over the pheasant's head and pulling him down. If, therefore, the pheasant is to be taken by either of these methods, the bird must not only place himself conveniently for the purpose, but all collateral circumstances must be equally fortunate.

We hear, too, of poachers heeling a game cock and placing him in the haunt of a cock pheasant; when, it is said, the latter comes fiercely to the encounter, and is quickly killed or disabled. I will not say that a case of this kind never occurred; but those who have witnessed battles between game cocks and pheasants would have some difficulty in believing that many of the latter birds could be thus taken. They would be aware that the pheasant, if he came to the encounter, if he either offered to fight or accepted the challenge, would not stand to be killed or much hurt: when these birds attempt to fight a domestic cock they show very little disposition to come to close quarters; they give the cock a buffet, and the moment he attempts to return the compliment, take wing—they fly up perhaps into an adjoining tree, leaving the cock staring about and wondering

what has become of his antagonist; and the moment he turns to go away down comes the pheasant and gives him another souse.

Pheasants may be taken with baited hooks, or grain steeped in an infusion of coculus indicus or ardent spirits; but none of these methods would answer the purpose of the poacher: he adopts a more speedy, a more decisive, and much more efficient method—the *gun*, which, as it has produced a complete revolution in field sports, has also entirely altered the system of the poacher. Pheasants, as I have already observed, betake themselves to roosting in the trees on the approach of winter; and will generally be found in clusters as it were, or several, and sometimes many in company: the poacher approaches like a wily assassin, in the silence of night, and shoots them one by one. If it be a very clear moonlight night the birds will frequently make off at the first discharge; but under other circumstances, already described, will suffer themselves all to be killed. Air guns are often used by those poachers who are fortunate enough to be able to procure them, and are of course preferred by the nightly depredator, as they make much less noise in the discharge than the fowling piece; but it is quite a mistake to suppose that their discharge is emitted in silence: the noise of an air gun is much greater

than might be supposed; particularly when discharged amid the dead silence of night.

In strong pheasant preserves, in hard weather, these birds congregate very much at those places where they are fed: they roost in the adjoining trees; and on such occasions the poacher is enabled to shoot two or three brace without moving from the spot, or scarcely altering his position.

There is no remedy for this species of depredation but a good look-out by the keepers; at the same time, poachers, if they are adepts at the business, resort to the most cunning and the most wary methods of frustrating the vigilance of those whose duty it is to detect and apprehend them. A poacher now living, and not yet beyond the meridian of life, informed me that on one occasion he and two of his companions sallied forth at eleven o'clock, and directed their steps to a wood well stocked with pheasants. He alone carried a gun—his companions merely a bag. It was during the frost. They entered the wood, and reaching one of the feeding places, this man killed four brace and a-half of pheasants, which his companions bagged. They then altered their station, and killed two brace more, when they retired completely unmolested; although a keeper, and at least a dozen temporary assistants, were ap-

pointed to take care of this very preserve. This fellow smiled when I told him that in the newspapers of a neighbouring large town the affair had been very differently represented. The published accounts stated, that "a desperate gang of poachers, all armed with guns, and amounting in the whole, it was supposed, to a dozen or more (*as nine were seen*), entered ——— Wood, and committed havoc amongst the pheasants for several hours, and retired with their booty: for that on the keepers approaching they were told to keep off; and they were under the necessity of so doing from the overpowering number of the ruffians!"

That keepers frequently neglect their duty on such occasions is probable; particularly when the nature of the business is considered. It requires at least a full share of courage to face the danger —to grope the way in the dark, as it were, liable at every step to be knocked down, or perhaps assassinated. But to return.

The practice of the more knowing poachers on entering a pheasant cover is this: they go in a body and fire only one shot in one particular place; having previously agreed upon a place of meeting if disturbed. As soon as a pheasant is discovered, a man with a gun is left at the foot of the tree, the others going to look for more. A second pheasant is found, and a man stationed with him; and so on until the whole of the band

have each marked a bird. The last man then gives a signal by a low whistle. The guns, which are lightly charged, make a common report; and the poachers leave the place immediately for their previously appointed rendezvous.

Partridges are particularly obnoxious to the depredations of the poacher; and in order to have a clear knowledge of the business of prevention we must, in the first place, look at the means employed for the purpose of capturing these interesting birds.

The stalking horse, as I have already observed, was used for the purpose of *driving* partridges; and the instrument in question was "made in the form and fashion of a horse cut out of canvass, and stuffed with straw." But the improving poacher at length discovered that a real horse would answer the purpose much better, and with less trouble; as the horse becomes an apt scholar at the business, and as fond of it as his teacher. Almost any horse will become very handy at driving partridges in an incredibly short period; but an active animal that could be got readily through the gaps, is, of course, best calculated for the purpose. It is well known that partridges are fond of sleeping or jucking in the after-grass, particularly during the months of August and September, before cattle are turned into it, as they will not continue in it afterwards; and such

situations are admirably calculated for driving partridges. The poacher in the first place ascertains the field in which the covey takes up its abode for the night, which he will be able to know by the calling of the birds in the evening. Two or three hours after the covey has become still (say eleven or twelve o'clock) he proceeds to the place, and fixes his *tunnel net** at no great distance from the hedge, and so that in driving towards it the birds may, if possible, run down wind. The net being set, with merely a bridle on the horse, he places himself close to the animal's near fore-leg, his right hand, with the bridle-rein, raised to the withers; from which position he is enabled to direct all the motions of the horse. The poacher should be clothed in a close jacket, and keep step with the horse's fore-legs. He moves up and down the field slowly till he perceives the covey, which he cautiously approaches till they get upon their feet and run; and this the birds evidently do for fear of being trodden on by the horse. The horse follows them; and if they attempt to move from the proper direction the horse is made to cross, or to move sideways, so as to force the birds into the right direction again. Thus the business proceeds till the birds arrive at

* A net with two extensive wings, and a tunnel, formed by hoops, in the middle. The net, when set, need not reach more than eighteen inches in height.

the net; they come perhaps in contact with one of the extended wings, and by the movements of the horse at length arrive at the mouth of the tunnel. The cock partridge leads the way, and when he arrives at the entrance of the tunnel he generally pauses for a second or two, when he enters, calling the others after him, and the whole are secured.

I have already observed that horses soon become fond of driving partridges. I knew a man who, thirty-five years ago, regularly followed the business of a partridge driving, and was a very expert hand. He kept no horse, but was in the habit of taking one which belonged to a neighbouring farmer; it was the owner's hack, and appeared to be almost as fond of this employment as a hunter is of following hounds. The hack in question was very handy at getting over fences. But I have known this man to accomplish his object with one of the cart horses, when the hack was not to be had. Driving was a slow, but a sure process; so sure, indeed, that if a bird happened to miss entering the tunnel and take wing, if the rest were set free, ten to one but every individual might be caught the following night. The man to whom I have just alluded generally commenced operations a week before the first of September; he would bring the birds home alive, and place them in a loft which he had for the purpose. They would

feed, and after having been in confinement for a day or two, the old cock would begin to call, morning and evening, particularly at the latter period; to prevent which, as much as possible, the fellow used to knock with a stick against the ceiling of his cottage (directly under the birds), when the noise would cease for several minutes, and cease altogether in a quarter of an hour. Many shooters were in the habit of coming into the neighbourhood on the first of September, to whom this fellow disposed of his birds.

A setting dog—one taught to allow the net to be drawn over him, without moving, was also used by nightly depredators; but every prior invention and contrivance has given way to the *drag net*. This is nothing more than a large net, forming what may be termed an oblong square. A drag net may be made from ten to thirty yards long (or rather, wide), and three or four deep. The bottom is leaded and left to drag on the ground; the top is supported by two men, one at each end, while a third follows the net to disentangle it, should it come in contact with any unperceived thorns, or other impediments. Thus prepared, the field is tried all over: if there are birds, the moment the net touches them they attempt to fly; the net is instantly dropped, and the birds are entangled. This is a much quicker process than driving, and is now in general use.

Bushing the fields is not an uncommon practice, nor yet a bad one, as poachers cannot net the birds till the bushes are removed; and the removal would give them much trouble, to say the least of it. Let it be recollected that partridges very rarely sleep in stubbles; their favourite places for jucking, as I have already observed, are grass fields, containing no cattle—particularly in *after-grass*, which is not disturbed.

If partridges be disturbed as soon as they have congregated for the night (at dusk) they will not assemble again that night, so as to enable the poacher to net them; and therefore, if they are run up every night, the poacher has no chance. When a covey is sprung at night they separate, and for the most part individually get to some hedge, where they continue for the night. If they should take up their abode for the night in the middle of a field, two will not be found together; they will not unite again till day-break.

If one partridge happens to spring, the whole are sure to follow, and therefore, against the tunnel net, the following method was adopted:—The bearing claw of one bird in each covey being cut off, he could not run; he consequently took wing the moment an attempt was made to drive. But this, which could not be otherwise than attended with much trouble, amounts to nothing:

it is no security against the operation of the drag net.

Partridges are sometimes destroyed by the fowling-piece in a wholesale manner. I once knew a fellow who watched a covey to their sleeping spot. He was placed behind a thin hedge, distance about twenty-five yards. As soon as the birds were quite still, and appeared comfortably settled, he broke off a twig; the birds, hearing this trifling noise, raised their heads; he levelled the deadly tube and killed every bird—eleven in number. There are few poachers but are very fond of the fowling-piece, and of embracing every opportunity of using it. The gun becomes a destructive engine in their hands when snow covers the ground; as partridges are deprived, as it were, of their natural protection, and may be frequently seen in groups huddled together.

Partridges may be taken with snares made of horse-hair, or baited hooks, placed in their basking places; but nothing requires so much vigilance to guard against as the drag net.

The "poor, timid hare" is an animal that demands particular notice, since it occupies much of the poacher's attention. The hare is easily captured in several ways. The common wire snare has been in use for this purpose for a long succession of years, and is too well known to need a particular description. It is merely a wire slip

noose, placed in the runs and meuses of these animals; and, when properly set, will seldom miss the object. It is made sufficiently large to admit the head of the hare; but on coming to her shoulders draws close, and the animal is hanged in its struggles to escape.

The purse net is also used, and is even more certain in its operation than the wire snare. For example, a small plantation, I will suppose, contains three hares: the poacher examines the fence of the plantation (in the daytime), and perceives there are eight meuses or runs into it; at each of which he places a net, or rather hangs it upon the twigs, with the mouth to receive the hare as she attempts to throw herself through the meuse. He then enters the plantation (without a dog, for the purpose of silence), shakes the bushes, &c.; the hares are disturbed, make for their accustomed runs, and are certainly taken. The purse net is, in form, merely a large cabbage net; except that the meshes are larger. When the hare throws herself into the net, finding herself embarrassed, she pushes, struggling, forward, by which she becomes completely entangled: she makes piteous lamentation, till the poacher hastens up and puts an end to her existence.

"In some countries (we read) hares are very numerous; and from May until August are taken with a *call*, which entices them within distance of

sportsmen. The *call* is a squeaking sound, first slow and then quicker; and is supposed to resemble the call between the male and the female." I never knew a poacher acquainted with this *call*.

Tracing hares in the snow is a well-known and a most destructive practice. In this case the poor animal is traced by its footsteps to its seat; and, when found, may be easily shot, caught with any kind of dog, or even taken with the hand, if the snow be deep. Hares, in fact, are so conscious of their incapacity to escape from their enemies in a deep snow, that they will sometimes continue under it till they perish from hunger.

But of all methods of taking this animal there is none more destructive than the *gate net*. I have heard it said, that if the bottom bars of the gate be painted white it will prevent the operation of the gate net. The fact is that this may prevent the hares from taking the gate for a few days, or rather nights; but when they have become familiarized to the sight or appearance it loses its effect entirely. A far preferable plan to this is, to place the lower bars of the gate so close together that a hare cannot get through them; which will effectually counteract the operation of the destructive gate net.

The gate net is sufficiently long (or rather wide) as to extend the whole length of the gate, and about a yard deep. It is placed about two or

three feet from the gate on the outside; the bottom being several inches on the ground; the top hung, as it were, in *declining* notches or clefts of two sticks placed at each extremity. What I mean by the word *declining* in this place is, that the clefts open downwards, so that the net is merely stuck in, and so lightly that the moment the hare touches it the net is drawn out, falls on the animal, and she becomes entangled. Who was the inventor of the gate net I know not, nor have I any means of ascertaining; but he must have been a cunning and an observant rogue. He must have become acquainted with the habits of the hare, since he was aware that this animal will avoid taking the meuses at night if possible, uniformly preferring the gate, fearful, as it were, of being entangled in the hedge in the darkness of night; as, if there happen to be a plain open gap, she takes it without hesitation. In the day time the hare generally prefers the meuse.

Hares, it is well known, have their feeding and their sitting ground. The poacher ascertains, if possible, the former. Clover fields are favourite feeding places, and in a well-stocked manor will very rarely be found without hares. When the nocturnal depredator has chosen his field he approaches it towards ten or eleven o'clock; and having ascertained that there are no gaps in the hedges, places his net at the gate in the manner I

have described. If there be any gaps or other gate places a net is placed at each. He then throws off his dog (which, to be perfect, should run mute), and the hares being alarmed make away for the gate or gaps, where they are taken. A man is generally stationed at each net, in order to take out the hare the moment it is caught and replace the net for the next comer. Sometimes it happens that two are caught at once.

For this business something of the bulldog or mastiff breed is occasionally used, as they are not much inclined to give tongue; but many of these fellows do not hesitate to make a hole through the dog's tongue with a hot iron, and thus render him mute.

Hares may be covered on their seats in the day time with a net, but it requires some practice and experience in the mode of approach.

There are few poachers who will not steal upon manors upon all possible occasions, and shoot either hares or any other kind of game. There is a fascination in the use of the fowling piece which is almost irresistible, and the poacher will run almost any risk for the gratification of this predominant and ruling passion.

There is a description of persons which do not come under the denomination of inveterate and desperate poachers, and are yet to be suspected; I allude to the wild-fowl and fen shooters. It is

uniformly the case on the borders of fens and marshes that the peasantry make a sort of trade of wild-fowl catching, and by which indeed many of them live. Wild-fowl shooting is not a fashionable amusement, and what indeed cannot be regarded as the diversion of a gentleman; and therefore the owners of fens and marshes seldom hinder the peasantry from catching wild-fowl, or even shooting them. These men are all fond of the gun; and few of them, when in the pursuit or on the watch for wild-fowl, would hesitate to shoot a hare, or indeed any kind of game, should an opportunity present itself for that purpose. Wild-fowl are difficult of approach during the day; and though the stalking horse was formerly used (and very successfully) for the purpose, it has been entirely laid aside for years. The wild-fowl shooter of the present day takes his stand at early dawn, and also at evening, at some place where he expects the fowl to pass him. He knows their haunts, and is seldom mistaken when they fly for feeding. Their feeding time is morning and evening, at which periods they get on the wing, and afford the shooter an opportunity of trying his skill as they pass to and fro. In the day time wild-fowl remain on the water, and are sometimes pursued in small boats made for the purpose; but are difficult of approach without some device or deception. Some years since,

during a very long and severe frost, vast quantities of the web-footed tribes, particularly ducks, visited the river Dee. Large masses of ice and snow were continually drifting down the river. A wild-fowl shooter took the hint; he constructed a sort of boat or raft, and so contrived the business that he concealed both himself and his apparatus by similar masses of ice and snow to those which were constantly floating down the river. He thus approached his game, and by means of a stancheon gun and a fowling-piece or two killed vast numbers.

Wild-fowl, in particular ducks, were formerly taken by nets, similar to the common lark net. The nets were, however, concealed by strewing grass or something of the sort upon them; the fowler also who held the cords of the net was concealed, and a decoy duck frequently used. This method was successful when the birds flew to feed morning and evening, but it has been entirely superseded by the use of the fowling-piece.

Those who reside on the borders of fenny lakes and marshes take abundance of snipes by means of small snares made of horsehair: these are merely hair nooses; and a number of them being fastened to a hair-string at a short distance from each other, they are placed in the runs frequented by the snipes, and rarely fail of success. The fowler, however, is under the necessity of keeping

a vigilant eye upon those snares (which in Lancashire are called *pantles*), as kites are for ever hovering on the watch; and if they perceive a snipe entangled in the absence of the fowler, they pounce upon the prisoner, and in tearing him away generally destroy or disarrange much of the fowler's apparatus. Morning and evening are the times for this business, and, indeed, for fen birds and wild-fowl in general; at any other period little or nothing is to be accomplished, and therefore the fowler has only to keep watch at these times. Not only the snipe, but the ruff and the reeve, the sandpiper, the purre, and indeed all fen birds, and wild-fowl in general, may be taken by snares, made according to the size and strength of the bird.

All these fowlers are, however, uncommonly fond of shooting; and whatever success may attend other modes of taking these birds, they are seldom seen without a gun in their hands. The use of the fowling piece affords a self-gratification and pride which is not to be obtained by the most successful employment of any other means; and it may be justly remarked, that the poacher prides himself as much as the sportsman on the dexterous and skilful use of the extraordinary engine just mentioned. These fen shooters become so expert in the use of the fowling piece that they frequently bring down the game when the night is so dark

that they are unable to see it. The web-footed tribes make a considerable noise with their wings in flying; and in such cases the aim is directed by the ear instead of the eye. A dog is employed to fetch the game—a water spaniel. There are great quantities of wild-fowl killed on some parts of the sea-coast, as well as upon the different fens and marshes of the kingdom.

It will generally be found that poachers during that period of the year when game is completely out of season employ much of their time in robbing fish-ponds, which, however, should be carefully watched during summer; for, although the wholesale destruction of the net might be prevented by placing stakes in various parts of the water, yet the preventive is unpleasant, since, as it opposes the operation of the poacher's net, prevents the amusement of the proprietor also.

THE GAME LAWS.

The Statute 1 and 2 William IV. chap. 32, passed October 5th, 1831, having recited "that it is expedient to repeal the following Statutes, or so much thereof as is expedient; viz.:—

"Statute 13 of Richard II, sect. 1, chap. 13, as far as it relates to persons having or keeping any greyhound, hound, or other dog, to hunt; or using

ferrets, pegs, nets, harepipes, cords, or other engines, to take or destroy hares, conies, or game.

" Statute 22 of Edward IV. chap. 6, as far as it relates to having any mark or game of swans.

" Stat. 11 Hen. VII. c. 17.

" Stat. 19 Hen. VII. c. 11.

" Stat. 14 and 15 Hen. VIII. c. 10.

" Stat. 25 Hen. VIII. c. 11.

" Stat. 33 Hen. VIII. c. 6.

" Stat. 23 Eliz. c. 10.

" Stat. 2 James I. c. 27.

" Stat. 7 James I. c. 11.

" Stat. 22 and 23 Charles II. c. 25.

" Stat. 4 William and Mary, c. 23.

" Stat. 5 Anne, c. 14.

" Stat. 9 Anne, c, 25.

" Stat. 8 Geo. I. c. 19.

" Stat. 10 Geo. II. c. 32.

" Stat. 26 Geo. II. c. 2.

" Stat. 28 Geo. II. c. 12.

" Stat. 2 Geo. III. c. 19.

" Stat. 13 Geo. III. c. 55.

" Stat. 13 Geo. III. c. 80.

" Stat. 39 Geo. III. c. 34.

" Stat. 43 Geo. III. c. 112.

" Stat. 48 Geo. III. c. 93.

" Stat. 50 Geo. III. c. 67.

" Stat. 58 Geo. III. c. 75.

" Stat. 59 Geo. III. c. 102.

"And all statutes, continuing or perpetuating any of the aforesaid statutes or parts thereof, so far as relates to the continuing or perpetuating of the same respectively."

The preamble of the Act then enacts the following provisions, in lieu of those of the repealed statutes.

The second section of the Act enacts that the word "game" shall include hares, pheasants, partridges, grouse, heath or moor game, black game, and bustards.

By sect. 3, persons killing or taking game, or using any dog, gun, net, or other engine or instrument for the purpose, on Sunday or Christmas-day, shall forfeit any sum not exceeding £5; and persons killing or taking any partridge between February the 1st and September the 1st; or any pheasant between February the 1st and October the 1st; or any black game (except in Somerset or Devon, or in the New Forest, Southampton) between December the 10th and August 20th; or in Somerset, Devon, or the New Forest, between December the 10th and September the 1st; or any grouse between December the 10th and August the 12th; or any bustard between March the 1st and September the 1st, shall forfeit for every head of game so killed or taken any sum not exceeding £1, with costs of conviction. And persons putting, or causing to be put, with intent

to destroy or injure any game, any poison or poisonous ingredient, on any ground, whether open or enclosed, where game usually resort, or in any highway, shall forfeit any sum not exceeding £10, with costs of conviction.

Section 4 enacts that if any person, licensed to deal in game by this Act, shall buy or sell, or knowingly have in his house, or possession, or control, any bird of game after the expiration of ten days (one inclusive and the other exclusive) from the respective days in which it is unlawful to kill or take such birds of game; or if any person, not being licensed to deal in game, shall buy or sell any bird of game after the expiration of ten days (one inclusive and the other exclusive) from the respective days on which it is unlawful to kill or take the same, or shall knowingly have in his house, possession, or control, any bird of game (except birds of game kept in a mew or breeding place) after the expiration of forty days (one inclusive and the other exclusive) from the respective days on which it is unlawful to kill or take the same, shall forfeit for every head of game so bought or sold, or found in his house, possession, or control, any sum not exceeding £1, with costs of conviction.

But the 5th section provides, that this Act shall not affect or alter the existing laws respecting certificates for taking or killing any game what-

ever, or any woodcock, snipe, quail, or landrail, or any conies, but that such annual game certificates shall be taken out as before. And by the 23rd section, if any person shall kill or take any game, or use any dog, gun, net, or other engine or instrument, for the purpose of searching for or killing or taking game, without a certificate, he shall forfeit for every offence any sum not exceeding £5, with costs of conviction: and such penalty imposed by this Act shall be deemed a cumulative penalty to any penalty to which the person so convicted may be liable under any statute or statutes relating to game certificates.

By section 6, persons obtaining annual game certificates may kill and take game, liable to any trespass committed by them in search or pursuit of game. But no game certificate on which a less duty than £4 0s. 10d. has been paid shall authorize any gamekeeper to kill or take any game, or to use any dog, gun, or net, or other instrument, for the purpose of killing or taking game, except within the limits included in his appointment as gamekeeper; but that if any such gamekeeper shall kill or take game beyond such limits, he may be proceeded against as if he had no certificate.

The 7th section provides, that in all cases where any person shall occupy any land under any lease or agreement made before the passing of this Act,

except in the cases hereinafter excepted, the lessor or landlord shall have the right of entering upon such land, or of authorizing any other person or persons who shall have obtained an annual game certificate to enter upon such land for the purpose of killing or taking game thereon; and no person occupying any land under any lease or agreement, either for life or for years, made previously to the passing of this Act, shall have the right to kill or take the game on such land, except where the right of killing the game upon such land has been expressly granted or allowed to such person by such lease or agreement; or except where, upon the original granting or renewal of such lease or agreement, a fine or fines have been taken; or except where, in a case of a term for years, such lease or agreement has been made for a term exceeding twenty-one years.

But the 8th section provides, that nothing in this Act shall authorize any person seised or possessed of, or holding any land, to kill or take the game, or to permit any other person to do so, in any case where by deed, grant, lease, or any written or parole demise or contract, a right of entry upon such land for the purpose of killing or taking the game, has been or shall be reserved or retained by, or given or allowed to any grantor, lessor, landlord, or other person whatever; and that nothing in this Act shall

defeat or diminish any reservation, exception, covenant, or agreement already contained in any private Act of Parliament, deed, or other writing, relating to the game upon any land; or in any manner prejudice the rights of any lord or owner of any forest, chase, or warren, or of any lord of any reputed manor, lordship, or royalty, or of any steward of the crown of any manor, lordship, or royalty appertaining to the king.

And the 9th section provides, that nothing in this Act shall in any way alter or affect any of the king's forest rights, or of any person entitled to any right or privilege under them, or the rights or privileges of any person holding under any grants or purchases from the crown.

The 10th section also provides, that the Act shall not give to any owner of cattle gates, or rights of common, any interest or privilege which he did not possess before the passing of this Act; but the rights and privileges in such wastes or commons shall remain as they did before the passing of this Act.

The 12th section enacts, that where the lessor or landlord has reserved to himself the right of killing game upon any land, he may authorize other persons, having obtained annual game certificates, to pursue and kill game thereon.

But where the right of killing the game upon

any land is by this Act given to any lessor or landlord, in exclusion of the right of the occupier of such land, or where such exclusive right has been, or shall be, specially reserved by or granted to, or belongs to the lessor, landlord, or any other person than the occupier, then, if the occupier shall pursue, kill, or take any game upon such land, or give permission to any other person so to do, without the authority of the lessor, landlord, or other person having the right of killing game on such land, such occupier shall forfeit, for every head of game so killed or taken, any sum not exceeding £2, with costs of conviction.—Sect. 12.

By section 13, lords of manors, &c., may appoint gamekeepers within the same, and authorize them to seize and take all dogs, nets, and other engines and instruments for the killing or taking of game from uncertificated persons within the limits of such manors.

By section 14, lords of manors, &c., may grant such deputations to persons acting as gamekeepers, or employed in any other capacity by other persons.

The 15th section empowers persons possessed of lands in Wales of the clear annual value of £500, whereof he shall be seised in fee or as of freehold, or to which he shall otherwise be beneficially entitled in his own right, to appoint gamekeepers:

but the 16th section requires all appointments of gamekeepers to be registered with the clerk of the peace.

The 17th section enacts, that every person who shall have obtained an annual game certificate may sell game to persons licensed to deal in game according to this Act; but that no gamekeeper on whose certificate a less duty than £4 0s. 10d. has been paid shall sell any game, except on the account and with the written authority of his employer; and that if he does he may be proceeded against as if he had not had a game certificate.

By the 18th section, justices of the peace shall hold special sessions in the present year, between the 15th and the 30th days of October; and in every succeeding year in the month of July, for granting licenses to deal in game to such persons as are householders or keepers of shops or stalls, and not being innkeepers or victuallers, or licensed to sell beer by retail, or being owners, guards, or drivers of mail coaches, or other vehicles employed in the conveyance of the mails of letters, or of stage coaches, stage waggons, vans, or other public conveyances, or being carriers or higglers, or being in the employment of any such persons; which licenses shall empower the persons to whom they are granted to buy game at any place from any person who may lawfully sell game by virtue of this Act; and also to sell the same at one house,

shop, or stall only, kept by the licensed person; provided that every person, while so licensed, shall affix to some part of the outside of the front of his house, shop, or stall, and shall there keep a board having thereon his christian and surname, and the words "licensed to deal in game." Licenses granted during the present year to continue in force to July 15, 1832; but such as are granted in any succeeding year, to continue in force for the period of one year next after the granting thereof. But by section 26, innkeepers and tavern-keepers may, without any license, sell game for consumption in their own houses, such game having been procured from some person licensed to deal in game by virtue of this Act. And, by section 21, persons being in partnership, and carrying on their business at one house, shop, or stall only require but one license. Licenses become void on conviction of any offence against this Act.—Sect. 22.

Persons licensed to deal in game under this Act must annually, and during the continuance of their license, obtain a certificate on payment of a duty of £2 to the collector or collectors of the assessed taxes, from whom they shall receive a receipt on payment of one shilling; which receipt they shall get exchanged for a certificate under this Act, in like manner as receipts for the duty in respect of killing game are exchanged for game

certificates; and if any person obtaining a license under this Act shall purchase or sell, or otherwise deal in game as a licensed dealer, before he shall obtain a certificate in exchange for such receipt, he shall, for every offence, forfeit £20.

The collectors are to make out lists of persons who have obtained licenses to deal in game, and are to produce the same to all persons making application at seasonable hours to inspect them, on payment of one shilling.—Sect. 20.

By sect. 25, if any person not having obtained a game certificate (except such person be licensed to deal in game according to this Act) shall sell, or offer for sale, any game to any person whatever; or if any person authorized to sell game under this Act shall sell, or offer for sale, any game to any person whatever, except a person licensed to deal in game, he shall forfeit for every head of game so sold, or offered for sale, any sum not exceeding £2, with costs of conviction.

And if any person, not being licensed to deal in game according to this Act, shall buy any game from any person whatever, except from a person licensed to deal in game according to this Act, or *bonâ fide* from a person affixing to the outside of the front of his house, shop, or stall, a board purporting to be the board of a person licensed to deal in game, he shall for every head of game so

bought forfeit any sum not exceeding £5, with costs of conviction.—Sect. 27.

And if any person, being licensed to deal in game according to this Act, shall buy or obtain any game from any person not authorized to sell game for want of a game certificate, or for want of a license to deal in game; or if any person, being licensed to deal in game according to this Act, sell, or offer for sale, any game at his house, shop, or stall, without such board as aforesaid being affixed to some part of the outside of the front of such house, shop, or stall, at the time of such selling or offering for sale; or shall affix, or cause to be affixed, such board to more than one house, shop, or stall, or shall sell any game at any place other than his house, shop, or stall, where such board shall have been affixed; or if any person not being licensed to deal in game according to this Act shall assume or pretend, by affixing such board, or by exhibiting any certificate, or by any other device or pretence, to be a person licensed to deal in game, he shall, for every offence, forfeit £10, with costs. (Sect. 28.) But the buying and selling of game by persons employed on the behalf of any licensed dealer in game, and acting in the usual course of his employment, and upon the premises where such dealing is carried on, is a lawful buying and selling in

cases where the same would have been lawful if transacted by the licensed dealer himself. And licensed dealers may sell any game sent to them to be sold on account of other licensed dealers. (Sect. 29.)

The 30th sect. reciting, that, as after the commencement of this Act game will become an article which may be legally bought and sold, and that it is therefore just and reasonable to provide that summary means should be provided for protecting it from trespassers, enacts, that any person committing trespasses, by entering or being in the daytime upon any land, in search or pursuit of game, woodcocks, &c., shall forfeit any sum not exceeding £2, with costs of conviction; and that if any persons, to the number of five or more together, commit any trespass, by entering in the daytime upon any land in search of game, &c., each of them forfeit not less than £5, with costs of conviction; the leave and license of the occupier of the land so trespassed upon shall not be a sufficient defence in any case where the landlord, lessor, or other person shall have the right of killing game upon such land by virtue of any reservation or otherwise; but that such landlord, &c., shall, for the purpose of prosecuting for each of such two offences, be deemed to be the legal occupier of the land; and that the lord or steward of the crown of any manor, lordship, or royalty, shall be

deemed to be the legal occupier of the land of the wastes or commons within such manor, lordship, &c.

The 31st sect. enacts, that if any person shall be found on any land, or upon any of the crown forests, parks, chases, or warrens in the daytime, in search or pursuit of game, or woodcocks, snipes, quails, landrails, or conies, any person having the right of killing the game upon such land, by virtue of any reservation or otherwise as is provided for by this Act, or the occupier of the land (whether there shall or shall not be any such right by reservation or otherwise), or any gamekeeper or servant of either of them, or any person authorized by either of them, or for the warden, ranger, verderer, under-keeper, or other officer of such forest, &c., may require the person so found forthwith to quit the land whereon he shall be so found, and also to tell his name and place of abode; and if such person, after being so required, refuse to tell his real name and place of abode; or if he give a description of his place of abode of so general a nature as to be illusory, for the purpose of discovery, the party so requiring his address, or any person acting by his order and in his aid, may apprehend him, and convey him, as soon as conveniently may be, before a magistrate; and the offender (whether so apprehended or not) shall forfeit any sum not exceeding £5,

with costs of conviction. But no person so apprehended shall, on any pretence whatever, be detained for a longer period than twelve hours from the time of his apprehension until brought before a magistrate; and if he cannot, on account of the absence or distance of the residence of the magistrate, or on account of any other reasonable cause, be brought before a magistrate within such twelve hours, then he shall be discharged; but may, nevertheless, be proceeded against for the offence by summons or warrant, according to the provisions hereinafter mentioned, as if no apprehension had taken place.

By the 32nd sect., if any persons, to the number of five or more together, shall be found upon any land, or in any of the crown forests, parks, chases, or warrens, in the daytime, in search or pursuit of game, or woodcocks, snipes, quails, landrails, or conies, any of them being armed with a gun, and any of them by violence, intimidation, or menace, preventing, or endeavouring to prevent, any person authorized, as hereinbefore mentioned, from approaching them for the purpose of requiring them, or any of them, to quit the land whereon they shall be so found, or to tell their or his name and place of abode; every person so offending, and every person then and there aiding or abetting such offender, shall forfeit for every offence any sum not exceeding £5, with costs of

conviction; which penalty shall be in addition to, and independent of, any other penalty to which any such person shall be liable for any offence against this Act.

And by sect. 39, if any person commit any trespass by entering or being, in the daytime, upon any crown forests, parks, chases, or warrens, in search or pursuit of game, without being first duly authorized, he forfeits any sum not exceeding £2, with costs of conviction.

But the 35th sect. enacts that the aforesaid provisions against trespassers and persons found on any land shall not extend to any person hunting or coursing upon any lands with hounds or greyhounds, and being in fresh pursuit of any deer, hare, or fox, already started upon any other land; nor to any person *bonâ fide* claiming, and exercising any right or reputed right of free warren or free chase, nor to any gamekeeper lawfully appointed within the limits of any free warren or free chase; nor to any lord or any steward of the crown of any manor, lordship, or royalty; nor to any gamekeeper lawfully appointed by such lord or steward within the limits of any manor, &c.

The 36th sect. enacts, that when any person shall be found, by day or by night, upon any land, or in any of the crown forests, parks, chases, or warrens, in search or pursuit of game, and then and there having in his possession any game which shall ap-

pear to have been recently killed, any person having a right of killing the game upon such land, by virtue of any reservation or otherwise, as before provided for, or the occupier of the land (whether there shall or shall not be such right by reservation or otherwise), or any gamekeeper or servant of either of them, or any officer, as aforesaid, of any forest, &c., or any person acting by the order and in aid of any of the said several persons, may demand from the persons so found the game which may be in his possession; and in case he shall not immediately deliver up the same, may seize and take it from him, for the use of the person entitled to it.

The 34th sect. defines what shall be deemed daytime for the purposes of the Act, namely, from the beginning of the last hour before sunrise to the expiration of the first hour after sunset.

The 24th sect. provides, that if any person not having the right of killing game upon any land, nor having permission from the person having the right, wilfully take out of the nest or destroy in the nest upon the land the eggs of any bird of game, or of any swan, wild-duck, teal, or widgeon, or knowingly have in his house, shop, possession, or control, any eggs so taken, he shall forfeit for every egg so taken or destroyed, or found in his possession, any sum not exceeding 5s., with costs of conviction.

The remaining sections of the Act (viz., from 37 to 47 inclusive) provide for the application of the penalties for offences against the Act, the time of the payment thereof, and the periods of imprisonment for non-payment; the form of conviction; the power of summoning witnesses; the time for proceedings, and the mode of enforcing appearance; the appeal, and the venue and proceedings. The 46th section provides, that the Act shall not preclude actions for trespass; but that, where any proceedings have been instituted under this Act in respect of any trespass, no action at law shall be maintainable for the same trespass. And the 48th section, that the Act shall not extend to Scotland or Ireland.

From the great injury caused to tenant farmers on some estates by the over-preservation of hares, the Legislature has deemed it advisable to sanction their being destroyed by occupiers much on the same terms long previously permitted in reference to rabbits. For this purpose a measure was framed, and passed on the 22nd of July, 1848, 11 and 12 of Vic., c. 29, entitled "An Act to enable Persons having a Right to kill Hares in England and Wales, to do so by themselves, or persons authorized by them, without being required to take out a Game Certificate." Though not altogether bearing on the gun, it still is sufficiently so to warrant a summary of its provisions here.

The statute commences by declaring that, from the damage which has been, and is continually done, by hares to the produce of inclosed lands, and the great losses that have thereby accrued, and do accrue, to the occupiers of such lands, it is expedient that persons in the actual occupation of these lands, or the owners thereof who have the right of killing game thereon, should be allowed to take, kill, and destroy hares without the obtaining of an annual game certificate, or the payment of any duties of assessed taxes which might otherwise be incurred by the use of dog, gun, net, or other engine for that purpose. The Act provides, accordingly, that any persons in actual occupation of inclosed lands, or any owner thereof who has the right of killing game thereon, or any person directly authorized by him in writing according to the form annexed, shall not, for killing hares, be liable to any of the penalties in force by divers laws referring to the duties on game certificates, or by other taxes bearing upon the agents used in killing game. Special mention is made of

48 George III., c. 55,
52 George III., c. 93,
3 and 4 Victoria, c. 17 ;

in all of which penalties consequent on not taking out a game certificate, or taxes incurred by the

use of dog, gun, and net, are repealed, as far as the killing of hares only is concerned, according to the conditions already stated, or more amplified in following sections.

The second section of the Act limits the authority from owner or occupier to one person only, at the same time in one parish, and further enacts that a copy of this authority shall be sent to the Clerk of the Petty Sessions, who shall enter it in a register provided for that purpose; this notice holding good from the time of its date to the 1st of February following, when fresh service will be required. Should, however, the authority be revoked, it is necessary for the owner or occupier so recalling it to send at once notice of such permission being withdrawn to the Clerk of the Petty Sessions.

The following is the form of authority required :—

I., A. B., do authorize C. D. to kill hares on ["my lands," or "the lands occupied by me," as the case may be] within the of [here insert name of the parish or other place, as the case may be]. Dated this day of [here insert the day, month, and year].

(Witness,) A. B.

Section the third enacts that persons so authorized to kill hares shall not be liable to any duties of assessed taxes as game-keepers, unless otherwise chargeable.

By section four the privilege of killing hares without a certificate is extended to coursing them with greyhounds, or hunting them with beagles or other hounds. This exemption reaching to all persons joining in the pursuit of them by these means.

Section the fifth protects hares from the laying of poison for their destruction, and from the use of fire-arms or gun of any description by night.

Section six—"the weak place" in the Act—suffers this privilege to be got over by private agreement between landlord and tenant, who may so, "now and hereafter," bind, and be bound; any agreement not to take, kill, or destroy any game upon any lands, debarring the tenant from either himself or by deputy killing hares as otherwise provided by the Act.

The eighth section confines the operation of the measure to England and Wales only, while sections nine and ten are occupied with the usual technical detail of terms, &c.

STEEL MAN-TRAPS.

If it be thought necessary to make use of steel man-traps in the preservation of game, what is called the humane trap should be chosen or adopted; this merely holds the thief fast, without inflicting the injury which cannot fail to result from the operation of the common trap. To the professed and dexterous poacher, however, the steel trap presents very little terror: I have known many of these traps destroyed by poachers. On such occasions they feel their way in the cover where the traps are placed with a staff or pole; and having thus ascertained its situation they very easily avoid it, or render it harmless—they often break it.

A gentleman whom I very well know placed a few humane traps in some of his beautiful and excellent covers. I am not certain what number of poachers he caught in them, but the following circumstance occurred:—A methodist preacher, on a Sunday, being on his return from a village on the seacoast, where he had been holding forth, to a large town at some miles distant, where he resided, took it into his head to leave the road and make a shorter cut through the plantations, in

doing which he was caught in one of the traps. The keeper very shortly afterwards, in going his rounds, perceived his sable rusty customer, and proceeded to inform his master. From the keeper's account, the gentleman became aware that the man caught in the trap had not been actuated by any design upon his game; but, nevertheless, directed his steps to the cover (being only at a short distance), for the purpose of ascertaining the rank and quality of the unexpected prisoner. The matter was soon explained; but, as the preacher seemed alarmed, and very anxious to be set at liberty, the gentleman, who is dearly fond of a joke, very calmly told him the key of the trap was lost, and he therefore was unable to release him. Some little rain was falling at the time, and altogether the preacher concluded that the prospect before him was anything rather than pleasant. For the purpose of heightening the joke, the gentleman left him *to bemoan his fate*, but returned in a few minutes—liberated the preacher; and the latter no sooner found himself quite free than he took to his heels, made towards the canal, got on board the packet, which happened to be passing, and related the dreadful tale with all imaginable horrors.

As a sort of general caution, "STEEL TRAPS" are well enough written up in conspicuous cha-

racters; but, I am inclined to think, have little influence in preventing the depredations of the poacher.

DOG SPEARS.

These instruments are but little used; and, in fact, it is only in certain situations where they can be successfully employed against the poacher. Where canals pass through preserves, they are very liable to be plundered by the boatmen; nor do I think that more savage, ferocious, and more demoralized ruffians, and greater thieves, are to be found in the universe than these boatmen. They are accompanied by dogs; and for these dogs spears may be successfully employed. The spear is nothing more than a piece of iron, sharp at the point, fixed in a wooden block or handle; this is placed in the runs or meuses in the hedges, but so high that the hare in passing through goes under the point, but which the pursuing dog receives in his breast.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

Hitherto I have proceeded by dividing my sub-

jects, or rather perhaps classing them under different heads or sections, which appeared the most eligible method in this work, as it possesses the undeniable advantage of rendering it more lucid and more distinctly intelligible; but in approaching the close of the book a few observations, by way of finish, will make it more complete, which however, from their general or desultory nature, render particular division superfluous and unnecessary.

In the first place it may be remarked that, in the execution of almost any office there is a pleasant and an unpleasant mode of performing it; and therefore I strongly recommend the former to keepers, particularly as it may be accomplished without the least relaxation of that unceasing vigilance so indispensable to the correct and effective discharge of the duty of a gamekeeper. Above all, gamekeepers should cultivate the goodwill and esteem of the farmers, since the latter are able to injure the game to a most destructive extent, without much risk of absolute detection. At the same time the farmer, when on good terms with the keeper, will not fail to look out not only for professed poachers, but for trespassers of every description; thus saving the latter much trouble and vexation, as well as preserving his game. And I must confess that I have found keepers

civil and obliging, with only two exceptions. In the year 1828, having permission to shoot on the manor of a neighbouring nobleman, I was met on the ground by the principal and the second keeper. The latter I had known many years; a simple, civil man, but a good servant, an excellent keeper in whatever relates to the preservation of game, and who is at present serving one of the most liberal and best masters in England. The principal or head keeper was a stranger, whose appearance did not indicate that sort of characteristic which exhibited the genuine man of business. His garb, his ridiculous tone of authority—in fact, his manner altogether, at the first glance, manifested with more than ordinary force the ignorant, the quaint, the presumptuous, yet vulgar and low-minded coxcomb. And, if preliminary observation thus made no very favourable impression, the subsequent conduct of this fellow was by no means calculated to remove or improve it. "Sir," said he to me, "beat that field while I sit on the bank and read the newspaper." When he very deliberately took his seat and drew forth the organ of intelligence. To be brief, had it not been for the civil attention of the under-keeper I must have quitted the ground in disgust. I visited the same manor the following year (1829), when this impertinent jackanapes met me; I was

not able to endure him, it was beyond human patience. I returned in disgust in a few minutes.

I once met with an unpleasant keeper, of another description: this, too, was the servant of a nobleman. He was surly and uncivil: he was evidently of a savage disposition: his countenance wore the most assassin-like aspect I ever beheld. I have come in contact with many keepers in various parts of the kingdom, but never had the least reason to be dissatisfied with their conduct except in the instances mentioned above.

Having in the early part of this work drawn the attention of gamekeepers to cats, and in particular to wild cats, I will in this place make a few remarks on dogs (including wild dogs), as far as relates to the destruction of game. It may very easily be perceived, even by those who have paid but slight attention to the subject, that all dogs pursue game of every description. They pursue it, as it were, by instinct; they pursue it eagerly; and the pursuit of it evidently affords them the greatest possible gratification: consequently all dogs will destroy game, if an opportunity presents itself for that purpose. Some of these animals are quite incapable of extensive mischief; but most of the mongrels and curs are

to be suspected. The terrier, the shepherd's dog, and the lurcher, are capable of serious depredations; particularly the latter: and I have known even mastiffs pursue and destroy hares. Dogs of this description, however, while they remain at home, will do no injury; but if they contract the habit of rambling into the fields they will seldom want the countenance and encouragement of their owner or master to induce them to pursue and destroy game. If dogs are suffered to ramble in the fields during the breeding season they will make sad havoc, not only with leverets, but with pheasants and partridges; and they will devour either eggs or young birds. But the wild dog is most to be dreaded. A case of this kind seldom occurs it is true; but it sometimes happens, as the following will show. It may be justly remarked, that of all "animals that have been reclaimed from a state of nature, no one has ever become so effectually domesticated, so sagacious, or, if I may be allowed the expression, so completely identified with the cause of his master, as the dog; yet there are not wanting instances where this useful animal has manifested a disposition to abandon civilized society, and assert his native independence. Four years ago (1821) a black greyhound bitch, the property of Mr. John Heaton, of Scarisbrick, Lancashire, left her master,

forsook the habitation where she had been reared, betook herself to the fields and thickets, and adopted a life of unlimited freedom, defying all the restraints of man. In this state she killed a great number of hares for food, and occasionally made free with the sheep; she therefore very soon became a nuisance in the neighbourhood. She had taken her station at two miles' distance from her master's house, and was generally found near this spot. In consequence of her depredations many attempts were made to shoot her, but in vain: she eluded for more than six months the vigilance of her pursuers. At length she was observed to go into a barn, which stood in a field which she frequented. She entered the building through a hole in the wall; and, by means of a rope snare, was caught as she came out. On entering the barn three whelps were found, about a week old; so that in her savage state she had evidently been visited by a male of her own species. The whelps were, foolishly enough, destroyed; but as the bitch herself evinced the utmost ferocity, and, though well secured, vainly attempted to seize every person that approached, she was taken home and treated with the utmost kindness. By degrees her ferocity abated; and in the course of two months she became perfectly reconciled to her original abode. Last season

(1822) I saw her run several courses. There is still a wildness in her looks; but although at perfect liberty she does not attempt to stray away, but seems quite reconciled to a domestic life."

Many other instances of wild dogs might be quoted; but the preceding is sufficient for the present purpose.

A mastiff or German boar dog, presented by the Prussian General Bulow to an English gentleman, was afterwards given to one of this gentleman's tenants as a house dog. I saw this dog many times. He was as large as our largest English mastiffs, and almost, if not quite as heavy, but more active; with a very large head. This dog took to running hares, and generally killed them. He possessed exquisite olfactory organs, or sense of smell. He would hunt up a hare, and when she had run out of his sight he put his nose to the ground, and carried on the scent as regularly as a southern hound, but with more expedition.

Dogs are much less employed by poachers of the present day than formerly: their whole system may be said to have experienced great improvement, or, at least, alteration; and they therefore do not stand so much in need of the assistance of this faithful animal. These fellows may use the

dog for running hares into the gate net, or the purse net, or the wire snare: as a hare is thus sooner and more certainly captured. But the partridge and the pheasant are taken without his assistance—and, indeed, so may hares, as I have already shown in preceding pages; yet I well know that shooting in the daytime is a great favourite with all descriptions of poachers, on which occasions they may be seen accompanied by pointers or setters. They thus appear on ground not preserved; and also embrace every possible opportunity of stealing-in upon preserved manors.

Having pointed out in the course of the preceding pages the most eligible and the best methods of preserving game from the depredations of vermin, it will be the keeper's own fault if it suffers much from them; for, however numerous vermin may be, the means of destroying them are so effectual, and so plainly pointed out, that nothing more than ordinary attention is necessary to attain the desired object. But in regard to the poacher the subject presents a different aspect. Man is much more than a match for every living creature except his own species; and as, in the case of the poacher, the wiles and cunning of one man are matched against those of another, the issue is more doubtful. I have shown that the

operations of the poacher may be impeded and obstructed in the absence of the keeper or his assistant; but at the same time it should be impressively kept in mind that nothing but the most active vigilance can frustrate his more audacious and more ferocious proceedings.

THE END.

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