

PRACTICAL HINTS
FOR
HUNTING NOVICES.

CHARLES RICHARDSON.

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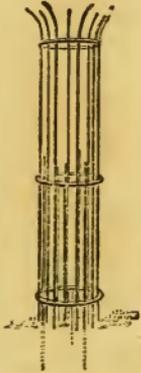
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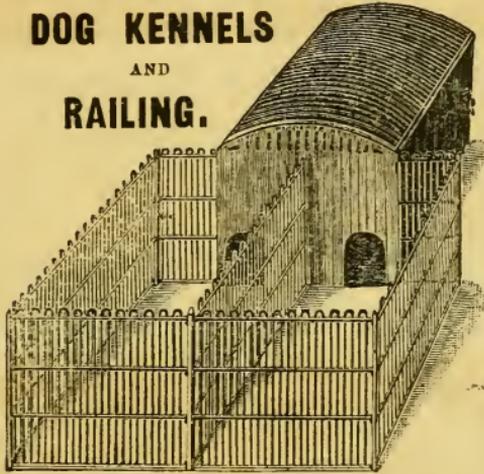
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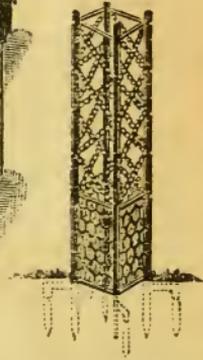
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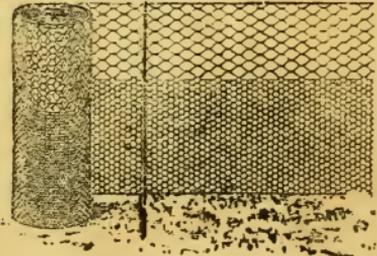
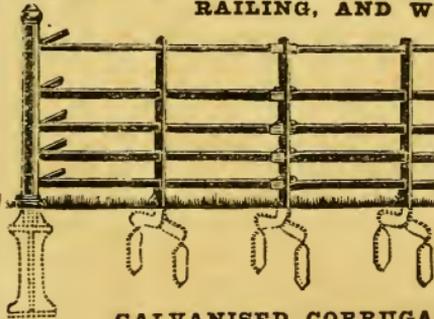
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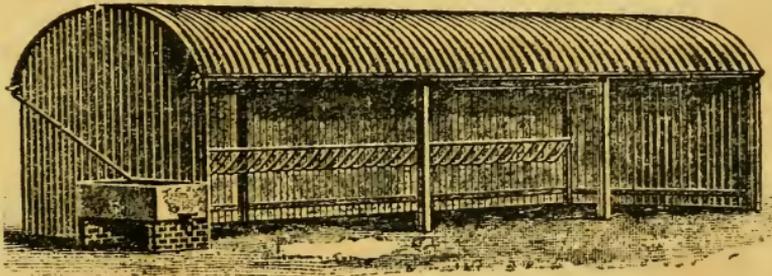
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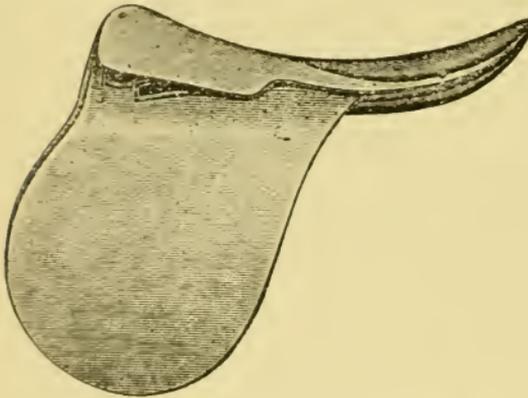


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PRACTICAL HINTS FOR HUNTING NOVICES.

BY

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PREFACE.

THE following papers, which by the courtesy of the proprietor of the *Field* are now published in book form, were written chiefly because of the increased difficulties which Masters of Hounds and Field Masters have lately found with regard to the management of their fields. And as much of the want of discipline which is seen from day to day is the outcome of ignorance on the part of the offenders, and is by no means intentional, it appeared likely that a few practical hints as to behaviour would be of assistance to those hunting people who had not been in the way of securing what may be called a hunting education. While the papers were appearing from week to week in the *Field*, many of the public expressed the wish that they should be published in book form, and this, therefore, has been done. The author now takes the opportunity of informing his readers that he has no wish to be didactic, but that the ideas and suggestions which are conveyed in the following pages have been gathered during a lengthy experience acquired in nearly half of the English hunting countries, and are the result of his own personal observations.

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PRACTICAL HINTS FOR HUNTING NOVICES.



CHAPTER I.

THE YOUTHFUL BEGINNER.

THE CONDITIONS OF LIVING have so greatly changed within the last generation or so that in a majority of hunts the field is largely composed of men and women who have been brought up in towns or in suburban districts, metropolitan or provincial, as the case may be, and who have, therefore, not been in a position to learn what may be called the rudiments of the chase. These novices in all that pertains to matters of venery, unless they are lucky enough to escape notice, are very likely to be a source of mirth to their better-informed neighbours. No one likes being laughed at, and a few hints, if carefully digested, may quite possibly save a certain amount of heartburning. As a broad rule the boys and girls who begin to hunt early are country born and bred, and have been from infancy in a position to know something about hunting. All of them are not so happily placed, and there are few hunting people who have not, at some

time or other, heard the youngsters abused, or at least blamed, for doing something wrong at Christmas time, when whole droves of boys and girls help to swell the field. It is not every hunting field which possesses a good-natured Master of the "Jovey Jessop" type, nor yet a "Jug" to pioneer the children and keep them in order throughout the day. Neither is every small boy when he begins to hunt in the way of being quietly told what he should or should not do. He may make his *début* under the auspices of an ignorant groom, who is totally unaware of the etiquette of the hunting field; or he may be sent out alone, and have to depend on himself entirely. And it is the fact that many parents who allow their children to hunt in these days know absolutely nothing of the sport themselves, and are, therefore, not only unable to offer any advice to their children, but actually do not know that any knowledge is necessary, thinking that if their boy can sit his pony without falling off he is fully qualified to go out hunting. So the odd boy in one hundred is that *rara avis* who has intuitive knowledge, and who is far too sharp to commit himself in any way. But the average boy wants a lot of instruction, and if he is not in the way of procuring that instruction at home he must acquire knowledge by careful observation and by gradual experience, or he may profit by the experience of those who have made a life-long study of the subject.

The relation of an instance which came under my notice some two or three years ago will serve to show how necessary it is for youngsters to be introduced to the sport by a person of experience, or one who will, at least, obey instructions. A lady who knew nothing

of hunting had lately come to live in a hunting country, and had sent her boy and girl out hunting (for the first time) in charge of a man who was just as ignorant as the children. His instructions were that he and his charges had on no account to leave the road, and the Master, seeing a big crowd at the meet, and being about to draw a gorse on a hillside below the village, sent a second horseman to direct the crowd to a spot where they were not likely to do any harm. The coachman in charge of the children, when asked to follow on, replied that he had only come to the meet, and was at once going home. The second horseman came on without him ; hounds found in the gorse, and the fox set out on a beautiful line ; but as he rose the hill the forms of the groom and the two children suddenly appeared drawn up (in a lane) on the skyline, and nicely placed about twenty yards apart. The fox turned back, and ran straight into hounds. There was, however, a second fox in the gorse, and he broke a little further along the hill, pointing for the crest some quarter of a mile from where the first fox had been headed. It looked as if he would make his point, but just as he reached the lane the three spectral figures again appeared, and the fox dodged back to covert, and resolutely refused to break again. The children went home highly pleased at having seen two foxes, and perfectly ignorant of the fact that they had spoilt the sport ; and their mother, innocently enough, for a week or so went about telling all her friends how sharp her youngsters had been in having seen two foxes on their first hunting day, while Mrs. B.'s boy (who had doubtless been in his right place with the crowd), though he was fourteen years old, had come

home complaining that he had not seen a fox all day, and had had no sport.

If boys and girls begin under the care of hunting parents, it may be assumed that they will have the best of advice. Parents who are ignorant of hunting should secure for their children the services of some one who "knows the ropes." Before they are allowed to go out hunting the youngsters should, at least, be able to manage their ponies without assistance. A child who goes hunting in a leading rein is a source of danger to himself or herself, and very often a nuisance to the field. The led pony often makes a disturbance, and nearly always causes a slight block at a field gate. Boys cannot begin too young, and even the child of five who goes out on a donkey can pick up something; but the donkey must be in charge of a strong and active man, for donkeys have a way of getting unduly excited when they see hounds or a field of horsemen, and at such times they can show extraordinary strength, and take a great deal of holding, even when a man is leading them. The child who is too young or too small to manage his or her pony may be taken to a meet, but should not be allowed to follow hounds, and, indeed, all very small ponies are likely to be a nuisance to the regular followers. Horses which never kick at another horse will often lash out at a small pony, and ponies which are perfectly quiet at ordinary times have a wonderful knack of becoming greatly excited when taken out hunting. In all Christmas fields there is invariably some boy or girl whose pony takes charge and does what he likes with his tiny rider, and though one seldom hears of a serious accident to a youngster, such things

are not unknown. For a boy who is anxious to hunt, the best course is to send him out on foot first, and if he is of an observing turn he will notice all sorts of little things which he would probably have no cognisance of when riding. But youth is impetuous, and the boy who knows how to ride will greatly object to trudging the country on foot if there is a pony in the stable which can carry him. The novice should be made to understand that when he goes hunting he has three-fold duties to bear in mind—duties to the Master and hunt servants, duties to the field, and last, but not least, duties to the farmers whose land he hunts over. And, if possible, he should before he takes the field have some knowledge of the various crops. He should know growing corn and young beans when he sees them, and he should be initiated into the mysteries of seeds. To the townsman, and, indeed, to anyone who is in no way bucolic, seeds are a terrible bugbear. When they are coming up through stubble the man or woman who is not well versed in such things recognises the stubble, and at once thinks that he or she is on fair galloping ground. The seed question is one to which too much prominence cannot be given. It is in the eyes of many farmers more heinous an offence to ride over seeds than wheat, for it is a very common opinion that, under certain conditions of weather, where the horse puts his foot down on seeds he leaves a round mark, which, if rain comes soon, holds the water and rots the young plants. Even if this is not likely to occur often, it is certain that young and tender plants must suffer in some degree from being ridden over, for they have no strength of root early in life, and are easily kicked out of the

ground. A boy, or any hunting novice for that matter, should always reflect what damage could be done to a kitchen garden by a horse galloping over it, and he should then bear in mind that some farming is very like gardening on a larger and grander scale. Old turf, moorland, rides in a covert, ploughed fields, and stubble which is free from seeds and about to be ploughed, are all fair galloping ground, but growing crops should always be avoided and a course steered along the headland of the field.



CHAPTER II.

THREE-FOLD DUTIES.

MENTION has been made of the three-fold duties which the boy or girl novice must bear in mind, and duty towards the farmers over whose land he or she hunts was taken first. Assuming, then, that the youngster—and for the moment I leave out the girls, who thus early in a hunting career are always in charge of a friend or groom—knows something of the various crops and is fully aware that he must not ride over seeds, growing corn, beans, or turnips (even if he sees others doing so), he must also be particular that he does no damage when finding his way across country. Should his pony not be fast enough to keep up with the rest of the field, he would do better if he made for the nearest field road or lane than if he attempted to follow the line of the hunt. But this will only occur occasionally, for hounds do not go at top speed every day, and for the ordinary average run in the ordinary average country good ponies are quite fast enough. If the boy novice happens to get into a real quick thing, and cannot go the pace, he should look out for the second horsemen, and, if possible, join them. It is little use plodding on half a mile or so in the wake of hounds when

thoroughly outpaced, whereas by saving one's mount there may be a chance of nicking in when hounds take a favourable turn, or of dropping in for a second somewhat slower run later in the day. It is when he is "left" that the youngster—very often without knowing it—is likely to do something which may annoy the farmer. He may leave the gate of a field in which cattle or sheep are grazing open, or he may make a considerable gap in a fence by squeezing his pony through a place which is too big to be jumped. This question of jumping should, however, be in some degree decided before the youngster takes the field. Every boy who wishes to go out hunting wants to jump. That, I think, may be taken for granted, but many boys come out perfectly ignorant as to whether their ponies can jump, promptly ram them at a fence when they see other people jumping, and very often, if it is old and rotten, carry away yards of the obstacle, leaving a gap big enough to drive a coach-and-four through. It is extraordinary what damage can be done to a fence by a pony—sometimes even by a horse—who is keen to get on, and has no idea of refusing, but has not been properly schooled. He will dash right into a fairly big place, and fight his way through, carrying a tangled mass of briars into the next field with him, and when the farmer comes to the gap he will not only be very angry, but will reflect that it will take a man half a morning to repair the damage. Gaps, of course, will always be made in the hunting field, and the boy whose pony is incapable of jumping his fences clean should wait his turn at the one or two gaps which are being gradually made by the rank and file of the field, following each other one by one, but on

no account must he attempt to make a fresh gap for himself.

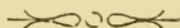
Nor should the beginner ever get off and try to pull a fence down, but rather he should bear away to the right or left in search of an easier place, or even go back the way he has come. If a whole field is shut in, with no practicable exit, then, as a rule, the Master will give orders for some place to be pulled down; but when that occurs it is long odds that someone is sent to repair the damage next day, or that the Master knows how to put the matter right with the owner or tenant. Unfortunately, inexperienced people have seen such an occurrence and have not grasped its true meaning, and of this I saw an instance two seasons ago. A couple of youngsters, rather older than most boy beginners, were out on a cubhunting day in charge of the family coachman, when hounds were in a large woodland through which runs a wire fence dividing two properties. At a certain place there were slip rails, and here the Master had arranged for a hunting wicket, which was actually on the spot on the particular day I refer to, but had not been put up. During the summer, however, someone had closed the slip rails by putting in a couple of upright posts close together, and these effectually barred the way. The Master, arriving at the place first, hounds having run a fox through the wire fence, jumped off his horse, and, being a very strong man, soon had one of the posts out, and having liberated the slip rails, led his horse through. Someone else pulled out the other post, and the whole field went through. Three months later, at Christmas time, hounds were running in a stiffly-enclosed country, and

the same two boys were out in charge of the same coachman, and were trying as best they could to follow hounds. One of the ponies would not jump, however, and the coachman levelled two fences to the ground before he could get his charges through. A day or two later the Master received a bill for 15s. from the tenant farmer, "for repairing fences broken by their father [the family coachman], for two young gentlemen who did not dare to jump, and had no business to be out hunting." The Master, being a good-natured man, at once paid the damage, but when he had an opportunity he spoke to the coachman, who remarked that he had seen him (the Master) do the same thing in — forest a few weeks before, so he thought there was no harm in his breaking the fences.

The beginner's duty to the Master is in a great measure wrapped up in his duty to foxhunting generally, but it is most important that he should gradually discover for himself what are the particular wishes of the Master he hunts with. This is at times not very easily done, for Masters vary so much, some being martinets, while others are too easy-going. Some Masters there are who encourage the children and give them plenty of sound advice; others take no notice of them, but are quite content as long as the children do not put themselves unduly forward. All boys and girls should cultivate an attitude of extreme respect to Masters of hounds, and should—unless they know them well—wait to be spoken to. Nor should they in the holidays make a great noise among themselves when hounds are drawing, or when they have checked. This is a very important point, for there are times in every hunting

day—which every boy and girl will quickly find out—when silence is absolutely imperative. There is plenty of time for talking when hounds are at the meet, or are going from covert to covert, and the “ babbler ” in the hunting field is the most unmitigated bore. If you are beginning to grasp what may be termed the business of hunting, and have any information about foxes or gamekeepers that the Master ought to know, tell him quietly when an opportunity presents itself ; but do no force your knowledge on him if you see that he is indifferent, and on no account tell him anything unless you know it to be absolutely true. In every hunt there are often idle tales in the air as to foxes having been seen in unlikely places, and so on ; and with these you need not concern yourself, the Master being just as likely to have heard them as you. As regards the huntsman and whippers-in, a policy of strict non-intervention should be observed. Never talk to the hunt servants while they are on duty. Their minds are fully occupied from the time they leave kennels until they return at night, and the less they are interrupted the more likely they are to do their duty properly. When the huntsman is casting hounds stand quite still, and do not speak or move until you see the rest of the field moving. Never single yourself out from the crowd at checks, and never attempt to follow the huntsman in his cast. Never go into covert after hounds on your own account, but only when you see the rest of the field going on, for in that case it will be customary with that particular covert. Never when hounds are drawing move away from the crowd, even if you see an odd man or so going off somewhere. The man in question may be the covert

owner or tenant, or one of the two or three privileged men there are in almost every hunt who are allowed to go to certain points for the purposes of viewing foxes. Never when going from covert to covert go close to hounds; ponies are more liable to kick them than horses, and the Master invariably dislikes any of the field to ride among the pack. Indeed, when hounds leave a meet, or are trotting along a lane, they should be allowed at least a hundred yards before the field begin to follow, and in this connection you should remember that even if others press too closely on hounds, that is no reason for your doing so, and you will lose nothing in the long run by keeping in your proper place.



CHAPTER III.

DUTIES TO THE FIELD.

THE duty of boys and girls towards the Master and his staff when hunting having been alluded to, mention must now be made of the duty which every boy or girl beginner owes to the rest of the field. And first of all it may be pointed out in all seriousness that all observing beginners will quickly find out that many hunting people of long standing are constantly offending in some little matter or other. This may be to some extent confusing, but children must never be carried away by the idea that it is right for them to do anything and everything which they see their elders doing. There are, as a matter of fact, some men and women who have hunted for years and years, and yet who will not learn the unwritten laws of the sport, or who, worse still, knowing what may and what may not be done, choose wilfully to do what they know to be wrong. Boys and girls must on no account adopt as their model any particular man or woman, unless they know for certain that he or she is one whose actions can be confidently copied. There are, it need hardly be said, in most hunting fields certain persons who constantly transgress. Some of these are actuated

by ignorance alone, and cannot apparently be taught the etiquette of hunting. If they are soundly rated one day, they repeat the offence on the next, and, indeed, they seem to be incapable of understanding what is and what is not correct. Luckily, there are not many so dense, but I have known of some cases which went on so long that they became standing jokes in their own locality, and, moreover, no amount of chaff had any effect. One of these offenders was a girl who came out in charge of a groom, but neither she nor her servant seemed to have the least idea of what to do or where to go. They would block the open gateway into a covert when the huntsman wanted to go through with his hounds ; they would follow the said huntsman round a hundred-acre field when he was casting ; and, if the top stones of a wall were knocked off to allow the huntsman egress from the field, the girl would rush at the gap almost before it was made, her servant would follow, and, meantime, the huntsman—who had dismounted to pull the wall down—would be swallowed up in the crowd, all hustling for the gap, and many of them quite unaware of what had really occurred.

When remonstrated with, this girl used to laugh, and ask why such a fuss was being made about nothing ; and a few minutes later hounds would run through a covert, and the field would follow along a ride. Then our friend was in her glory ; she would be first if possible, and, if there were a dozen in front of her, she would shove past them all, squeezing them into the ditch or into the trees, and not caring in the least as long as she got to the front. As for pulling up to go slowly

past anyone who had dismounted, she had no idea of it, and her groom was just as bad. In many countries grooms are not allowed to follow their charges across country, but this was a provincial hunt, where the fields were small, and the Master had taken no action in the matter. Beginners should make a strong mental note of this question of rushing past. When in the open field he who can go the fastest has a perfect right to be first. The boy or girl on a pony is at liberty to pass all and sundry at such times, but when the end of the field is reached the situation becomes quite different. There may be a fence in front which can be jumped anywhere. If that be the case, choose your own place, but look right and left, and see that you are giving plenty of room to your neighbour on either side. If you are following a leader, give him plenty of time to jump. Get your pony well in hand, and do not let him go at the fence until your pilot is well over and galloping on, at least a dozen yards from the far side. If the fence is a big one, and the field are following each other through a gap, get there with what speed you may, but pull up as you reach the crowd, and take your proper place, in the order of your arrival. Do not on any account attempt to shove past anyone who may have reached the gap before you, and when your turn comes let whoever is immediately in front get well through before you go. If you have gone for a gate, observe the same rules as to turns, and if you should happen to be last at a gate which someone has opened, take great care to shut it behind you. When going from covert to covert, along a narrow lane, for instance, keep in your place, when you can. There is at such times no

particular reason why you should be forward, but if you want to join anyone who is in front, go quietly past, with a "beg pardon," if there is plenty of room. Otherwise you should remain where you are until the road widens, or until you find yourself in an open field. When going through a covert, never attempt to pass the man in front. If he is going too slowly, and a gap is being opened out between him and the man he is following, you can ask him to quicken up, and he will, of course, trot on, and this rule applies equally whether hounds are running or not. If a covert has to be traversed in the course of a run, you cannot exercise too much care, and the first thing you must think of is to have your pony well in hand. Two years ago I saw some horrible confusion caused under these circumstances. Hounds were running hard in a grass country when they came to a belt of covert near a great house. There was a ride across the belt—which was about a hundred yards wide—and a hunting wicket at either end. The run had only been ten minutes in progress, and there was a large field out. The first who reached the gate opened it and went through, and the field crowded in one by one, pressing on far too closely. Unfortunately, the far gate was locked, and a delay took place, and those behind, not knowing what had happened in front, kept shoving on, and caused the ride to be blocked up with horses. All of a sudden one horse lashed out, and a moment later half a dozen horses which had never kicked before were all trying to do the same thing. Luckily, the horses were so jammed together that few of them had room to kick freely; but one man was rather badly hurt, and, if the gate

had not been very quickly lifted off its hinges, there would doubtless have been a serious accident.

Then, again, you should never attempt to pass anyone when the field is proceeding at single file along the ride of a covert or in a lane where there is a lot of mud. You and everyone else can slow down when a bit of really deep or boggy ground is reached. In such going the best horse in the world may fall if when galloping fast he hits a stone which is concealed in the mud, and, even putting aside the fact that galloping in such ground is extremely dangerous, it is almost certain that, if you go fast through such a place, you will plaster with mud whoever is coming behind you.

Another matter about which you must be careful is the dismounted man. If when hounds are running you see a man off his horse and in your direct line, you must pull up to a slow pace and walk or trot slowly past, for if you gallop past at top speed you may cause his horse to break away, or, if he retains his hold, to set about playing the fool. The man may have dismounted to do something for the common good of the field, or he may have dismounted on his own account or because his horse has become lame ; but, anyhow, you may take it for granted that he has not got off during a run without good reason, and you will not be any the worse off for slackening speed for a few moments. Then, again, if someone gets off to open a refractory gate, and you are first through, give him time to get on again before you go on, even if hounds are running hard in front. This is a matter on which hunting etiquette is very strict, and only a huntsman is allowed to go on without waiting, and when a run has been in progress some

time even a huntsman will often wait for the man who has opened a difficult gate for him. And as early as possible you should learn to catch a loose horse, though in your pony days this will not be an easy matter. It may be against the grain to pull up or to go out of your course in an endeavour to catch the horse of someone who is down; but there is a give and take in the hunting field as there is elsewhere, and the man who makes no attempt to catch a loose horse should remember that he may want one caught himself some day, and that his duty towards his neighbour is as clearly defined in hunting as in any other condition of life. If you see anyone in difficulties, go at once to his assistance, even if you lose your place thereby. Such very simple things occur that are difficult for a single man or woman to put right, but which can be arranged in a moment by two people. A saddle slips back, owing to the girths having become loosened (some horses maintain a fairly even girth all day, and others require their girths to be taken up three or four holes after they have been out two or three hours), the rider dismounts, but cannot put the saddle back because his horse will not stand. But if someone comes up to hold the horse the matter is arranged in a moment. So, too, a man may jump a fence, and afterwards perceive a thorn sticking into his horse where he cannot reach it. He has to dismount in order to pull it out, and the horse will not stand still. Half a minute of willing assistance at such a time is most valuable, and you should always remember that horses which are quiet enough at ordinary times become greatly excited when hounds are running, and will seldom stand still when dismounted in the

middle of a field, and while other horses are galloping on. There are, in fact, as you will find out for yourself, many occasions during every season when you can help your neighbour, and these you should on no account neglect, for even the assistance of a boy on a pony is most welcome at times, and you would naturally like to grow up with the reputation of having been a good sportsman from early youth.



CHAPTER IV.

LEARNING TO RIDE.

EVERY season produces whole batches of recruits to hunting who are of mature years, and such people are, as a rule, more in need of advice as to their conduct than are the infantile beginners. The older novice class takes a very wide range indeed. Some parents will not allow their boys and girls to hunt until the days of education are over, and thus one constantly sees young folk who make their first appearance when somewhere between eighteen and twenty years of age. As a rule, those who begin at this time of life have learnt to ride before they attempt to follow hounds, but there are exceptions even to this rule, and not long ago I saw a midshipman at home on leave out hunting for the first time, who candidly admitted that he had never ridden anything but a donkey before, and that only when he was quite a child. He appeared at the meet on a well-bred hack of sedate manners, but his seat was not elegant, and he held his reins clubbed together in a bunch. He was, however, supremely confident, and all went well until hounds were just about to be put into covert, when the field one by one hopped over an 18in. rail into an enclosure adjoining the gorse which was being

drawn. The sailor's turn came soon, but the sedate one was a flippant jumper, and she put her loosely-sitting rider well over her head. He was quickly in the saddle again, and hounds found and went away. The middy did as he saw others do, but, having no knowledge of how to sit and grip, he was put off every time he jumped.

After some half-dozen falls (all voluntaries), he made a dash at the saddle to get on again ; but the girths had never been tightened, and he pulled the saddle right round, and was last seen cheying his mount across a field, her saddle being underneath her instead of on her back. Luckily, the sailor was no worse for his adventure, and because he was a sailor his performance only gave rise to good-humoured mirth ; but had he been the ordinary novice his *début* in such inglorious fashion might have been seriously against him.

The moral, however, of the sailor's story is that no one should go out hunting until they have learnt to ride. This, one would think, most beginners would consider to be essential, but the fact remains that many people take to hunting, or rather attempt to hunt, before they have mastered even the rudiments of horsemanship, and when this happens the novice is not only at once betrayed, but very likely starts his hunting career with several black marks against him.

It need hardly be mentioned here that a love of sport is inherent in many people, and those who have the desire to hunt will almost invariably attempt it as soon as their circumstances will permit. A man may long to hunt throughout his boyhood, but not be able to

satisfy his ambition until he is well on in years. Instances of men who began at thirty, forty, and even fifty years of age are not unknown, and it should be added that when men of what may be called mature age take to the sport they very rarely commit themselves. Their general knowledge of life has taught them so many lessons that they have postponed their appearance in the field until they knew they were what the actors call letter-perfect. Though unable to hunt as young men, they—having all along had an intuitive desire to hunt—have followed the sport in the papers, have kept themselves abreast of what has been going on in the hunting world, and have most likely fed themselves up on the works of Whyte Melville and Surtees. They may have even dipped into Beckford, Vyner, Capt. Cook, or Delmé Radcliffe, the classic authorities of the sport, but anyhow they have, as a rule, made themselves very fully acquainted with all the ins and outs of hunting, and most certainly they have become passable horsemen before they took the field. To this class of man little need be said, but there are still a few middle-aged novices who have or have not a lot to learn, and I can think of two specimens of the class, one of whom was a good and the other probably the most aggravating novice ever known. The good novice had hunted a little—a very little—as a boy on a pony, but from his childhood until he was about fifty he had never seen a hound, and had ridden very little. Indeed, he had spent some five-and-twenty years in India, and then came home to live at the family place which he had inherited. He at once sent a subscription to the hounds, and shortly afterwards appeared at the

covert side, faultlessly got up, and well mounted. He looked as if he had been hunting four days a week all his life, and when hounds ran, without being an absolute thruster, he took a good place and kept it. In fact, no one for a moment could have imagined that he was hunting for the first time since he was about fourteen years old ; but such was actually the case, and it is quite certain that he had profited by and remembered what he had learnt in early youth. The antipodes of this case was a Londoner who came into a large country estate when about fifty-five years of age. He was a horsey-looking man, with a capital seat on a horse, who looked the middle-aged country squire of sporting tastes to the life. His appearance created a most favourable impression, but he was a perfect ignoramus in all matters connected with hunting, and yet it took several weeks for the field to find it out, so much did his appearance belie him. Thus, when he holloaed a hare it was thought he was short-sighted ; when he charged a man who was walking through a gap and knocked him out of his saddle, it was said that his horse had bolted ; but when the Master suggested drawing his coverts, and asked where he would like the meet to be, his answer of " Will you want meat for the hounds as well as luncheon for yourselves ? " fairly gave him away. He did not hunt for long, and the last the writer heard of him was a complaint that the hunt " had invaded the privacy of his private domain, had frightened his swans, and done considerable damage to his ornamental shrubs."

About this learning to ride there are nowadays so many opinions and ideas that advice and suggestion

are more difficult to make than they are with regard to any other matter connected with hunting. To presume, then, that the aspirant to the hunting field, of either sex, has never learnt to ride until he or she is well advanced in his or her teens. The thousand and one books which have been written on the subject will for the most part suggest the riding school, and though much has been taught in the schools in the past that is of little value in the hunting field, it cannot be denied that the schools have turned out many good riders.

The fact is, there are apt and inapt pupils, whether they learn in the schools or out of doors, and the former class soon pick up a good deal of knowledge, while the stupid beginners muddle on for long enough, and seldom become even moderate horsemen. Broadly speaking, the schools may be recommended for townsmen, and the open country system for those who live in the country. The average townsman has, indeed, little chance of learning to ride except in a school. He cannot well take his first lesson on horseback in a public street, and, moreover, most grown-up men do not like being laughed at when they attempt anything new, and there is less chance of this occurring in the privacy of a riding school than there is on a public road. If the would-be hunting man lives in the country, his best plan is to buy a thoroughly steady, quiet horse, who does not pull or shy, and who may be trusted to do exactly what is wanted; or, if he knows of such a horse, he might borrow or hire him before he buys for himself; but under any circumstances he must not attempt to ride until he has secured the services of someone

who is willing and able to instruct him what and what not to do. A quiet cob in a country lane, where there is no fear of interruption, is perhaps as good a beginning as can be suggested; but in these articles it is not intended to offer instructions as to learning to ride, but rather at the moment to suggest that no one should go out hunting until he has learned to sit his horse, and is able to keep him in perfect control. The novice, too, should always remember that horses "which a child could ride," and which are as quiet as a lamb if taken out hacking, are very often quite different in the hunting field. Many horses, possibly most horses, who have not an atom of vice about them will to some extent alter their manner and character during the early part of a day's hunting. The quiet hack who trots along the road quite sedately, and takes no notice of anything unusual on an ordinary day, will prick his ears and fidget when hounds and a crowd of horses are in his vicinity, and even the lightest mouthed nag will often pull a little at the beginning of a run.

Some otherwise quiet horses, too, will give a few playful bucks at starting, and I once possessed a good hunter who, on hunting days, kicked freely half a dozen times when he first got on to grass. He never kicked at other horses, but merely lifted his heels in exuberance of spirits when he first felt the grass underneath him, and he never repeated the kick later in the day. Yet in all other respects his manners were perfect. The novice, then, should remember that a horse in the hunting field is a different animal to a horse that is being quietly ridden along a road, and be prepared

for some extra ebullition of spirits. If he feels that he has the upper hand of his mount, that he can pull him about at will, that he can sit on at the jumps, and that there is no fear of his horse getting out of hand, then he is, as far as horsemanship is concerned, in a fitting condition to go out hunting.



CHAPTER V.

COSTUME AND EQUIPMENT.

THERE is possibly no matter connected with hunting in which the novice so often fails as in dress and equipment, and, though things have improved in this respect during the last five-and-twenty years—owing, probably to the fact that people go about more than they did, and that the average tailor is a little broader-minded, as regards hunting clothes, than he used to be—one still occasionally sees veritable figures of fun among the novice class. And, first of all, a very strong point must be made of neatness. Every boy and girl, and every man and woman, who hunts should be as neat as a pin all over. No buckles or straps should be allowed to fly out either from saddle, breastplate, or bridle, and no loose strings or tags should be visible about one's person. And, to begin with the children, some of whom are endowed with the bump of neatness, while others are equally untidy. What the children must first of all thoroughly understand is, that hunting, from the earliest days of childhood, demands the closest attention in the matters of toilette and equipment. Children who are going to begin hunting must never think that because they are about to spend the day

in the open air—possibly in scrambling across a rough country on a shaggy pony—any old clothes will be suitable for the occasion. Let them rather understand that hunting on horseback, as apart from hunting on foot, demands an appropriate costume and extreme neatness of attire. Any old clothes will do to go rabbiting in, but when a long day has to be spent on horseback, both underclothes and the garments which are visible to the eye require the closest attention. Everyone who goes hunting should wear flannel or wool underwear, because during a run one is apt to become very hot, and there may be a considerable amount of standing about or slow work afterwards. It is then most necessary to be warmly clad, except, perhaps, in the early days of cubhunting; and many who have studied the question prefer to secure warmth by wearing thicker underclothes than at any other times, urging that they carry less weight by adopting this plan. This, however, may be left to individual taste, but boys and girls alike should cultivate flannel clothing for hunting, even if they are not in the habit of wearing it at other times.

For boys the best possible costume to begin hunting in is a suit of dark whipcord cloth—thick, stout cloth, that will turn a lot of rain. Jacket, waistcoat, and breeches of this material should be secured, and, if paterfamilias objects to paying for a suit which can only be used for hunting, have the jacket and waistcoat cut in the style of an ordinary lounge jacket, so that they can be used for general wear during the winter. Breeches are indispensable, both as regards comfort and appearance, and it may be almost taken for granted

that the father or mother who allows their boy to hunt in these days will let him have a pair of cloth breeches; otherwise a suitable appearance is impossible. There is nothing so unsporting to look at, or so uncomfortable to the wearer, as a pair of trousers stuffed into leggings, and yet a generation or two ago most small boys who hunted during the Christmas holidays were turned out in this fashion. It was not thought necessary to provide breeches for youngsters who had only the chance of a few days in the season, and thus in the average Christmas field some of the boys wore trousers and leggings, while others sported knickerbockers of the old-fashioned sort, and the odd boy who possessed a pair of breeches was an object of envy to all the other boys. On one of these occasions I saw a novice clad in white flannel cricketing trousers, which had been thrust into shiny black leggings. Their wearer thought that they were a good imitation of white breeches, but he found out his mistake when it began to rain. Another boy, whose father objected to his son having breeches, on the ground that he would grow out of them before he had half-worn them out, was much cleverer. It was in the days when trousers were worn tight, so he got his of the right stuff, whipcord cloth or Bedford cord, and had them made as tight as a friendly tailor would agree to. He then secured some small buttons, and on hunting days he had four of these sewn on to each knee, to come just above his leggings, and the result was quite satisfactory. But this matter of early breeches, and boots, too, is one for parents, and not altogether for the children themselves, so it will be sufficient if it is said

that whipcord breeches and black jack boots (if possible) are the best and neatest leg wear for the boy of ten or twelve, and upwards—until the dignity of proper hunting clothes is arrived at. If riding boots are out of the question, leggings are within the reach of every boy, and now there is so much choice in these garments that it is no easy matter to advise. But neatness must be attained at all hazards, and the fewer straps and buckles a legging has the neater it looks on horseback. Boys should remember that the legging for shooting and the legging for riding are not alike. A legging which has to be walked in must be comfortable and not too tight, but a riding legging must fit closely, and must be strongly made. In hunting the lower part of the leg should be to a certain extent protected, so that a blow from a swinging gate or the swish of thorns is minimised, and leggings of stout leather have quite as much resistive power as riding boots. Then, again, it is necessary to have the leather of the legging well down over the top of the boot in front, because in a long day's riding the top of the stirrup is apt to make the ankle sore, if it is not well protected.

Little girls, as a rule, hunt much more frequently than their brothers, because so many of them are educated at home. Thus one sees them once a week or so throughout the season, and with some of them hunting is so regular a thing that they must of necessity have a proper costume. And here I come to rather delicate ground, because the vexed question of riding astride crops up. But, personally, I strongly favour the man's saddle and the man's seat for all girls, say,

until they are sixteen years old. Where I mostly hunt all the little girls have ridden astride for the last eight or ten years, and now some of them who are grown up and "out" have taken to the side saddle. Yet these one and all declare that riding astride is the most comfortable, and that in a man's saddle they have more command of their horse. There I leave it. It is a matter for fathers and mothers to decide, but when girls begin on a man's saddle they must have breeches and boots and a long coat, rather tight at the waist, and with big, deep skirts meeting the top of the boots; this looks smarter and better than the divided skirt arrangement, which some big girls affect, because it leaves the horse's or pony's back and loin free of covering, while the divided skirt to a considerable extent covers the horse's back, and has a rather untidy appearance. In the matter of hats and hair girls cannot be too particular. Even the smallest girls look better with their hair loosely confined by one or two knots of ribbon, and, when the girl is old enough for a pigtail, she will find that form of wearing her hair more comfortable when hunting than having it loose about her shoulders. The girl who is only a child should wear a "tammy" (as I believe they are called), and not a pot hat until she is into her teens. The latter makes her look older than she is, and need not be worn until the general costume has got beyond the childhood stage. And to girls a little older it may be suggested that frisettes (I believe that is the right word, but what I want to signify is really "stuffing") are fatal in the hunting field. I may be told that no girl uses such things when hunting, but that is not correct for I have noticed

them on what I have considered an untidy head, and I have seen a grown-up girl's hair come down during a day's hunting, and was told—by another girl—that it was because she would use frisettes. A close, neat head looks sporting, and, when the pot hat or "billycock" stage has arrived, great care should be exercised, and, if possible, the hat should be big enough to take the head inside it, as a man's hat does. This is, by the way, somewhat difficult for a mere man to explain, but what I want to get at is that some girls wear pot hats perched on the top of their heads, while others, by arranging their hair low on the neck, wear their hats as they were meant to be worn, and the latter arrangement is not only much neater than the other, but the hat is far less liable to come off. Veils, too, are unsightly on children, and possibly unhealthy as well. Those girls who are always thinking of their complexion ought not to attempt to hunt, for they do not understand that the finest complexions in the kingdom are those which are due to plenty of exercise in the open air. Yet one sees at times little girls hunting with their faces smothered up in veils, because a non-hunting mamma has not grasped the fact that fresh air, winter sunshine (which has not a freckle in it), and occasional rain are the best possible promoters of a healthy and wholesome complexion.



CHAPTER VI.

COSTUME AND EQUIPMENT (*continued.*)

WITH regard to what was written in the previous chapter in connection with hats and hair I have heard several opinions expressed. Among other things, I should, I learn, have used the word "frame" instead of *frisette* when I wrote of an untidy head. I may, however once again urge that hair should be worn close and neat on hunting days, and that there should be no fluffy arrangements above the ears. Neatness, combined with a sporting appearance, is what a girl should strive to attain, and the hat should come as far down in front as possible. Not so long ago a lady made her appearance in a certain hunt to which she was a stranger. Her reputation as a fine rider to hounds had preceded her, and at the meet she was pointed out to the Master. That individual was a man of few words, and little given to taking note of his field; but he looked her over with a critical eye and observed, "She's neat, by Jove! Looks just like a smart hunt servant." It was a somewhat rough way of expressing approval, but the lady—who, of course, was told of the incident—took it as a compliment; and, as a matter of fact, it was very true. But this matter of sporting appearance is to some extent

a gift of nature, both to men and women. A certain cast of features carries with it a knowing, sporting look, while a round or broad face can hardly be made to look sporting, even when all the accessories of costume are perfect. And in the matter of hat wearing something very similar exists. Some people are natural hat wearers, and look well in any hat they may choose, while others, their heads being differently shaped, can seldom find a hat to suit them. So, then, it comes to this, that no hat should be chosen until it has been approved by someone else, and in the matter of shape the novice should never be tempted to buy anything that is unusual and likely to be conspicuous in the field.

The question of riding astride seems also to be matter for anxious debate. A little girl of about eleven once informed me that, though she liked riding astride, she could sit her pony best at a jump when in a side saddle. Another declared that she did not like the man's seat so much as the side saddle, though she added, "When I ride sideways mother will not let me use spurs." I am afraid that mother was too easy-going, for spurs should on no account be used by children of either sex. A boy's seat is always more or less loose for some time after he has begun to jump fences, and if he puts on spurs before he has learnt to sit quite tight, he is extremely apt to spur his pony in the shoulder as it lands over the jump. I have seen this happen, and the pony has instantly bolted and rushed through another fence which was close at hand before its rider could pull it up. Boys should not wear spurs until they have ridden for some years, and have had at least three or four spells of Christmas holiday hunting.

The average schoolboy can hardly get more than five or six weeks of hunting in any one season, and those who have only one pony will be lucky if they get eight or ten days during the holidays, and that can only be achieved if there is no stoppage from frost or snow. Therefore, the boy who hunts regularly every Christmas holidays will at the end of his schooldays have had a total of hunting which would hardly equal one regular season, and his hunting will have been spread over several years. Each winter he will be to some extent a beginner again, and, whereas he might have become proficient as a horseman, and possessed of much hunting knowledge, could he have managed three or four months of hunting straight on end, he has had in reality only a few short spells of sport, with long intervals of no hunting between. Let him therefore desist from wearing spurs until his schooldays are over and he is a free agent in all matters connected with hunting.

To trust a little girl with spurs is to court accident, for the average pony is unaccustomed to be ridden in spurs, and a touch of the steel will often make him bolt, and when a pony bolts with a girl the chances of an accident are greater than they are with a boy. Few girls have the wrist power which boys of the same age possess, and a girl's habit may be caught in a fence or on a half-open gate. Indeed, I have mentioned a half-opened gate because I saw a girl come to grief many years ago in this identical fashion. She was quite a young girl, and was riding a tall horse, and she wore a spur. Hounds found, and a big field began to gallop in a cramped country, where there was a high park wall. Hounds got through or over, and the field

all made for some farm buildings, where there was a gate into the park. There was a tremendous rush up a narrow lane, the girl's horse became unruly, and bucked several times. As a matter of course, she touched it with the spur, and it bolted up the lane to where there was a farm gate, opened about 4ft. The horse made a dash and got through ; but the girl's habit—habits were worn much longer then—caught in the fastener of the gate and was torn from top to bottom, pulling its wearer off. She, luckily, was not hurt, but she dropped into a pool of liquid mud, and had to go home in the farmer's cart rigged out in the clothes of the farmer's wife. This came of wearing a spur, and much more recently I saw a great weight-carrying hunter bolt down a muddy lane with a lady, who did not join the hunt again for an hour or two. Her horse had stopped after a while—as some runaways will do when they find themselves alone—but the man who went after her found her trying to take off a spur, and she has never worn one since.

Spurs are very much a matter of fashion, and are only necessary for horses that are stubborn and inclined to refuse. A really willing hunter who will do his utmost does not require a spur ; but men all use them, and many acquire the art of moving their horse about with the slightest touch of the spur. But such men never by any chance hurt a horse with the spur, unless they do it by accident in a fall. Women, on the other hand, can only wear one spur, and it is no finish to the toilette, because it is generally hidden. And the sideways seat does not allow the foot on which the spur is worn to be in quite the proper place for spurring, so that

it is, broadly speaking, inadvisable for any woman to wear a spur, while the novice should never dream of such a thing. A neat, light crop, with a short thong, can, on the other hand, be used by everyone—even by children. Children and girls should exercise as much care in the choice of a crop as they should in the matter of hats. The crop should be light and of cane, and not too thick, while it should have a good long horn handle or crook, with a stump at the bottom, or, if the handle is flat, with a big screw turned outwards. Girls generally have gates opened for them, but this does not always happen, and, anyhow, they have to put out their whip, and, if they can manage it, hold the gate for the next comer. This is what the horn protuberance or the screw is for, and the long handle is, of course, necessary for insertion below the latch of the gate. The thong is a matter of smartness and not of necessity for girls. It gives, however, a finish to the general get-up, but it should not be too heavy, and it should be short, otherwise the end often becomes dirty and wet. And the crop should not be clutched by the handle (in a fashion which seems to be very general with the novice), but carried with the head down and the thong once looped.



CHAPTER VII.

COSTUME AND EQUIPMENT (*continued*).

ONE might have thought that enough had been written concerning the costume of boys and girls when they commence to hunt; but inquirers are still numerous, and one wishes to know what sort of hat or cap a boy should wear. If he is a little boy of nine or ten a cloth cap is the best headgear; but nowadays great care must be exercised in the choice of this article, for nothing in any way approaching the motor cap looks well out hunting, and there are hatters who have no great discrimination between the two types. The proper hunting cap for a boy is rather difficult to describe, though it can be picked from a bunch of caps in a moment. It should have a peak, covered with cloth, all in one piece with the rest of the cap, and not glazed like the motor cap, and it should be fairly full at the sides in front, and close-fitting behind. The fact is that the popular motor cap is a gross exaggeration of the cap which has been worn, say, with ratcatcher kit on cubhunting days for many years past, and pains must be taken so as to get what may be called the original cap, without the motor exaggerations. A leather band inside is a great advantage, and holes

should be perforated round the crown and properly set with "eyes" worked in, which will prevent them closing up. Boys of tender age can wear this cap for all hunting, but when the boy reaches the stage of breeches and boots the "pot" hat, now commonly known as a "bowler" can take the place of the cap, and on no account must the hat string be forgotten, as a bowler is almost as likely to be swept off when going through a covert as a tall hat is. And bright-coloured hat strings look a trifle loud, and are even vulgar. A scarlet or a gold-coloured hat string on dark clothes is an abomination, and though those made of grey or brown are not so bad, black is undoubtedly in the best taste. Gloves should be of leather, and of the best which can be bought. Cheap gloves, like cheap boots, are always more or less of a fraud, and a pair of really good ones will last far longer than half a dozen pairs of cheap ones, the latter often splitting the first day they are worn. It should be borne in mind, too, that, for riding, gloves should always be rather loose—so loose, indeed, that there is plenty of room for the hand to move inside, and so that they can be pulled on and off in a moment. One day's hunting in tight gloves will alter and correct the idea of any girl who may think it necessary for her to show how small her hand is when out hunting, and girls should also know that if gloves are worn when riding of which the fingers are filled to the end, the ends will most certainly split. The fingers of gloves which are ridden in should always curl over a trifle, if comfort is to be achieved, and girls, like boys, should wear strong leather gloves, and eschew kid altogether. Buckskin gloves are difficult to manage,

and often shrink after they have been cleaned ; but knitted gloves are very comfortable in cold weather, though a horse which pulls will wear them into holes in an hour or two. I have had this glove question on my mind nearly all my life, because when I was a very small boy, riding a pony to covert, my father noticed that I had no gloves, and instantly sent me home again to get them. In consequence, I never found hounds until two o'clock, when the best sport of the day was over. That is the sort of lesson which one remembers, and I have always been particular about gloves since then.

And now as to the costume of the novice of riper years, a matter which is really of greater importance than the general turn-out of the boy or girl, because what will be overlooked in children may easily be made the subject of unfavourable comment where a man or woman is concerned. And, with regard to ladies who begin to hunt, much that has already been written concerning children also holds good, more especially the remarks which treated of neatness of hat and head, and tidiness of person. And I am not going to commit myself on the subject of ladies' hunting clothes. Fashion in habits changes every year, probably is changed by enterprising tailors, who do not care for one particular style to remain long in vogue. With that I have nothing to do, but advise all ladies who are about to hunt to go to a tailor and to a hatter who are accustomed to make hunting clothes and hats. The tailor who has no trade of this description should be avoided, no matter how good he may be in the "coat and skirt" line of business, for he is almost certain to be behind the times, and might turn his customer out in the hunting costume

of ten years ago. How distressed any lady novice would be were she to find that her costume was of a bygone date, unlike all the others in the field! This, however, is what might happen if she did not go to the right place for her hunting rig-out, and this I know has occurred. My advice to lady novices as regards costume is that they should go to the best places for everything; but on one point, and one only, should the tailor be ignored, and that is on the stoutness of the material. It is, as a matter of fact, just as important for a woman when hunting to wear strong and warm clothing, with great power of resistance, as it is for a man. Women are just as likely to feel cold and the effects of heavy rain as men are, yet the latter almost invariably wear thicker and more waterproof clothes out hunting. In the winter it is generally cold at some period of the day, either first thing in the morning or during the ride home, and I have heard countless complaints from women who could not keep warm on the days of east wind, or when there was a lot of rain. And over and over again I have solved the riddle by a single glance at their clothes. They were wearing the latest things in hunting costumes, sometimes diagonal cloth, sometimes thin whipcord, but never by any chance the thick and almost waterproof cloth of which the man's scarlet or black hunting coat is made, and which is, as a rule, stout enough to defy all the cold and nearly all the wet one is likely to encounter in a day's hunting. If you will take my advice then, ladies, you will eschew all these light-made fancy garments in favour of the genuine thing; or, if you think the usual cloth that man wears is too sombre and heavy, have your habit bodice (is that

correct?) doubly lined with flannel. Warmth you must have at all costs, for though you may get heated when hounds run hard and you have to gallop fast, there is the cooling process afterwards, and when this is taking place warm garments are an absolute necessity.

Men who have not hunted before should begin so quietly dressed that they will attract no notice—at least on this account. A black or iron-grey frock coat—with the former cloth breeches slightly lighter in colour, and with the latter breeches to match—black jack boots, and a tall hat or a bowler, the first named preferred. No novice should begin with scarlet and leathers, and at least a season should be passed in the costume I have described. Then, if everything is *couleur de rose*, if the novice shall have satisfactorily served the first period of his novitiate, he may be advanced to white breeches and top boots, and a year later, if all has gone well with his hunting, to scarlet. And the novice who begins some time after he has reached the years of discretion must not be surprised or envious if he sees men much younger than himself wearing scarlet. Such men have probably been brought up to hunting, and naturally take to the full uniform as soon as they are old enough to wear it. It used to be an old saying that all men should ride three seasons in black before they began to wear scarlet; but this hardly applies in these days, when everything goes so rapidly, and in a general way two seasons is a long enough period for a man to find out whether he really likes hunting, whether he intends to go on with it, and whether he feels that he has sufficiently mastered the subject, so as to be able

to hold his own with others in knowledge of the sport and ability to ride across country. But the intending foxhunter usually (and always if he is wise) makes his *début* during the period of cubhunting, and here the matter of costume is not the grave affair it is on and after Nov. 1. Indeed, some of the cub-hunting costumes one sees in these days are really grotesque, especially in late summer, when the weather is still warm. A straw hat, flannel jacket, white polo breeches, and brown jack boots; a Norfolk jacket, knickerbockers, and shooting boots; white breeches and puttees under a long black morning coat, and a motor cap. All these and sundry others of an equally curious kind were seen during the present autumn, and my advice to novices is that they should in no way make themselves conspicuous, but wear not too light-coloured clothes, with cloth breeches, and either jack boots or leggings, as the fancy takes them. A cloth cap can be worn, too, with this undress costume; but the appointments of the horse should be as carefully attended to as in the regular season, and, even if one has to turn out in the middle of the night, saddle, bridle, bit, and spurs should be as clean and bright as it is possible to make them. A hunting whip should be carried, too, for there are always gates to open or to hold open for others on cub-hunting mornings, and the crop is a necessity for this business, and, by the way, nothing looks so lonely and bald as a crop without a thong attached. And before I close this paper I may just remind the lady novice that the old-fashioned cutting whip of a former period is quite out of date, and has been for many years. Indeed, this riding whip was only intended for park

riding, and is useless in the hunting field, being far too weak to hold a gate, and very liable to slip through the fingers. I should hardly have mentioned the old-fashioned whip but for having seen one a day or two ago. It was a pretty little affair, gold mounted, and with a blue silk tassel, and its possessor was a tiny child of five, who was beginning her riding career on the family donkey, and who showed me what mother had given her with all the pride of possession.



CHAPTER VIII.

WHERE TO HUNT.

To return for a moment to the use of spurs by ladies, a correspondent writes stating that he agrees very thoroughly with me that, "broadly speaking, it was inadvisable for women to wear spurs." He states that he saw a lady not long ago galloping over a field of high ridge and furrow, and that her horse lost its action, with the result that she half lost her seat, this causing her horse to bolt. The unfortunate rider said afterwards that when the horse began to flounder, making her bump in the saddle, she was unable to prevent herself spurring him hard, and this it was which caused him to bolt. Another correspondent points out that spurs sometimes get caught in the habit skirt, and that when a lady wearing a spur has a fall she is liable to become entangled from the same cause. A third hunting man cordially approves of women wearing spurs, and thinks they give a finished appearance to their toilets, and help them to keep their horses up to the bit in heavy going. Doubtless really finished horsewomen are as much at home with spurs as men are; but my hints are written for novices, and for a novice the spur is most dangerous. Then as regards the

finished appearance to the toilette, this is a matter of opinion. It is quite certain that a top boot on a man looks lonely without a spur, but the one boot on which a woman wears her spur is only half visible, and probably few people regard the spur as a necessary adjunct of the toilette. It comes to this, in fact, that only really fine horsewomen ought to wear spurs, and the rank and file should avoid them. I am also asked to be more definite as to the colour of ladies' habits, but I have already stated that I am not going to commit myself on this point, but I may say that dark colours are in better taste than light ones. Dark grey and black are, perhaps, the most sporting, but light brown and drab are conspicuous and become shabby much sooner than the dark colours. I have seen a habit the colour of which was more like mignonette than anything else—green with white spots all over it—and not long ago I saw a girl in a purple hunting costume; but my advice is to stick to the dark, quiet colours, and this especially applies to novices, who most certainly should not attempt to attract attention until they are quite sure of themselves, and feel that they can get through a day's hunting as if they had been at it all their lives.

Doubtless the question will arise in the minds of many as to where the novice is to go when he wishes to commence his hunting career. If the man who wishes to hunt lives in the country, his course is clear enough. He may first subscribe to and then go out with the local pack; but as regards the townsman the case is different. He may be a man of large means

and willing to subscribe and hunt with a fashionable pack, and he may be so situated as to be within easy reach of several such packs. To all, however, one piece of advice may be given, viz., that they choose some small, unfashionable country in which to disport themselves at first, so that they may pick up experience before they (metaphorically) fly at higher game. A beginner should never go where fields are really large—firstly, because he will be in such a crowd that he will probably find himself unable to see anything of the sport, and, secondly, because he will have so many bad examples before him. It is a sad thing to have to say, but it is none the less true, that in all big fields of the present day there is far too much “riot” on the part of the followers, and that the worst offenders are often men and women who when they do wrong must be perfectly aware that they are giving cause for offence.

In some hunts the continual getting forward and the constant overriding of hounds are little short of a scandal, and this is proved by the fact that nowadays so many Masters find it necessary to issue strong remonstrance to their fields, sometimes verbally, but generally in the form of a written appeal, which is published in local newspapers or sent to the members of the hunt. This, unfortunately, being the case, it stands to reason that the novice must not learn his first lessons of foxhunting in such company, for, if he does, and he ever goes amongst a smaller field of real sportsmen, he will be quickly undeceived. I once had a “week-end” in Leicestershire, which included a day with the Belvoir on Saturday and a day with the

Quorn on Monday, and the overriding on both days was enough to try the patience of Job, and, indeed, one of those particular days was very severely commented on by a *Field* correspondent at the end of the week.

On the Saturday of the same week I hunted with what may be called almost a metropolitan pack—the Burstow, to wit. It was a popular meet, and though the field was small in comparison with what I had seen a few days before, there were something like one hundred and twenty horsemen and women all riding in a cramped country of small enclosures. Hounds found and went away, and about the third field was young wheat. Someone shouted “Ware wheat!” and as soon as they jumped the fence every man and woman turned down the headland, and rode in single file halfway round the field before they jumped out again. I was much impressed with the occurrence, and, though some of the southern hunts may have been cockneyfied when Surtees made such sport of the Old Surrey, some seventy years ago, I am quite certain that a modern field of hunting men and women who are practically Londoners know how to behave when hunting far better than the fields of some of the ultra fashionable packs. The novice, then, whether he intends to hunt with a provincial pack or aspires to the Shires, should first of all go to a small but sporting country, and learn all that he can. Careful study of “Baily’s Hunting Directory” will afford him many particulars of the various countries. It will show him where they are situated, which are the nearest towns, and of what nature and size the country is, and what sort of horse is suitable for it. He can then

make his own choice of a district, and when he feels thoroughly equal to it make his *début* where a stranger will at once be noticed, and probably made welcome. If a newly beginning stranger goes to the Shires or any of the second rank of important countries, his presence will not be noticed, unless he commits himself; but if he goes to a small and quiet hunt, his appearance will give rise to comment, and it is good odds that, if he conducts himself properly, the hand of fellowship will quickly be held out. The best thing, however, is, if possible, for the novice to begin his hunting career under the charge of a hunting friend. If he has a friend who knows the ropes, he will learn more from him in a day than he will in a month of personal observation, and it is always as well to be properly introduced; possibly, indeed, this is a more important matter in a quiet country than in a large one.

If the beginner hails from London, he can make choice of a dozen or more of what may be termed metropolitan packs, metropolitan because of the fact that nine-tenths of the field is regularly composed of Londoners. Not necessarily people who hunt by train from London, for, as a matter of fact, hunting from London is almost a thing of the past, the average hunting Londoner having his hunting quarters somewhere not far from town, and in the country where he hunts. Nevertheless, these men are Londoners, most of them having business in town on three or four days of the week, and hunting on the other days. As a rule, too, they know what they are about in the hunting field almost as well as the men who have lived in the country all their lives and have been entered to sport

from an early age. The latter class nowadays are much inclined to take for granted that they know all about hunting, simply because they have been brought up in the country, and have hunted from boyhood ; but the hunting Londoner, whose youth has been spent in London itself, or in the suburbs, perforce goes through the novice stage, and, as a matter of fact, he is from the first far less of the novice than the provincial novice, because he has early recognised the fact that he is ignorant, and has taken every opportunity of acquiring such knowledge as has come within his reach. Indeed, whilst writing these letters I have often thought that, if all novices were Londoners, there would be little need for any advice, and though there are, of course, exceptions, I have seen far more funny episodes and ridiculous appearances among country folk than I have in the countries adjacent to town, where the field, as a rule, seems to pride itself on its knowledge of what is correct and fitting, and where everyone is extremely careful not to offend against the unwritten canons of the sport. All round London there are foxhounds. In Essex alone there are four packs ; there are two in Hertfordshire, and a double pack in Herts and Bucks, three more in Berks, three in Surrey, and one in Kent, all of which are within easy reach of town, so that the beginner can make choice of the country he would prefer to be in, and arrange accordingly. The packs referred to are what may be called the inner circle of hunts near town ; but there are quite a dozen others in the home and southern counties, which, if a little further afield, are still well within reach of London, and have, indeed, their fields to a considerable

extent made up by Londoners. And in these metropolitan hunts there is every variety of country except grass. Grass there is in some degree, because of the dairying which is carried on near all big centres of population ; but nothing like the great grazing grounds of the Midlands or of some nothern hunts will be found, and, as far as the beginner is concerned, this is all for the best. In the average country near town there are many big woodlands, in some, steep hills involving careful climbing, both up and down. In all a good deal of plough land, and amongst them every variety of fence, except, perhaps, the stone wall. Thus a beginner in any one of these districts will have opportunity of learning something about crops, of how best to go up or down a steep hill, of when to creep and when to gallop or trot up to a fence, of how to travel through a covert or up and down a gill, and of how to pick his ground. He will, too, have a far better chance of seeing hounds work and of learning to understand what they are doing than if he was one of a huge field in a quick grass country, and he will, in brief, have the best possible chance of acquiring knowledge of the sport.

An apprenticeship to foxhunting should be served in a country of great variety, and not on a monotonous plain, where the sport is much the same from day to day. The novice should, if he can so arrange it, go to a hunt where hounds are one day in the woodlands, a second in the vale, and a third amongst the hills. He should then take careful note of all that he sees. Let him watch the huntsman, the Master, or anyone of the field whom he knows to be a

fit person to be copied. Let him study the hounds and their various styles of running to the best of his ability, and very shortly he will begin to find that he knows when scent is good or bad, whether he is in a fair run or a very moderate one, and whether, in fact, the sport is good or indifferent.



CHAPTER IX.

THE HIRING QUESTION.

PROBABLY there is no question connected with his early hunting which troubles the novice so much as that of horses. It may happen, of course, that he is of a horsey turn of mind, that he has been in the habit of riding, and that it is merely the change from hacking to hunting which is new. When this is the case the new beginner probably knows where to find the horse he requires ; but, as has been already stated, there is more than one class of novice, and the townsman who has learnt the art of equitation in a riding school will, in nine cases out of ten, be hopelessly at sea if he makes his *début* in the hunting field on an unsuitable horse. And it must be borne in mind that there are far more unsuitable horses to be bought or hired than satisfactory ones ; but the beginner is much more likely to find a good hireling than he is to secure a fair hunter at his first deal. This leads up to the question of hiring, and I am most strongly of opinion that the novice is more likely to achieve early success if he hires than if he buys. In nearly every hunting country of note there are respectable men who are engaged in the business of letting out hunters on hire, and

many of these men take infinite pains and trouble over their customers, especially when they see that they are being trusted. Of course, the question of luck enters in some degree into this matter of hiring. The new beginner may chance to pick the one bad-mannered horse of a stable of twenty, or he may find himself on a horse which pulls too hard, but is in other respects a good hunter. Again, he may have very heavy hands, and may quickly convert a light-mouthed horse into a runaway, or he may fret a sober animal until it becomes restive and difficult to ride. These, however, are questions of horsemanship, and, as everyone knows, "hands" are to a great extent a gift, though bad hands can be greatly improved if the pupil is willing to learn.

Quite the best thing which the novice can do when about to make his first appearance in the hunting field is to go to a respectable man who lets hunters by the day, month, or season, and put himself entirely in the livery stable keeper's hands. It is no use attempting to conceal the fact that he is a beginner, and it is even sillier to try to pose as being experienced in the hunting field. No amount of plausibility will go down with the man who has been concerned with horses and hunting all his life. In two minutes he will have reckoned his customer up, and will have arrived at a very true estimate of what that gentleman knows about horses and hunting. And, if he thinks that the novice is trying to humbug him, he will naturally be less inclined to interest himself in the business or to offer advice.

If, on the other hand, the would-be customer is

perfectly frank, and states that he wants to hunt, but knows little about it as yet, he will probably—indeed, almost certainly—find that the hack owner will meet him more than halfway, and that he is put on to something which will give him no trouble. The most awful thing which can happen to a new beginner is for him to make his *début* on a horse which he cannot ride. Instead of being able to look about and gain experience from all he sees, his whole time and attention is occupied with his horse, and he is exceedingly likely to offend against some of the unwritten laws of hunting etiquette. And, *à propos* of beginning on queer horses, the novice should never be tempted into going out hunting on a harness nag, even if he is offered the loan of one. Of course, there are harness horses who are good hunters as well, but the average harness horse is quite likely to go half mad with excitement when he sees hounds and a crowd of galloping horses, and when this happens he will very probably lose his head altogether and bolt.

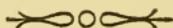
I remember once going to stay with the owner of a large stud, who hunted in the grass countries. Overnight we went round the stables, and horses were fixed for the following day. My friend placed two at my service, one a good hunter which I had ridden before, the other a very sporting looking horse which he (the owner) stated he knew little about. He had gone leader in a team during the summer, and during the autumn he had been driven in a dogcart and used as a covert hack, but had not been hunted, because he was not up to his owner's weight. However, he was a hunter all over to look at, and I mounted him with some

confidence on the following morning, and was never carried to covert more comfortably. But when hounds went to draw he was quite another animal, and for the next two hours I was the most miserable man in the field. The horse tried to bolt, backed, kicked and reared, and it was more owing to good luck than anything else that I did not have a nasty accident. About one o'clock I found the second horses, and with them was my friend's stud groom on a pony. I told him what I thought of the horse I had been riding, and he, in somewhat supercilious tones, hinted that there was nothing wrong with the horse, but that I could not ride him. Well, I frankly admit that he was too much for me, but, still, he had not bolted or got rid of me in two hours, and so I suggested that the stud groom should take him in hand himself. He at once fell in with the suggestion, and changed on to the horse just as hounds were crossing the lane where we stood. In a moment the horse was off with him, and I have a recollection of standing on an eminence and watching the pair go out of sight nearly a mile off, and no more of the stud groom was seen that day. Similar instances of harness horses being bad hunters I could give by the score, and, on the whole, I am greatly inclined to think that the new beginner should avoid them at a costs, unless, indeed, he knows that some particular harness horse is really quiet when taken out hunting.

To secure even a small measure of enjoyment in his earliest hunting days the novice must be mounted on a quiet nag, and this he is most likely to find in a livery stable. If he is quickly suited and gets through

his first day or two in comfort, he should instantly bespeak the horse for a month, or even for the whole season, and, if his arrangements allow of it, he should try to hunt this horse twice a week, or at the least three days a fortnight. If he should happen to give the horse one or two heavy days close together, he may then rest him for a day or so, but a new beginner will find that, as a rule, the hireling can stand two ordinary days a week, and that, indeed, he is better if he hunts twice in every seven days than if he had six days of idleness. Of course, the proviso that the horse remains sound is understood, but the fact is that four-fifths of the hunters in the kingdom are, when in really good condition, quite fit enough to hunt twice a week, and if some of them came out a little oftener than they do therẽ would be less of the bucking and pulling which is so often seen in the early part of a day. Then the novice should bear in mind that livery stable horses are always in good, hard condition, whereas many horses from private stables are often too gross and highly fed, too full of life at the beginning of a day, and too helpless in the afternoon. It does not pay the owner of hirelings to keep them in anything but hard, working condition, and the present writer has known a hireling last to the end of a long day, when he was the only one of six horses to finish a great run, who had been hunting all day, the other five being second horses. And having established friendly relations with a respectable owner of hirelings, the beginner should not forget to be on good terms with the stable staff. The head man of the yard and the man who looks after Mr. Novice's horse should be tipped, more especially if the hirer is using

his own saddle and bridle on the hireling. If relations are smooth with the staff of the yard, the hired horse and his tackle will be turned out almost as smartly as if they came from a private stable, and if the hirer wants his horse to meet him at a certain place or to be met again after hunting, there will be no trouble about it.



CHAPTER X.

BUYING AT AUCTION.

THE case for the hireling having been put, the question of purchase comes next, and here the field is a wide one, involving all sorts of conditions. Thus the rich novice who intends to hunt several days a week has merely to place an order with a dealer, or with some reliable commission agent, and in all probability he will secure three or four useful, handy mounts if he buys a dozen horses. But these hints are not written altogether for the benefit of wealthy men, to whom it is of small moment whether a loss is made on any particular horse ; they are more particularly intended to help the modest beginner, who purposes to take the field—at first, at all events—with a single horse, or two at most. And though hiring at first has been strongly recommended, it must be borne in mind that nine men out of ten would sooner hunt their own than other people's horses, and even the beginner who makes his *début* on a horse from the livery stables will after a while wish to possess a horse of his own. If he is wise he will stick to the hireling during his novitiate, jobbing a horse which he likes and can ride comfortably by the month or the season, but if at the end of this period

he still likes hunting, and intends to go on with it, he will in all probability wish to ride his own horses, and then, unless he has a natural aptitude for the game of dealing, his troubles will begin. The one-horse man who tries to get a useful hunter at a price ranging between £50 and £100 cannot have the pick of the market, but he ought to be able to procure what he wants if he will only exercise patience, and not allow himself to be carried away by what he is told. Countless volumes and treatises have been written on this subject of buying horses, and much good and some bad advice has been given, and I am not going to add to the mass of literature which horse dealing has brought forth; but the very few practical hints I shall give are the result of experience, and should therefore be of some value. And it must be understood that I am not writing for the horsey man, even though he may be a hunting novice, but rather for the man who is as ignorant about horses as he is of hunting, and who has everything to learn in connection with both. Firstly, then, it may be said that no absolute novice should think it necessary that he should own a horse before he begins to hunt. If he happens to have a horse, and the horse is a suitable one, so much the better for him; but when he goes to market for the first time he will be in a far better position if he has already gained some experience in the hunting field on a hireling or a borrowed horse.

Next comes the question of whether the intending purchaser is a townsman or a countryman, for whilst the former is almost compelled to buy at an auction, or from a dealer's yard, the latter is often in a position to

hear of, and very often to try, some likely horse, about which he may possibly be allowed a day or two, or even longer, to make up his mind. The townsman who has decided to have a hunter of his own may have a friend who is a good judge of horses, and willing to give the benefit of his knowledge. If so, the novice should consult him, and if possible, take the horsey friend with him when he attends a sale or visits a dealer's yard.

And here it may be mentioned that in the case of dealers it is generally inadvisable to attempt to buy a hunter from a man whose business chiefly lies among harness horses and general utility nags. Such men very often incline to knee action and a suspicion of hackney blood, and some of them, even if they are fine judges of harness horses, know little or nothing about a hunter. Besides which, there is the very real danger that the so-called hunters which are on sale at the stables of the man who deals chiefly in harness horses are nags which have declined harness, or which are not up to the dealer's standard when in leather. "Anything which is not good enough for harness will make a hunter, I reckon," I once heard a celebrated West-end dealer declare, and though the remark sounds a little extravagant I have not the least doubt but that it was a genuine sentiment on the part of a man who preferred a trapper to a hunter, and whose business was with the very best of the former class. When in search of a hunter, then, avoid the dealer in harness horses, unless, indeed, he be an ordinary small country dealer, who buys and sells whatever he can turn a penny by. In this case the man

is quite likely to have a genuine hunter in his stables occasionally, but it will hardly be a high-class one, and may have some fatal "crab," so that, on the whole, if the novice decides to buy from a dealer, he should go to a man whose business lies among hunters, and who, whether he be in a large or a small way, knows what a hunter is like and what is required of him.

But for a first horse the novice is likely to do better at an auction than he is at a dealer's, because thousands of "made" hunters are sold at auction every year, whereas the inmates of a dealer's yard are for the most part young horses who are only half made. Not only are the well-known hunters of individual men sold by auction in half a dozen different parts of the kingdom every week, but at the end of the season great numbers of hunt horses are always disposed of, and concerning these it is generally an easy matter to learn some details. Moreover, the horses which have been carrying hunt servants often go far below their value, yet the majority of them are clever hunters, in hard condition, who, if only they are sound, are likely to do a great deal more work. Of course, these hunt servants' horses are seldom up to much weight, and that is one reason why they fetch so little; but if they come up for sale described as "good hunters" they are sound in wind and eyesight, and are practically warranted to go over a country. As regards limb soundness this has to be taken on trust at all horse auctions, but the novice will probably look them over before the sale in company with someone who is likely to detect anything palpably wrong, and moreover he must remember that

if he buys cheaply he is, of course, taking a risk. At a sale of the Bicester cubhunters I once saw a chesnut horse knocked down for £40 who a few months later was winning steeplechases all over the country, and at a Dublin sale a certain horse (a five-year-old) brought £36, and, after doing a season's hunting for its new owner, won a point to point and a hunt steeplechase, and went into a rich man's stable at £350. The novice must disabuse his mind of the common idea that every horse sent up for sale is a "wrong 'un," and understand that the buyer who knows nothing of the horses which are being sold is embarking in a sort of lottery. Many Masters of hounds and many ordinary hunting folk sell their entire stud every spring, and it stands to reason that a big majority of these horses are very genuine hunters.

In nearly all horse dealing there is a certain amount of luck, and a man may turn up trumps with the very first horse he buys, or may purchase half a dozen before he finds one to suit him. But a new beginner will, as a rule, find himself best carried if he buys what used to be called a "seasoned" hunter, but which is now generally spoken of as a "made" horse. It is for this reason that I suggest buying at auction rather than from a dealer at first. At auction one gets the finished article, from a dealer the young horse, who may be a perfect fencer in the dealer's field and still has had little experience in the hunting field. What the beginner wants is a horse with some manners, and such horses can best be procured, at a comparatively low price, at the auctions. Blemishes, unless very unsightly, are of little account, but, as the novice generally requires a horse

which is easy to ride, it is most necessary that he should buy a horse of experience. It is, therefore, perhaps, better to begin with a horse who is past mark of mouth, or, in other words, over eight years old. Such horses have probably been hunted for two or three seasons or more, and they know their business, and are less likely to turn out difficult to ride than younger horses, no matter how fresh-looking the latter may appear to be. Moreover, it takes a long time to get real hunting condition on to a horse, and the well-cared-for hunter, who keeps sound and is of good constitution, is at his best from eight to twelve, and very often an awkward horse in his first, or even in his first two seasons. Not so many months ago I knew a beginner who wanted a couple of horses for the present season. He was told to go to the sale of the Blackmore Vale hunters, and some half-dozen of these were recommended as likely to suit him. One he bought, but he did not like the others, and, after spending many hours among the dealers, he bought a second horse privately. The Blackmore Vale horse has carried him well, three days a fortnight up to now ; but the other horse ran away with him, and was then sent to a roughrider, and got so badly cut by wire that he has not worked since, and he will be no good this season. This I quote as illustrative of what I have written, but, of course, there is no golden rule in any matter connected with buying horses, and one man may secure a bargain in lot one, while the purchasers of lots two and three may do just the reverse. Judgment, brains, common sense, and knowledge of horses and horsey matters will, of course, go a long way, but the real novice should

never attempt to buy at auction without competent advice, and should not bid himself (unless he is accustomed to bid at auction), for if he is observed to be keen on the horse he will most certainly be run up by someone who is interested in the sale.



CHAPTER XI.

BUYING PRIVATELY.

THERE are some men who have a prejudice against buying horses at auction, on account of the bustle and quickness of the transaction. Such men are not in the habit of making up their minds in a hurry, and cannot bring themselves to decide in a moment whether they like a horse or not. Possibly they have only looked it over amongst a lot of others prior to the commencement of the sale, and possibly, too, they have been unable to procure any reliable details as to its past history. Whether a man can and will buy at auction depends greatly upon his temperament, and a man in quest of his first hunter must necessarily be somewhat at sea if he attempts to secure what he hopes will be a satisfactory mount in this way, unless, indeed, he relies entirely upon the judgment of someone more experienced than himself. Besides, it is not always that a trial of any particular horse or horses can be arranged for previous to a sale by auction, and most men of no great experience dearly love a trial. It is plain, then, that such individuals should buy privately, either from anyone who happens to have a horse to sell, or from a dealer. And to the novice there is, perhaps,

more risk in the former than there is in the latter mode of buying. There is no secret so close as that between the rider and his horse, and a horse which appears to be a fairly useful hunter may have some bad fault which its owner has been able to hide, and which he is not likely to disclose to a possible purchaser. Many good-looking horses are tremendous flatcatchers, and possibly there is nothing so irritating as to give a fair price for a horse which seems suitable in every way, and yet is likely to shut up after galloping over four fields. And yet there are many horses of this class, and one I knew of who went into four different countries at big figures in a single season before his real character became known. He was a big-boned and very handsome horse, had perfect manners, and always carried a lot of condition. He had won many hunter prizes as a four and five year old at country shows, and his breeder sold him for a long price to a man who had a bad fall (from another horse) immediately afterwards. The upshot was that this horse had an easy time of it during what should have been his first regular season, and his new owner was never on his back until late in the spring. He then rode him on one or two days of poor sport, entered him for a point to point, and offered me the mount. I said I would like to try the horse first, and he was sent to a certain meet of hounds, where I got on to him just as hounds went away from a small gorse. Immediately in front was a fine grass country, and no covert for a couple of miles, but hounds ran very hard, and the show horse was in difficulties after going for less than ten minutes. I was glad to get rid of him at the first check, and I afterwards told the owner

that his horse was both slow and soft, and would never stay a point-to-point course. Later I heard that another man had ridden him and had formed the same opinion as I had, and then he was sold, and again went the round of a lot of country shows, winning several prizes as a weight-carrier.

In the following season a very hard man bought him, but passed him on after riding him once, and then he went to a Master of hounds, who, of course, discovered his peculiarity immediately, and lastly he was sold to a veteran sportsman whose hard-riding days were over, and this man he suited exactly, as he was not asked to do more than canter along the field roads and lanes. There are various other types of flatcatchers, too, but the soft horse is perhaps the most difficult to detect, as he has to be hustled beyond the limits of an ordinary trial before his weak spot is detected, and if he slows down when an intending purchaser is galloping him, the seller can so easily say that he is not quite in hard condition, or that he is lazy—as some really good horses are—when galloping alone, and that out with hounds he will show in very different form. Then, again, there are many horses who go quietly enough when trotted out, or even when galloped or jumped over fences in cold blood, which in the hunting field are very difficult to ride, and quite beyond the powers of any but a really experienced horseman. Some horses, too, take far longer than others to learn their business as hunters, and are only fit to be ridden by a rough rider at first. As a rule, however, these badly broken or raw and excitable horses will reveal at least a portion of their true character when they are tried; but such

are generally to be found in dealers' stables only, whereas the odd horse which is on sale by some private individual is very often pretty well known in his own district. The novice should beware of the man who is not a regular dealer, but who is always chopping and changing; he may, of course, secure a bargain from such a man, but he is also very likely to be taken in, for he may be offered a horse which the owner has had only a week or two and really knows nothing about. On the other hand, there are many reliable amateur dealers in various parts of the country, men who are good horsemen, and who profit by their knowledge and skill, selling horses at a fair advance over their cost to them. When the novice knows of such a man and finds in that man's stables something which is likely to suit him, he may easily secure just what he wants, provided he intends to hunt in the same country in which the amateur dealer lives. The last named, if he has anything of a business, is not likely to jeopardise it by "planting a wrong 'un" on to a new beginner, and he is also more likely to tell the truth about a horse which he wants to sell than is the chopper and changer, who is always buying and selling, and who is probably taken in as often as he takes in others. What the beginner should bear in mind is that when buying or trying to buy a hunter from a private individual he should only purchase a horse which has been fairly hunted, which he himself has seen going with hounds, or about which he has absolutely reliable information. If he asks whether a horse he is looking at has done much hunting, he should never be put off with such a doubtful answer as, "No, not much, he's quite a young

horse ; but look how he is made. Did you ever see a more hunter-like horse ? ” That may be true enough, but the novice wants a horse who is a real hunter, and not an embryo one. In early deals the young horse and the veteran should both be avoided. The first named is possibly only half made, and has most of his business to learn, while the veteran may have been got up for sale, and be really so worn out that a heavy day or two will bring on lameness. As regards age, horses of from eight to eleven, in the prime of life as hunters, are far the most likely to give satisfaction. If a hunter is not made at eight he never will be, and a beginner should if possible secure one between the two ages named, though it need hardly be said that even now it is no easy matter to determine a horse's age after he has passed mark of mouth, very few people having really studied the signs.

If the beginner goes to a dealer in hunters he should have fair confidence in his own ability as a horseman, and he should bear in mind that it is far harder to buy a single horse from many dealers than three or four, or even more. There are, however, many honest dealers, who will always do their best by their customers, and such men will generally say which of their horses can be ridden by anyone on a thread, and which require a finished horseman. Beware of the horse which is spoken of as “ bold,” for the dealer's bold horse is often a very hard puller, who will be with hounds if he can. Reflect, too, that, in a general way, it is better to buy from a dealer (a hunter which is intended for the following season) during the spring or early summer than in the autumn just before

the season opens, for dealers must necessarily pass horses on as quickly as possible, and many horses which come out of dealers' yards are far too fat, and quite devoid of condition. Some, indeed, bought quite early in the autumn are not fit to hunt before Christmas, and others, having been fattened up on soft food, go all wrong for a time when put on to hard food and on a system of regular work. At most dealers' establishments a would-be purchaser has the option of a trial, and can, if he so desires, jump the horse he tries over a variety of fences, while he can always gallop him, and ascertain for himself whether the horse has comfortable action. But the man who is quite new at buying horses should always take an expert with him, and, if the expert approves of a certain horse which the novice also likes, there is little more to be done beyond the veterinary examination, and in this I have very little faith. If a horse is galloped for his wind, and it is ascertained that he is clear in his pipes, the matter of limb soundness must be more or less a question of observation, unless the horse has some very palpable fault. If a horse is sound in all his paces it is, in my opinion, little use suggesting that this formation suggests side bones, and that formation suggests spavin or curbs, for these suggestions are almost invariably made, and yet so often come to nothing. At the moment I know of two valuable weight-carrying hunters, on which a well-known sportsman hunts hounds every week, and one was rejected by several veterinaries for incipient side bones five years ago, whilst two veterinaries pronounced the other a roarer when he was five years old. The last-named horse has done eight seasons

since then, and is still clear-winded, but he could not "pass the vet." when a young horse, and this failing to satisfy an expert is very common indeed. Still, if the novice wishes to be on the safe side, he should take a professional opinion, as many clever buyers will miss an incipient cataract or some semi-hidden fault which a skilful veterinary would detect. The beginner should, before he buys a horse, have made up his mind what he wants, especially in the matter of size. A little man on a very tall horse looks like a robin on a rail, and a heavy man palpably underhorsed is almost as ridiculous. For the average man, whose height is not more than 5ft. 9in., a horse of 15.3 is about right, and, as a rule, medium-sized horses have smoother action than very big ones. Colour is not of much moment, but a beginner, if at all doubtful of his own capabilities, should avoid a very gaudy horse, which would render him conspicuous in the field."



CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

JUST lately I have observed that hunting field manners are far worse than they used to be, and, though some of the biggest offenders are anything but novices, it is nevertheless a fact that many of the beginners are in these days quite a nuisance during their period of novitiate. It would appear that the veneration and respect which a former generation of boys and girls—and of older people who were new to hunting—used to possess have entirely departed, and now the beginner often bustles and squeezes in the unfairest manner, with almost a total disregard not only of ordinary civility, but of the established customs of the hunting field. There are, of course, well-behaved children and plenty of novices who would on no account offend against the canons of sport, but, at the same time, nearly every hunt has just now what may almost be termed a rough element—men, and sometimes I am sorry to say, women, who push and squeeze when in a crowd, who cut in at a fence and force their way past at a gateway without the slightest apology, who often fail to hold the gate for the next comer, and who are at times totally deaf to loud-shouted warnings

with regard to seeds or wheat. The same people are by no means deaf when wire is shouted instead of wheat, so that there is really no excuse for them. Though the rough element is not composed of novices, the bold novice who is not frightened of a big obstacle may be easily drawn into it, and it is most important that every beginner should closely observe which section of the hunt is the right and which the wrong one, which, indeed, he should copy and follow, and which he should avoid. He should have no difficulty whatever in finding this out for himself if he watches closely what takes place when hounds are running on a weak scent, and he will be well advised if he keeps back on such occasions. When hounds really travel fast he will have ample opportunities of showing what he is made of, but if he presses on when hounds are constantly checking he will soon incur the wrath of the Master, and might easily gain a bad character, when in reality he has erred through ignorance alone.

With regard to equipment, I may be excused for returning to two points, viz., the wearing of spurs by women, and the wearing of scarlet by men. As regards the former, I have lately heard the strongly-expressed opinion of a Master of hounds of nearly twenty years' standing who in his younger days was a well-known performer between the flags. This authority is most emphatic in his dislike of the spur, urging that in the hunting field only horses which are given to refusing require a spur at all, and that confirmed refusers should not be taken out hunting. A spur, he says, is all very well in a race occasionally, and is useful for a rough rider who is schooling a horse, but he maintains that

they are not wanted in the hunting field, and he further tells me that he has worn no rowels in his spurs for a dozen years. To all appearances he is, of course, wearing spurs like anyone else, but his idea is that the steel shell in which the rowel is inclosed is all that is wanted, and that a sharp rowel is often a source of danger and of very little use. And doubtless there is much truth in this remark, for a rider who is accustomed to move his horse about with a touch of the spur can do so well enough by touching him with the outer shell, and men thus equipped have no chance of giving their horses those long, railway-like lacerations which we so often see. Not so long ago I was looking over some hunt horses at Tattersall's which were to come up for sale on the following day, and one particular horse bore a high character, and greatly attracted a Master of hounds who was with me. On removing the sheets, however, no fewer than seven old spur lacerations or stripes were visible, and my friend at once decided not to bid, because he thought the horse must have fallen far too often. In this particular case, therefore, the value of the horse would appear to have been discounted because of the spur marks, and even the knowledge that the horse had been the frequent mount of a hard-riding first whipper-in did not cause the M.F.H. to waver in his opinion. For those who do not care to use sharp rowels threepenny-bits may be recommended. Another correspondent writes that his daughter persuaded him to allow her to wear a spur, and that shortly afterwards she fell, owing to a rotten bank giving way under her horse; luckily, she was not hurt, but her habit was split by her spur from top to bottom. This

is an almost similar accident to one I have before described, and is quite the commonest form of danger which the wearing of the spur by ladies is likely to bring about. On the other hand, I had an opportunity recently of discussing the matter with a first-class horsewoman who invariably wears a spur. She often rides young horses, and always rides her own line in the two countries where she hunts. She is, indeed, an exceptional performer across country, and, of course, she falls at times, especially when riding young ones ; but she assures me that she has never yet found the spur an inconvenience, and that it has never been caught up in her habit when she has come to grief. This rather upholds my original contention about really fine horsewomen wearing spurs ; but, all the same, I shall stick to my text, and will again suggest that the wearing of spurs is inadvisable for women.

In a previous chapter I stated that the novice might begin in dark clothes, and that a year later he might appear in white breeches and top boots, and that in his third season "if all had gone well with his hunting," he might be advanced to the full uniform of scarlet and leathers. It must be understood, however, that this was an individual view of a matter about which there is no fixed rule, and doubtless there are many who think that every beginner should ride for at least three seasons in black before he dons the scarlet coat. And in suggesting what I did I was, of course, taking it for granted that the novice had become a member of the hunt, and was qualified, as far as subscription goes, to ride in whatever costume he preferred. On all sorts of points there must be diversity of opinion about wearing

scarlet, and the custom varies greatly in many parts of the country, some hunts having a far greater percentage of scarlet wearers than others, while in the small, very provincial hunts it is sometimes hardly worn except by the Master and hunt servants. A novice who began his hunting career in scarlet would doubtless come in for the sneers of some of the field, but a novice who was clever enough to adapt himself to hunting manners and customs in a very short space of time would hardly be noticed, especially if he hunted where there was a large field. Indeed, I once saw a man have his first day's English hunting in scarlet and leathers, but he had learnt to ride in the Australian bush, and the only question asked about him was as to which hunt he came from.

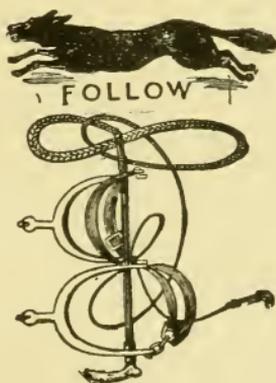
To turn to yet another subject, the novice would do well to study some of the great amount of hunting literature which has appeared at intervals since Beckford wrote his "Thoughts on Hunting." This book, it need hardly be said, is the great classic of the sport, and, though it was written a good deal more than a hundred years ago, there is, allowing for the changed condition of the country and *ergo* of the sport of foxhunting, very little in it which is not applicable at the present day. It deals with hunting from its very root, and those novices who wish to possess a real command of the subject, and who even dimly aspire to the dignity of mastership at some future date, would do well to make themselves thoroughly acquainted with it. Then all Surtees's books may be read with advantage, for it is just as well that the comic side of hunting should be studied, and in these particular books there is immense

variety, so that a student of the whole series will be able to learn what really serious hunting is, while at the same time his sense of humour is being appealed to. The real teacher in all matters connected with hunting is experience, but a beginner can, of course, learn a great deal from books as well, and when he takes the field he will find his reading—if he has thoroughly understood and taken in what he has read—of great assistance.



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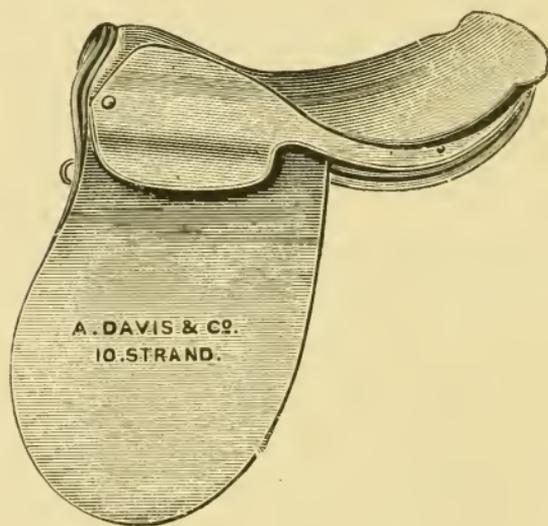
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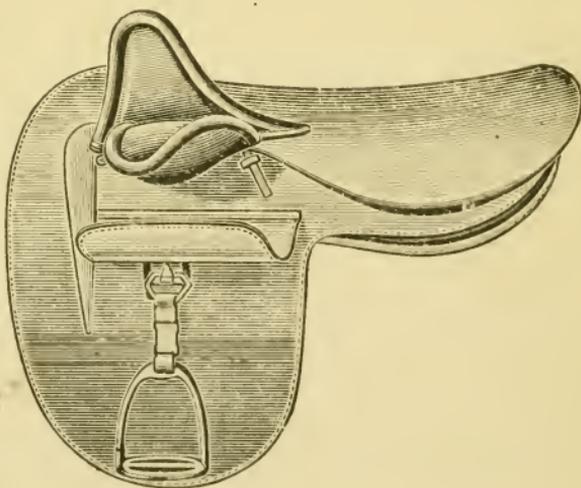


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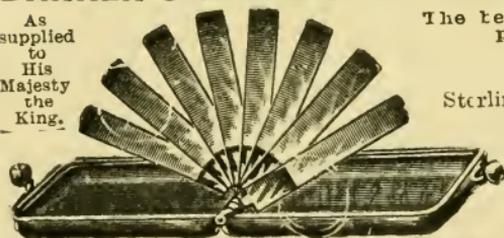
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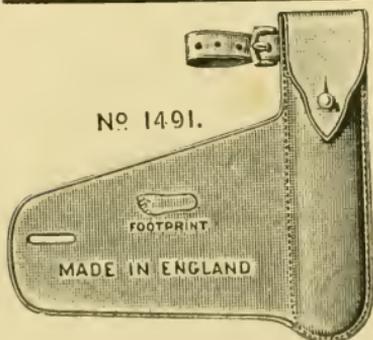
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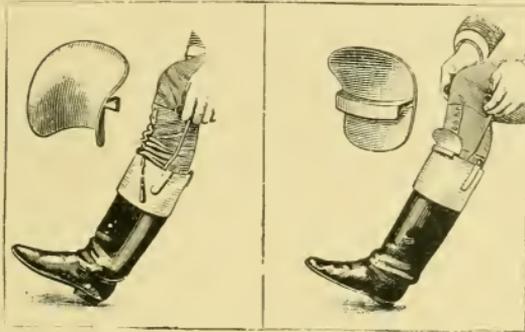


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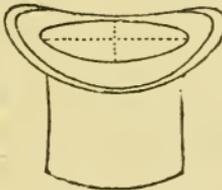
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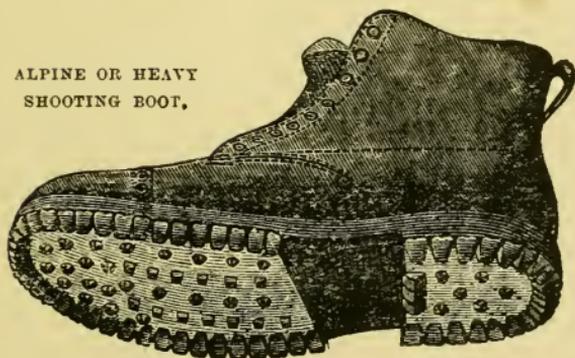
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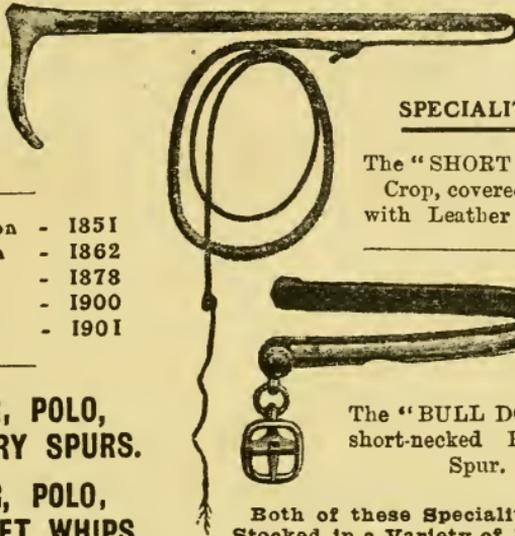
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