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SPORTING SCENES

AND

COUNTRY CHARACTERS.

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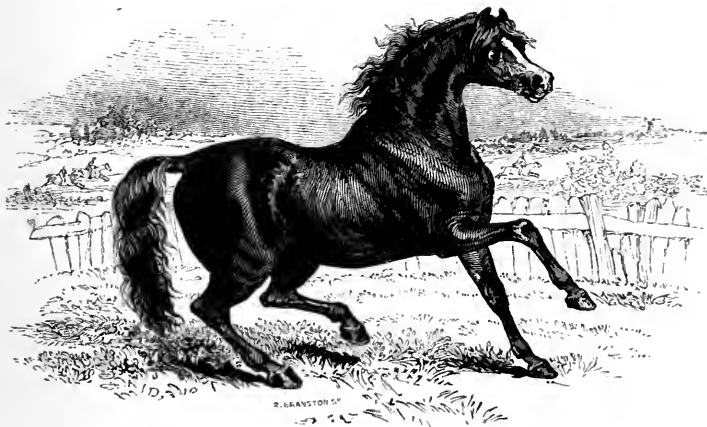


COUNTRY CHARACTERS

BY

MARTINGALE.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS ON WOOD.



Middleton, by Phantom—Won Derby 1836—From Portrait by Hancock

LONDON:
LONGMAN, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, & LONGMANS.

MDCCCXL.

VIZETELLY AND COMPANY,
PRINTERS,
FLEET STREET, LONDON.

TO

LORD VISCOUNT MILTON, M.P.

THE FOLLOWING

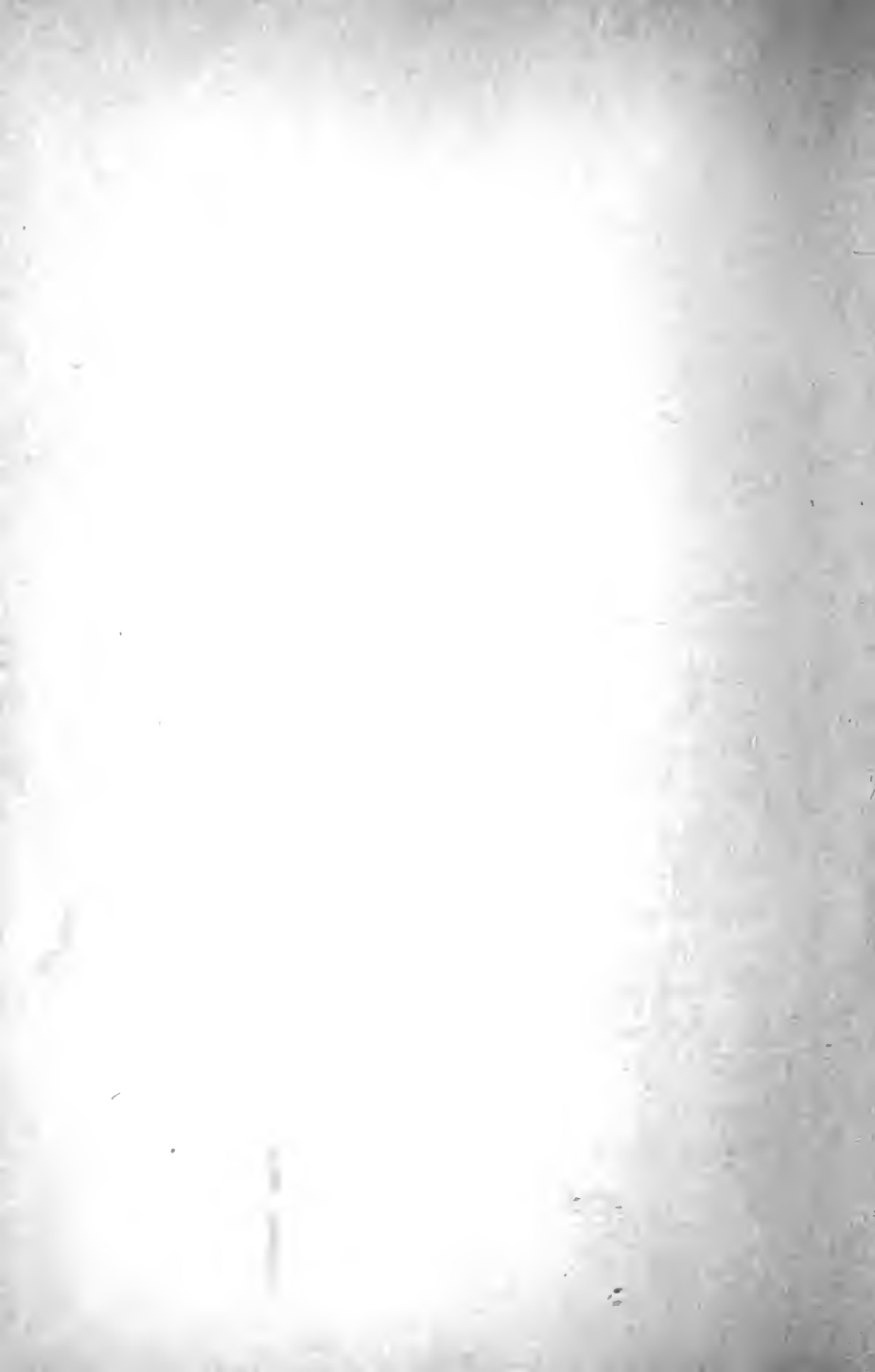
SPORTING SCENES & COUNTRY CHARACTERS

ARE DEDICATED

WITH EVERY FEELING OF RESPECT

BY

THE AUTHOR.



PREFACE.

A PORTION of the sketches contained in the following pages will be recognised by the readers of "THE DONCASTER GAZETTE," as having appeared in the columns of that paper, under the signature of MARTINGALE. From these, with the addition of some chapters, and the extension of others, the present volume has been formed.

Without touching on the practical details of sporting, which are so ably treated in Mr. BLAINE'S excellent "ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RURAL SPORTS," the author has endeavoured to collect such scenes as his own opportunity and relish for field sports and country life have brought before him; but he is fully sensible that to the interest which Mr. THOMAS LANDSEER, Mr. ALKEN, and Mr. DICKES, as well as Mr. BRANSTON, and Mr. ACKERMANN of Regent Street, who has obligingly allowed copies to be made from some oil paintings

in his possession, have taken in the execution of the designs, he will be in no small degree indebted for any popularity these pages may acquire.

The author cannot omit to acknowledge his obligations to Mr. C. HANCOCK, for his permission to copy the vignette on the title-page from his portrait of Middleton, by Phantom, out of Web, bred by Lord JERSEY; foaled in 1822, and winner of the Derby in 1825; as well as to Mr. DAVIS, for the engraving from his portrait of the Ripley Deer.

The author also feels himself called upon to acknowledge the aid received in the article on Stag Hunting from an old master of staghounds; as well as from another gentleman, long in the habit of hunting with the Queen's hounds, who has been so good as to give him some highly interesting particulars of the Ripley Deer.

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INTRODUCTION.

How beautiful upon the mountains are thy feet, O rosy Health! herald of hope, and peace, and happiness; the stalworth companion of hardy toil, the perfection of beauty, the zest of all enjoyment! Wealth cannot purchase thee, nor power annihilate. Without thee, the rich are poor; and with thee, the poor are rich. Thou lovest not the smoke and the din of manufacturing industry, nor the crowded mart of trade and commerce. Thy voice is heard in the melodious woods, and in the tuneful streams; in the shout of the ploughman; in the halloo of the hunter.

What can surpass the healthful enjoyments of the English country gentleman? To say that his life is a life of idleness, is far from the truth; the reverse, indeed, is the fact. The country gentleman has every

means of enjoyment within his reach; he participates in all the sports of the field with a free and generous spirit; he diffuses around him contentment and happiness; and he is regarded with the warmest feelings of attachment and veneration. His board is hospitably spread; he is liberal and kind to all. He is the chief stay against political aggression; and woe betide the day, should he be driven, by internal convulsions, from the halls of his ancestors! Honour to the name of the true English gentleman!—the key-stone of the arch of society, supported by the hardy yeomen of merry England!

Who is there, acquainted with the many attractions of field sports, and who can relish the excitement of these varied scenes of manly diversion, that does not feel his heart bound within him even at their bare mention? Those, truly, who maintain that to share in their numerous attractions tends to debase the mind, to blunt the affections, and to brutalise the disposition, must be wholly unacquainted with country life.

A taste for the pursuit of wild animals, through magnificent woods, over far-extended moors and mountains, through golden corn-fields or green meadows, on wide-spread lakes or on impetuous or peaceful rivers, is inherent in human nature. This natural taste is never more strikingly displayed than in the high spirits and

unbounded joy evinced by the denizens of crowded cities, when they escape from the turmoil of their confined habitations, to spend however brief an interval amid these exhilarating scenes. Their usual trammels for a while thrown off, the cares and anxieties of life forgotten, and clashing interests disregarded, their spirits become buoyant, their strength is renewed, and they return to their several occupations better men.

The royal forests of old were scenes of peculiar attraction, with their sunny green slopes, their tortuous windings, their snug recesses, and majestic covers, from along whose sylvan boundaries the deer might be seen cautiously out-peeping, decked with their noble antlers, or bounding over the plain with the swiftness of the winds. To the lover of rural life and field sports, the woods of the present day present similar attractions: in spring, when they put forth their young buds; in summer, when they exhibit their fully expanded foliage; in autumn, when robes of every variety of hue are hung upon their branches; in winter, when the glory of summer is trodden under foot, presenting around a scene of apparent desolation, yet, to him, not destitute of interest; for they are the home, the resort, the protection of many of his favourites. The wily fox has his earths within their precincts; they are the haunt of the cock

and the pheasant; they are the shelter of the hare and the rabbit. They afford the means of the greatest diversion with hound or gun, in the noble chase or in the more quiet pursuit of shooting. The woods, indeed, can never be observed by him without awakening associations full of interest, of adventure, and of high gratification. Not unmindful of their beauty or of their magnificence, —not disregarding their utility in the many purposes of civilised life, he beholds them on all occasions as affording him the means of enjoying the most varied pleasures.

Not deficient in those qualities of the mind which perceive and can appreciate all that is beautiful, attractive, or sublime in nature, he marks all sights, minute or magnificent,—all sounds, discordant or harmonious. The ever-varying array of clouds, spread above like a curtain adorned with golden fringe, or whose dark masses are charged with the electric bolt; the sun shining in his effulgent glory, lighting every corner of the wooded scene, creating the brightness of an oasis, or causing the most beautiful shadows; the saddle-clothed yew standing as a solemn sentinel at the gate of the sylvan temple; the long range of giant elms on each side of the ridings, interlacing and forming arches above the columned aisles of the rustic sanctuary; the winds, like a mighty organ, breathing their solemn dirge

through the branches of the oak, the ash, the fir, the larch, and the sycamore,—a concord of sounds so sweet, yet so sublime and impressive, as to throw into insignificance the power of the fullest cathedral choir:—these all arouse in his mind a feeling of reverence and gratitude to the Almighty architect of all nature.

The sound of the woodman's axe, stroke after stroke, echoes through the labyrinth; the raven, with his ominous croak, soars overhead; the ringdove coos, unseen through the thick foliage; the *prima donna* of the woods swells her ever-varying and liquid notes, until the echoes, listening to the strain, seem pleased by a repetition of each cadence; the squirrel leaps from tree to tree with marvellous agility; the fox steals silently along, bent on his prowling excursions; the smoke from the cottage of the woodman, embosomed in the very heart of the scene, curls gracefully upwards; the charcoal-burner pursues, at night, his dingy occupation, with his snug wigwam placed beside his lighted cones, whose flames throw a ghastly light around, presenting a fiery dragon here,—an unnatural monster there,—a hideous spectre on one hand,—a scowling demon on the other; whilst he himself appears the *Caspar* of a scene of incantation. Such are the themes of most pleasant associations, and such the objects of study, to those who delight in a country life.

Nothing contributes so much to the beauty of the family mansion and estate as well-managed and luxuriant woods. They are the badge of true nobility. They embody the idea of snugness, warmth, and shade, protection and security. The lover of country life possesses the warmest feelings of attachment to the woods in all seasons of the year, whether they are lighted by the sun by day or the moon by night; but especially during a rich autumn evening, when the polar lamp is hung in the unclouded heavens, the inmost recesses of the woods with their long ridings and more open spaces—the deeper gloom in one direction forming a contrast to the bright silvery radiance in another—present a scene upon which the mind as well as the eye rests with peculiar gratification. Everything around is so calm, so silent, so still,—as though nature were holding her breath before the commencement of some high festival, provided for the entertainment of a countless array of sylvan deities.

“And well might they who viewed the scene
That lit up all around them, say,
That never yet had nature been
Caught sleeping in a lovelier ray,
Or rivalled her own noontide face
With purer show of moonlight grace.”

It is a matter calculated to excite deep attention, that, throughout the whole plans and operations of nature, the habits and conformations of the several species of the feathered tribes are such as to be, in every respect, adapted to the character of the country of which they are the interesting inhabitants. Nor does this peculiarity stand alone. A particular description of food only is found suitable to each species; a fact which is rendered strikingly apparent with regard to those birds which inhabit the low grounds. The bearer of the deadly tube should not merely be occupied in the destruction of the birds which are the objects of his pursuit, but he should carefully consider all their various habits and peculiarities; a close observance of which serves to complete his knowledge of the perfection of the great chain of existence. Nor is this knowledge destitute of important advantages, even in a sporting point of view; for a close and an attentive observation of the habits of those birds whose home is upon the low grounds, as well as of those species which are found in other situations, enables the true sportsman to find out their respective haunts, and to approach them with such remarkable success as to astonish the many pretenders who can never even get within shot of a flight of wild fowl.

If, indeed, there be “a pleasure in the pathless woods,” security in the sheltered valley, joyousness upon the mountain tops, splendour in the sight and the roar of the headlong cataract, and peace, gentleness, and harmony in the still small voice of the “babbling brook;” — if in the pursuit of the grouse, the black cock, and the ptarmigan, there be attractions on the wide-spread moors, eminence peeping over eminence—an ocean of hills,—the far-extended pathless commons and low grounds have also their peculiar associations of pleasure. True it is, that some portion of regret will occasionally steal over the mind, as in these localities the absence is marked of some favourite of our sport, the result of what is called modern improvement. The progress of civilisation has destroyed the once undisturbed and peaceful home of several species of birds, by draining and bringing into cultivation grounds which were never intended by nature for that purpose, yielding produce deficient in quantity and meagre in quality, and ill-rewarding the expended labour. The ancient occupants of the low grounds have thus been driven from the possession and enjoyment of their natural inheritance, and compelled to find a home in other countries.

Notwithstanding the devastation which the march of man has made among many species of birds peculiar to

low grounds, the sportsman will still find there abundance of amusement. Both descriptions of snipes, the several sorts of plover—the golden species in particular, the dotterel, the widgeon, the teal, the goose, the mallard, without mentioning other descriptions, still present objects of interesting pursuit. It is these varied species which give to the low grounds the attractions with which they are intimately, and, it is to be hoped, at least in some parts of our country, indissolubly associated.

In the pursuit of wild fowl, there is, to many, a greater charm than in that of the pheasant, or of any other game. The spirit of adventure is more fully awakened; the interest created is of a far deeper character; and the prize, when attained, is held in higher estimation than any object which pertains to the fields or to the woods, with the exception, perhaps, of the cock. In proportion, indeed, to the success of the gunner in the low grounds is to be estimated the degree of his skill as a shooter. Nor, emulous of success, does he disregard any fair means which are presented before him. He knows the difference of proceeding down wind and up wind; the time of the birds' feeding; the spot of their repose at night; the stratagems to which they resort for the purpose of safety; the mode of their flight; the direction which they will take; the place to

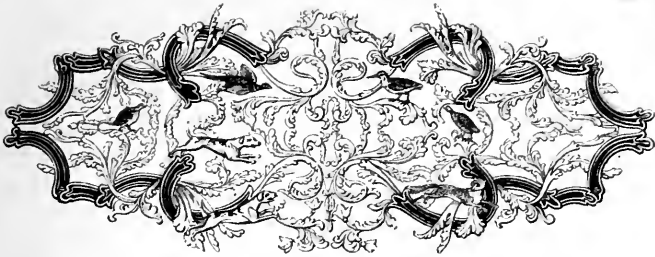
which they may bend their course; the probability of their returning to their former position;—in short, he is acquainted with every indication, a careful and attentive observance of which enables him to accomplish the purpose for which, under whatever circumstances, favourable or unfavourable, he commenced the pursuit. The peculiar whistle and flight of the plover, with their pointed wings, are as familiar to him as the twisting of the snipe, or the rapid flight of the mallard or the eider duck. But it must be apparent to the most indifferent observer, that the difficulties to be overcome, and the disadvantages to be encountered, arising from the peculiar nature of the ground, are far greater than those which are presented in either field or cover. He is exposed to more observation by the watch-birds, which are invariably appointed to look out, and to give the alarm to the whole flock in case of the approach of danger; and hence he is obliged to resort to stratagem.

These wide-extended wastes create a feeling peculiar in itself, not unaccompanied with deep interest. There is prevalent a sense of loneliness without being lonely,—converse without a tongue,—society without intrusion. The soul has ample room and verge enough; and can bring into full play all its capabilities and all its powers.

The most delightful feelings, indeed, spring up in visiting every rural locality. Free from the jarring of political contention, without those cares and cares connected with the pursuits of this toilful world, the lover of field sports follows his favourite diversion with a joyousness and elasticity of spirit wholly unknown to those whose tastes lead them to seek enjoyment in pursuits of a more sensual character.







FOX HUNTING.



HOWEVER numerous and diversified may be the attractions connected with the pursuit of the timid hare, by harrier, beagle, or greyhound; or, with the gun, of grouse or ptarmigan, pheasant or partridge, cock or snipe; or of those beautiful annual visitors which come under the general designation of wild fowl,—from the magnificent swan to the tiny teal; still the most exciting of all sports is fox hunting. Fox hunting, indeed, eclipses *every other sport*, now that the pursuit of the stag, in his old wide-spread and intricate wilds, is nearly abandoned, or can be practised only in a very few districts. Fox hunt-

ing calls into full and vigorous exercise the best qualities of the rider, and the best powers of that generous creature the horse. In short, it is the truly noble sport. The strongest proof of this, is to be found in the numerous packs of hounds which are kept, at great expense, throughout the kingdom; the spirit with which the sport is pursued, and the large number of persons who participate in the pleasures afforded by those exciting scenes which continually present themselves to the fox-hunter.

In order, however, to enjoy fox hunting in its best form, many important matters are indispensable. Much depends upon the breed of the hounds; much upon the manner in which they are trained and managed; much upon the style in which they are hunted in cover; and much upon the way in which the chace is conducted throughout. The accomplishment of all this depends materially upon the agency of the huntsman, the whipper-in, and even the humbler instrument, the earth-stopper.

Immediately connected with the pursuit of the fox, the first attractive scene that presents itself is the cover side, where the meet is appointed, previous to commencing the operations of the day. The pack, accompanied by the huntsman and the whips, arrives at the spot precisely at the hour appointed. It sometimes happens, however, that the owner of the pack, who perhaps

reaches the place in his carriage, whilst his groom is waiting with his hunter, is rather behind time, especially if he has had to travel a considerable distance; or if some of his particular friends, with whom the arrangement has



been previously made for the enjoyment of a day's diversion, have exceeded the precise hour. Under these circumstances, the pack will wait, especially if some well known female equestrian should have been unavoidably detained.

In the meanwhile, the scene increases in interest. Numerous horsemen continue to arrive by the various roads which lead to the appointed spot; some, fearful of disappointment, have probably ridden too fast, and exhibit extraordinary and useless anxiety; whilst the old hand at the favourite diversion presents that calmness and composure which strangers would mistake for careless indifference, but which are, however, indicative of the best qualities of the genuine fox-hunter,—self-possession, endurance, skill, tact, and untiring resolution. A large and brilliant field is then presented:—the more numerous, indeed, although not the best for sport, the more interesting; for the many pleasures of the chase derive considerable increase from their being participated in by a large number, particularly if amongst that number are included the best horsemen of which the country can boast, who, on all occasions, never mar by any injudicious proceeding the pleasures of the day.

The whole pack may be seen clustered on some cross road not very far from the cover which contains the earths. The situation is perhaps more elevated than the immediate country around. The crowd of horsemen increases; and the humble pedestrian is also enabled to come up to the spot in sufficient time to witness the commencement of the sport. The attrac-

tions of the scene are also increased by the arrival of parties of ladies in carriages of various descriptions, who receive the recognition of their friends and acquaintances, and whose joyousness in the field is not exceeded by that of the most enthusiastic devotee of the chase—whose customary zest in the hunt is increased by the presence of those so truly calculated to give an additional charm to every scene over which they are privileged to preside, or in which they so gracefully participate.

True, indeed, it is that in the enjoyment of these scenes, there is no danger similar to that described by a Spanish poet, when—in the mountains of Galicia—the wild boar, rushing from the thick-grown mountain forest, seizes the iron-jagged collar of the hound that hunts him; and, reaching the bravest horse, converts the hot foam with which he is bathed into a stream of blood; or, when the bear attacks the intrepid hunter awaiting the strong animal on foot, and, as has been often witnessed, rolls with him, in savage rage, down the hill-side.

“ Salir suele un javalí
De entre esos montes espesos,
Cuyos dichosos sucesos
Tal vez celebrar les ví,
Fieras son, que junto alcanza
Del caballo mas valiente,
Al sobuesco con el carlanca.

Y tan mal la furia aplacan,
Que para decirlo en suma,
Truecan la caliente espuma
En la songne que le sacan.
Tambien el Oso, que en pie
A comete al Cazador
Con tan estraño furor,
Que muchos veces se vé
Dár con el nombre en el suelo."*

The morning is probably after the heart of the fox-hunter in every respect. A rather heavy dew is upon the ground; and no indications are visible to warrant the expectation that the scent will lie badly, or that the pack will come to any perplexing check. The sun is shining unclouded in the heavens. There is a degree of freshness and elasticity in the atmosphere, which produces a corresponding feeling in the mind. The most intricate parts of the wood are lighted up with a cheering ray. The several ridings, and the openings of the woods, which, protected by the adjacent shelter, exhibit their luxuriant little knolls, seem to invite attention; and while the woodpigeon is scared from his accustomed haunts, and the pheasant, whose home is for a short time disturbed, resorts to a spot of greater security, countless indications foretel that a brilliant run is about to be

* El mejor Alcalde et Rey, de Lope de Vega.

commenced. This feeling of anticipation is cherished by all. Disappointment seems out of the question; and all is joyousness around, unmixed by any the most distant forebodings either of mortification or disaster. Impatience, however, is on tiptoe. A crowd of well mounted horsemen attired in their scarlet coats,—numerous elegantly-dressed ladies in their open carriages or pony phaetons, and some of the more adventurous on horseback, mingled with the anxious and good-tempered group,—with here and there a schoolboy on his pony, as anxious and as joyous as any; numerous pedestrians who have taken up their position at a little distance off,—the hounds, with their attendants,—the huntsman and his whips, all placed in front,—and the well preserved cover immediately at hand,—these contribute to form a scene on a bright sunny morning, which, interesting and attractive in every point of view, is calculated to raise the spirits to the highest pitch of excitement, and to make the heart bound merrily within the bosom in a manner wholly unknown to the inhabitant of the crowded city, whose still-beginning, never-ending toils confine him to other and far different scenes.

At length a carriage and four approaches at full speed. They dash down the hill,—ascend the rising ground,—and are immediately in the midst of the whole

group. All then is animation. Each well managed, high conditioned, and magnificent hunter elevates his ears,—his eyes glance quickly around,—he is all alive,—and as the reins are handled and the rider is placed firm in his seat, he is ready and anxious for the pursuit. The owner of the pack and his more immediate guests, who have accompanied him, are now mounted; and, as the kind and friendly recognition is passed around, particularly with the ladies, who share joyfully in the attractions of the morning, the whole pack are upon the alert,—and crowding round the heels of the huntsman—the whips at the same time flying off to occupy their respective positions on the outside of the wood—they dash into the opening, and the cover is drawn. A general movement then takes place amongst the body of horsemen. The dappled grey looks beautiful, and, like his rider, is all animation and spirit; the chesnut old stager, that has been in at many a death, is as calm and as sly as a bird-catcher, but cautious withal, ready for the first burst, and, if possible, to take the lead; the little bay is impatient and headstrong, requires a tight rein, and will fail ere the *mort* is sounded; while the fine slashing brown, with his immense stride, untiring resolution, and great power, will, with his excellent rider, lead the whole field, clear

every obstruction which may present itself—fence, stile, gate, drain, or rivulet—and be in at the death.

The huntsman now throws the hounds into cover, and the truth and fidelity with which they disperse in



every direction, may well form a matter of astonishment to the mere stranger.

Not a nook, or corner, or hollow, or intricacy of any description, escapes their unceasing vigilance, especially

if judiciously directed, as occasion serves, by the skilful huntsman. Some hound will open,—the horsemen are all attention,—many of them, as well as their horses, impatient. But it is “no go,”—it is a young hound,—and the old ones, as well as the huntsman, know that it is not “good,” and pay not the least attention to it. If, however, dashing about in all directions, the ear of the huntsman has caught the tone of an old hound, which he knows as well as the sound of his own name, and knows, too, that it is “good,” he is instantly upon the spot to lay on the pack, and the best hounds appear to know the matter as well as himself. Reynard, thus aroused from his lurking place, will break cover,—perhaps steal along the side of the wood, as if loath to leave his home; but, if tightly pressed, will break away at once, provided he is not injudiciously headed,—a circumstance which the follower of hounds always carefully avoids, and of which no one, whether equestrian or pedestrian, should ever be guilty.

It often happens, however, that the fox, when he reaches the outside of the cover, will double and return, and attempt to break away in another direction. A check is the inevitable consequence, as the hounds, in the eagerness of the pursuit, rush beyond the point where he has suddenly turned,—probably along a ditch which

skirts the wood. The skill of the huntsman is then much needed, and should be brought into full exercise, by marking, if the nature of the ground admits, the position and movement of the leading hounds, and enabling the pack to regain the scent of which they have been suddenly and unexpectedly deprived.

At length, closely pressed, away flies the unkennelled fox as swift as the winds; and the hounds stream out of the cover in hot pursuit. The huntsman is with them; and the whips are bringing up the stragglers. The field is all delight, eagerness, and animation. The woods resound with the cry of "Broke away—tally ho!" Each horseman takes the position which he deems the best: the bold, the dashing, and the resolute go right ahead, following the line of the hounds, but avoiding interference with them; the sly old hand, who knows the country well, all its fences, drains, and intricacies, and can form a tolerably correct notion of the direction to which the fox will point, avails himself of these advantages; whilst the genuine fox-hunter rides well up to the hounds without distressing his horse, and receives the praises of all for his skill and judgment. Away they fly right ahead, and seem to be lost in the distance. No—no—"a double—a double!" is heard. "They are coming back." The ladies in the carriages rise to enjoy

the sight. "Be still, be still!" says an old veteran, whose galloping days have passed by: "the fox is coming this way; the whole field are well up." The notice is instantly obeyed. Reynard dashes along at a rapid rate; and the hounds are running the scent breast high. He skirts the cover, in front of the beautiful Dianas in the carriages, where the hounds were first cast off; all have a fair view of him; he enters the cover; he seeks for safety in his earths,—but will be disappointed, for they have all been previously stopped. The whole pack advances, and dashes into the very spot at which he entered; the horsemen come up at full speed; some rush down the ridings of the wood; some skirt its margin on one side,—some on the other. They are lost from the sight. Another loud cry is raised: he has broken away on the farther side. The cry, intermingled with the sound of the horn, becomes fainter and fainter, and is only heard at intervals. Reynard, pressed by his many determined pursuers, has fled his country.

Away go the hounds at a tremendous rate: a crowd of eager horsemen follow. Now must be brought into full play the skill of the rider, and the stoutness of the hunter; for the resolute old fox will lead his determined pursuers over every variety of country. He tries to swamp them in the low and marshy grounds,—to

puzzle them in the intricacies of the woods,—on the cross roads,—in hovels,—in farm-yards,—or by many other devices which the cunning and craft of his instinct teach him.



“Hold hard, there!” says a genuine veteran to a young, rash, and inexperienced rider; “there’s a rasper before you, with a deep ditch on the other side, and a fallow beyond; mind what you’re about!” His horse

takes the fence; falls on the opposite bank; and the young rider is pitched into the mud and water. The old hand, knowing the country well, draws a little to the right or to the left; and, cautious and unerring on all occasions, gets clear over all, and is soon near the head of the whole field. Another follows over the same disastrous spot. Rider and horse are rolling in the fallow. Nevertheless, both are of the right sort. The former still holds fast by the reins; his horse has risen, and is dragging him over the field; the beautiful scarlet is changed to the sober russet; the horse stops at the next hedge; the rider regains his feet—springs upon his back—and, after all, has not lost much ground. Next comes a fretful horse; he shies. Then another,—a full stop: the rider is nearly over his head, and both present a striking picture of the craning system. Then comes a third: the horse could do it, but the rider is deficient in courage. The experienced followers of hounds, who know how to ride well up to them on all occasions, have surmounted the difficulty; some have avoided the danger; others have gone clear over, and are well up with the pack. “A check! a check!” is vociferated with hasty and bursting breath; “the hounds are at fault!” Thanks for that,” says one, “for my horse is blown.” “That old fox,” cries another, “goes well ahead, and the hounds

are as fleet as the very winds ; here's a splendid burst of a full hour at least!"

Those who share in the pleasures and excitements of the chace should never follow each other in a line. It is far better to spread themselves, as the means of the escape of the fox are thus lessened, and the whole pursuit is rendered more perfect. It is too much the practice of timid and inconsiderate persons to select some old and experienced rider, who is known to be well acquainted with the country, as a pilot, and ride in his wake, regardless of all consequences. Serious accidents, indeed, have very frequently been occasioned by this dangerous practice, as in the event of the pilot meeting with a fall, those immediately behind him, not being able to stop their horses, ride over him, and thus most ungraciously repay his services.

Everything now depends upon the skill and experience of the huntsman ; and the whips have got all the hounds together. The first whip should be in advance with the huntsman, while the second should remain behind so long as a single hound is left in cover ; for by keeping the hounds together, they do their work steadier ; but when left to themselves, they take any blood they can get, and thus often become riotous. The huntsman observes the direction of the leading

hound. He casts about, re-animating the pack. A short pause ensues:—

“Hark! on the drag I hear
Their doubtful notes, prelude to a cry
More nobly full, and swelled with every mouth:
As straggling armies, at the trumpet’s voice,
Press to their standard; hither all repair,
And hurry through the woods; with hasty step
Rustling, and full of hope; now driven on heaps
They push, they strive; while from his kennel sneaks
The conscious villain.”—SOMERVILLE.

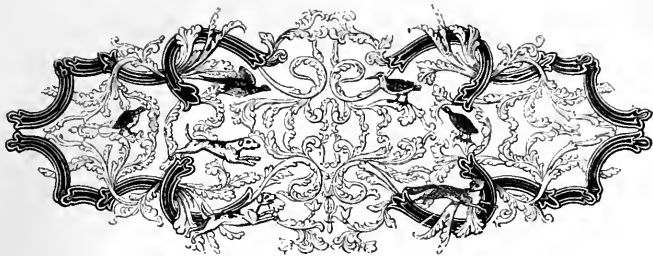
The scent has been regained. The leading hound opens. “Hector has it!” says the huntsman: “Trueman follows him: excellent dog! Vanquish has hit the scent also,—so has Victor,—good dogs!” He receives the just praise of the whole field.

“Tally-ho! tally-ho! hark away!” may be heard in every direction. The whole pack are in full cry for a short time: now they are running so fast they have not time to give tongue. In the meanwhile, crafty Reynard has stolen a march, or rather a run, ahead. Nevertheless, the hounds are all again well laid on; and the life of the old fox is hung in the balance. Then become reanimated the hearts of the whole field, and the spirits of their faithful horses. Then is the trial of nerve, and strength, and skill, and resolution. Then fall into the

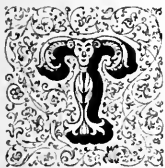
rear those horses which are the more deficient in power, or are backed by the more injudicious horsemen. Then goes merrily forward the true-hearted and devoted lover of the chace. He feels armed with additional strength. He manages his horse in the finest style. The generous creature bounds over every description of fence, hurdle, stile, or gate; makes his way through the heaviest ground; clears every ditch, drain, or brook; and the fame of the dappled grey is known "fifty miles round." The safety of the stanch old fox becomes more in danger every moment. He is struggling for his very life. He is within view; he is nearly black with dirt and sweat, and his brush draggled in the dew; his resolute and untiring enemies are pressing upon him closer and closer. He is attempting to reach a well-known and secure earth. He threads through a tangled copse; rushes down a green lane; turns to the left for a shorter cut,—his spot of safety is not four hundred yards off,—two fields have only to be crossed; he ascends the rising ground,—rushes down the slope adjoining the woods where are the earths,—the hounds are at his heels—almost breathless; he has reached the last field,—a moment more, and he is safe.—No! Hector is upon him; he rushes into him; the pack pours down like a stream; the stanch old fox is dead in a moment, and he resigns his life—*mute*. The huntsman

immediately is among his hounds. The dead fox is elevated over his head; and the whips and the most forward in the chace complete the breathless group. The death-cry of "Wo-HOOP! Wo-HOOP!" is heard at a considerable distance, and immediately answered, even by the adjoining woods; for the echoes repeat the cry—"Wo-HOOP!"





THE FOXHOUND KENNEL.



THE judicious management of the kennel is an important matter, connected, as it intimately is, with the successful pursuit of the fox. No pack of hounds, however well bred, can afford that superior diversion in which the thorough-paced follower of the hounds delights, unless the internal arrangements of the kennel are properly made, and constant care and attention judiciously and skilfully applied. To this department of his business the huntsman should pay especial attention; for in order to establish permanently his own reputation at all points, it requires no small portion of skill to bring out the pack

in the best running condition. Many essential qualities are requisite on the part of the trainer in the racing stables. Many are also needful in the foxhound kennel. It is, indeed, not an easy affair to be what is termed a good kennel huntsman.

The kennel must be built on an elevated and a perfectly dry situation; and should, if possible, have a clear stream of water running completely through it, so that the hounds can, at all times, be furnished with a good supply of that essential article. This is a very important consideration. The kennel is generally divided into three yards. To each of these a lodging-house is attached. This arrangement is for the purpose of separating the hounds, as occasion requires, in cases of lameness, disease, &c. There is besides, a feeding-house, where, under the eye of the huntsman, the hounds are supplied with food. It is particularly necessary that the lodging-house occupied by the running pack should be rendered perfectly warm, by carrying flues round it, in order that the hounds, after a severe run, perhaps through a heavy and wet country, may rest with perfect comfort; otherwise their physical powers will be so injured, by exposure to the inclemencies of the weather, as to render them anything but a complete and effective pack. Cleanliness, too, is an important object; and in this respect no exer-

tion should be spared with the view of preserving them in health, condition, and vigour, to endure the severe struggle of a long run after an old and courageous fox.

When, under the guidance of the huntsman, the hounds have left the kennel on a hunting morning, the dog-feeder's labours are called into active exercise. Previous to the return of the pack, he should render every part of the kennel as clean, warm, and comfortable as possible. That part of the lodging-house where the hounds sleep, elevated about half a yard above the floor, he must spread with clean wheat straw. The dog-feeder, too, whilst the pack is out, has, in addition to his other labours, to prepare their food. For this purpose, one part of the kennel is provided with the necessary apparatus. Large pans are furnished in which horseflesh is boiled until it separates from the bones. This supply is obtained by the purchase of lame and worn-out horses, which are offered for sale for that purpose—a circumstance which has given rise to the current expression, that such a one "has gone to the dogs." The liquor obtained by this process, after being properly cooled, is mixed warm with oatmeal and portions of the boiled flesh. This, on the return of the pack, is poured into long troughs to be eaten by the hounds. The huntsman should then be in attendance. After the food has

been thus prepared, he enters the kennel, whip in hand; and he should possess so perfect a command over all the hounds, that not one of the pack should dare to



move unless at his bidding. By strict attention to this part of his business, he becomes more thoroughly acquainted with the hounds, and they with him, and possesses over them, on all occasions, more control; for it

invariably happens that all dumb animals are more obedient, and become more attached to those persons who supply them with food. Well, then; there they are upon the platform, with ears and eyes all attention, eager for the repast, but fearful of moving until called upon. How necessary it is that the huntsman should have full command over the whole lot, will be apparent,—for if it were not so, many of the hounds would have no chance of feeding. The huntsman, therefore, on the first onset, calls the weak and thin hounds, and the bad feeders, in order that they may first get a supply of food. After the hounds of this description have been thus drawn, and have obtained what is needful, they are ordered back; and the remainder of the pack are summoned down. They immediately fly to the troughs, which are soon emptied of their contents. They are then shut up for the night. If the weather be warm, a slide formed in the door is opened, which will admit each hound to enter the yard, and, if needful, to get a supply of water: besides, by adopting this plan the lodging-house is not kept too hot. An excellent kennel huntsman—one extremely well known some years ago in the neighbourhood of Doncaster—was the late Dick Lambert, who hunted the hounds of the Duke of Leeds. He was, besides, an excellent manager of the pack when

out; a most courageous horseman, fearing nothing; resolute, untiring, and persevering to the last. He possessed, indeed, many of those extraordinary qualities in the chace, which distinguished the celebrated Tom Moody, to whom he bore, in other respects, a remarkably strong resemblance.

Every arrangement should be made, and every attention bestowed to promote the condition of the pack, that they may be enabled to thread the intricacies of the closest covers, to overcome all obstacles, and to endure the burst of a long run. The huntsman who is perfect master of the business of the kennel, and adds to the due performance of those duties the most perfect command over all the pack, as well as skill and perseverance in the cover, and in getting across the country, is the chief contributor to the noble diversion of fox hunting.

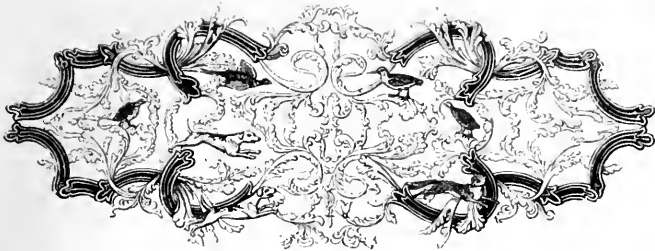
A well bred foxhound, under proper care and judicious management, is a perfect specimen of spirit, endurance, and untiring resolution. He is beautiful in form, strong and supple in his limbs, and determined in spirit. Nothing daunts him; and he is as *game* an animal as can possibly be imagined. But he requires much attention to make him what he ought to be; for if once the leading hounds of the pack get the upper hand of the huntsman, the diversion will be spoilt, and bitter disappointment

will inevitably ensue to the whole field. Of the patient endurance of the foxhound—not to speak of his spirit and resolution in the field—an extraordinary instance occurred some years ago at Cawthorne, near Cannon Hall, in the neighbourhood of Barnsley. The name of the hound was Rover. He became much afflicted with the mange, and was hanged at the kennels at Tevydale, near Cawthorne. He was then thrown down an old coal pit of considerable depth, which appears to have been a common receptacle for dead animals and carrion; but at the end of twelve weeks, he was discovered to be alive, contrary to the expectations of all. Rover was immediately extricated from his perilous situation; and it was found that he had been only half hanged, and had likewise recovered from his disease; and it is a fact, that this very dog hunted with the pack for two years afterwards, and proved himself equal to his competitors in the chase! A portrait of the hound, commemorative of this extraordinary circumstance, is now to be seen at Cannon Hall, the residence of J. Spencer Stanhope, Esq.

In those establishments which contain about sixty couples of hounds, two packs are formed, one consisting of dogs, and the other of bitches. It is generally found that the latter are the more efficient, especially in a close country. They are in all their movements quicker

than the dogs; and, from their smaller size, they are enabled to get through the smeuses more readily than the dogs, as well as through the most dense covers. They hunt as truly, and may be considered as fully equal to the dogs in the swiftness and endurance of a long and bursting run. If the manager of the pack adds to his other essential qualities in the field the character of a good kennel huntsman, he has attained the summit of perfection.





CUB HUNTING.



THE pleasures of hunting would be wholly destroyed, unless the hounds, in addition to perfection of nose, were rendered masters of their work in every respect, perfectly under command, unerring, swift, resolute, and persevering to the last. In order, therefore, to arrive at that state of perfection which is calculated to give the highest gratification to all the followers in the chace, the practice of cub hunting is a preparatory and needful step. It is, indeed, strictly necessary for the purpose of breaking in young hounds to the pursuit of the fox *alone*, to have recourse, in the first instance, to what

is termed *blooding* them,—or, in other words, to let them taste the blood of the cubs.

The young hounds are located within the precincts of the kennels, and as soon as the hunting season has come to a termination, their ears are properly rounded with an instrument made for the purpose, to prevent them from being cut or torn with briars and other obstacles in hedge or cover. They are afterwards very frequently taken out by the huntsman, accompanied by the whippers-in, and taught to go steadily in couples. When that has been accomplished in a satisfactory manner, they are permitted to run without that restraint, in company with the old hounds; but if one of them is unruly, he is instantly coupled to an old and steady hound, that drags him forward, and keeps him in subjection. During the summer months, the young hounds should, for the space of several hours at a time, be conducted into a park of deer. This is done for a very particular purpose. Probably a fawn jumps up before their very noses. They are instantly all alert, and desirous of following in pursuit. But if one of the hounds attempts to do this, the huntsman, or one of the whips, rides towards him immediately, and rates him sharply for this fault. This is done for the purpose of breaking them from following either deer or fawn. The necessity

of paying strict attention to this is apparent; for instances have frequently occurred when a pack of hounds, losing their fox on the borders of a park, have aroused an outlying deer; and, in spite of all the efforts of huntsman and whips, have killed the unfortunate animal. When a pack is once guilty of this error, it is a long time before they can be wholly restrained from the recurrence of a similar fault. Hence the necessity of preventing the young hounds from even looking at a deer, by adopting the plan here pointed out.

The period of cub hunting commences sooner in the southern than in the northern parts of the country, particularly if the covers join each other and extend to a considerable distance. August is the time very commonly selected for the purpose. In the north, the period is later—generally after the corn crops have been cut,—though in some instances before the harvest has been completed. The hounds are cast into cover very early in the morning, generally at three or four o'clock. The earths are stopped, as during the regular hunting season. No one is acquainted that the pack is coming on a certain appointed day but the earthstopper and the keeper; and the latter is very often deceived as to the precise hour. This rule, however, is not strictly adhered to in all instances, especially when some particular friend

or acquaintance—some regular old stager perhaps, whose age precludes him from joining in the regular chace, but who is still partial to the diversion—is invited to witness the efforts of the hounds, and the skill of the huntsman. This early hour, indeed, is selected to prevent the attendance of a number of persons; for, on such occasions, a crowd would be the means of frustrating the necessary tuition of the huntsman.

Cub hunting, however, is not destitute of attractions. It is delightful to see the hounds cast off at that early hour of the morning, when all is freshness and joy around; when the choristers of the woods are in full harmony, and the flowers, shrubs, and trees appear with renovated perfume and beauty. The whips are placed on the outside of the cover to watch the proceedings, and prevent the hounds breaking away and injuring the corn, provided it has not been cut. The scent, too, lies better at that early hour,—a circumstance which is all in favour of the young hounds. The cubs are very reluctant to leave the cover, and, when that is the case, they will generally make a double, if pursued, and return to the same spot. But if an old fox be severely pressed, he will not hesitate to break away at once. In other instances—such is the affection which the parents have for their young progeny—the mother, in

case of great danger, will seize a young cub in her mouth, and rush away at full speed, in order to seek for a place of safety.

Both the huntsman and the whip, who are all attention and activity, particularly the former, if an old hound challenges, whose tone is well known to them, will ride instantly towards the spot, whilst another whip rushes in the proper direction for the purpose of heading the fox, and driving him back within the wood. But whilst the whips generally are on the alert on the outside of the cover, the huntsman is always busily employed within. He dashes along the beautiful green ridings from point to point, marking every movement of the hounds, particularly the younger ones, encouraging those which are acting correctly, in imitation probably of the old hounds, and correcting others which are doing wrong. If a hare springs up before the nose of a young hound, he will dart at her and pursue her. When the huntsman perceives this, he rates him soundly; and the stroke of his heavy and long whip resounds from side to side; for it is as necessary to break a young hound from the pursuit of hare or rabbit, as it is from that of deer or fawn, encouraging them solely to the scent of the fox. Cub hunting, being chiefly confined to the woods, it is truly delightful, even to a person on foot, to see the young

hounds, assisted by those which outmatch them in age and experience, lay themselves well on after a cub. At one moment they are in full cry here; at another, they rush headlong in another direction—threading, crossing,



and recrossing; while many an echo, awakened by their joyous and exhilarating cry, mingled with the animating voice of the huntsman, makes the blood tingle again in the veins of the hearty old fox hunter.

The chief object of cub hunting is to train the young hounds for the due performance of their after duties in a long chace, and nothing contributes so much to the attainment of this object as to let the young hounds taste the blood of the fox; and the unwillingness of the cubs to leave home contributes much to the accomplishment of this. Nor, under some circumstances, do the huntsman and whippers-in hesitate, if occasion requires it, to turn the victim into the very mouths of the hounds. Generally, however, with the superior nose and training of the old hounds, the cubs are killed without resorting to any other means than fair play.

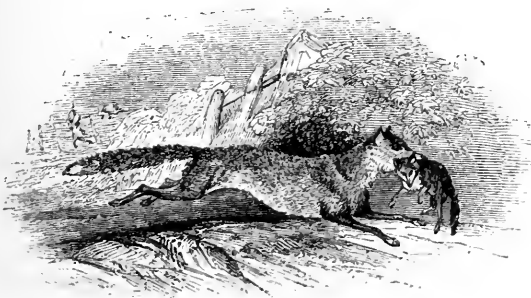
As soon as a cub is killed, it is seized by the huntsman, who immediately shouts the "Wo-hoop," which, resounding through the woods, is heard by the whips at a distance, who hasten to afford their assistance. It generally happens, however, that the young hounds are at first much divided, the attention of some having been diverted in one way, and some in another. When this is the case, the dead cub is hung up in a tree, to be out of the reach of the old hounds. The stragglers are then collected together, an open space of ground is selected, and the cub is cast to the hounds by the huntsman, who contrives, if possible, to let the young hounds have a good share of the spoil, particularly those

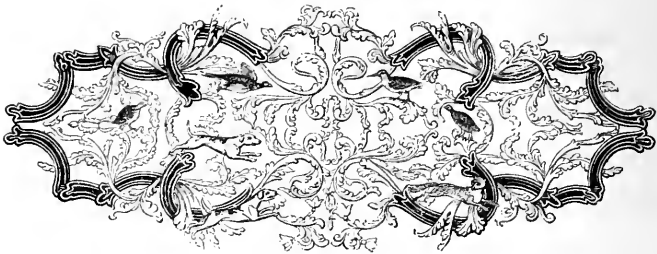
which are shy and timid; for if hounds, however well bred and perfect at all other points, taste not this essential requisite, they will run riot, and be totally unfit for a day's effectual run in the pursuit of a resolute old fox.

There is often some difficulty in getting young hounds out of a thick cover, after they have been cast into its intricate recesses; for as much difference is found in the temper and intelligence of young hounds as in different individuals of the human species. Some will act with much cunning in pursuing, killing, and feeding upon hares when unnoticed. Others, after having been severely rated for this fault, will, through timidity or sulkiness, secrete themselves among the underwood, and refuse to leave unless by force. Some will hunt well immediately, whilst others will take a much longer time; and it often happens, that those which are the more precocious, turn out, in the end, very inferior hounds; whilst those which do not hunt freely at the first will frequently prove the leaders of the pack.

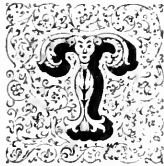
At the age of six years, hounds begin to lose their speed. They become less agile in all their movements; and, however superior may be their nose in cover, they are defeated by their younger competitors in a long and bursting chace, perhaps over a heavy and broken country.

There are other advantages connected with the practice of drawing the covers at an early hour in the morning; for although the huntsman is previously made aware of every litter of cubs in each cover within the country hunted by his pack, the practice of cub hunting enables him to confirm or contradict the various statements which have been made by the keepers. Thus he can ascertain the number of foxes in store for the sport of the approaching season; where they are most abundant; where they have been destroyed by the keepers; and where, on any particular occasion, which may be fixed upon by the owner or the manager of the pack, there is the greatest chance of a good find and a brilliant run.





THE HUNTSMAN.



To form a complete huntsman, the possession of many good qualities is essential. These qualities can only be acquired by long experience, unwearied attention and perseverance, and by advancing, step by step, through the several duties of third, second, and first whipper-in, to the management of the pack itself. Upon his knowledge and exertions much depends to ensure such sport as will give satisfaction not only to the owner of the hounds, but to the whole field. In giving delight to the master of the pack, he is, at the same time, affording pleasure to his friends: the feeling is reciprocal; and

in proportion to the diversion derived from the skill of the huntsman, is the fame of his character spread through the country around.

The huntsman who is perfectly master of his business in every point of view is an important personage in the pursuit of the fox. He is attired in a red coat, with a black velvet cap. He is booted and spurred, bears a long thonged whip, and carries his horn in a case attached to his saddle-bow, near his knee. He has a good head, and is possessed of good nerve. He has the most perfect knowledge of all important points connected with his vocation. This knowledge, too, must be exercised with judgment. He has the most perfect control over his hounds, and knows each hound as well as each hound knows him. A word—a look is sufficient for them. They are as well acquainted with his voice as they are with the cry of the leading hound. His horn, whose tone is calculated to reach beyond the power of his lungs, works perfect magic. However thick may be the cover; however strenuous each dog may be whilst hunting, with nose to ground, through fern or bush, brier or thick underwood—each at his own labour, and yet all struggling for the attainment of one object; however they may be cheered onwards by some raw and busy hunter (the hounds at the same time taking no more

notice of him than an old hound would do of a squirrel, a weasel, or a rabbit),—when the horn is sounded, they rush in a moment around their well-known master and guide; so closely, indeed, that one would be inclined to think that the horse upon which he is riding would strike out, and lay some of them prostrate. But not so. All are animated by the same impulse, and work harmoniously together.

Besides the possession of perfect control over the hounds at all times, the huntsman should be civil and obliging to all the sharers in the sport, requesting them mildly to refrain when they are upon the point of doing wrong, and enforcing his purpose in such a manner as will, if possible, meet with the approbation of all. All boisterous passion should be avoided. Nor should he ever assume that high tone and temper, which, however it may suit his own views and feelings, is duly appreciated by those who are calm and cool, and who invariably condemn such proceedings. The huntsman should also be intimately acquainted with the localities, the habits, and the cunning of the fox; the expedients to which he resorts; his stratagems to throw the hounds off the scent; and the course which, when hard pressed, he is likely to pursue,—and act accordingly. He should be an excellent rider; and, as he is always well

mounted, he must not be stopped by brooks, nor by the highest fences and gates. In order, indeed, to keep well up with the hounds, to cheer them onwards, and



to direct the bursting pursuit, he should be enabled to surmount almost every obstacle. The huntsman must know the country, with all the intricacies of each wood; the turns in each cover; the nature of the soil; the

situation of large rivers, drains, and bridges: he should have such a knowledge, indeed, as, in addition to his skill in hunting the hounds, will enable him to be always the foremost of the field, taking care, at the same time, that, while he places full reliance upon the capabilities of the pack, no rash and impetuous rider—whoever he may be—shall interrupt their progress, and thus occasion them to come to a check. A clever huntsman will force a fox out of cover, when a bungler would fail, and mortify every one in the field; but he will also be desirous to give the fox a fair chance, and to see that his hounds have their good qualities brought fairly into play.

The huntsman, whilst drawing the cover, is all attention and alertness. He is awake to each sound: he is vigilant and cautious,—anxious, but collected withal; he knows the cry of each hound, and is still, but yet watchful. That is the cry of a young hound;—but if the smallest tone comes from one which he well knows, and which no person else would mark, he flies to the spot. Although he knows each hound in the pack, he acts with extreme caution. If one of the old hounds opens, he is all attention and quickness. He is then certain that a fox is at hand, and the sound of his well-known voice brings the whole pack together.

They then

— “ Make the welkin answer them,
And fetch shrill echoes from the hollow earth.”



They are all soon well laid on ; and although Reynard may have stolen out some time previously, the whole pack is in full cry in a moment. The huntsman knows

full well what hounds will lead ; for each pack canine, like each pack political, has its own leaders, whether Peelers or Repealers. Then the whole field, cheered by the view-halloo, presents a scene of the highest animation ; then comes the tremendous burst, and the test of nerve, resolution, and courage.

The fox is, unfortunately, sometimes headed by strangers, many of whom, though not participators in the run, will halloo when they see him approach, by which he is immediately turned aside, when, most probably, the hounds are at fault ; for, instead of turning at the very spot where the fox was diverted from his course, they rush past to a considerable distance, and are thus thrown out. This should be carefully avoided. In the neighbourhood of towns, where pedestrians assemble to see the chace, they should keep together, and make no noise. When the fox is mobbed, it is enough to vex the huntsman, especially if headed whilst attempting to break cover. During the progress of the chace, the increasing exertions of the huntsman are called into full exercise, for much depends upon him in carrying out the run to a successful termination. When a check unavoidably occurs, he is often, from his great experience and skill in the management of the hounds, and his knowledge of the habits of the fox, enabled to lay

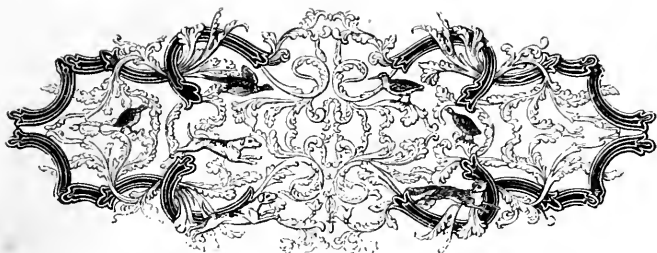
them on again, and to renew the pursuit with undiminished alacrity and resolution. He becomes more at his own ease as the length of the run increases; for the field then becomes more select: the inferior horses, having had enough, are compelled to stop; and the parties up with the hounds are of the right sort, and require not a word to be said to them in the way of caution and direction.

The huntsman, thus carrying the chace well through at all points—from cover to cover; over every variety of soil and of fence; from one haunt of the fox to another; through wood, plantation, and coppice; over plains and meadows, fallow fields and commons—ends his hardy labours with the “Wo-hoop!” which is answered by the whips, who are generally close at hand, until the air rings again with the death cry, repeated by those who have not been able to reach the spot when the hounds ran in to their fox. The huntsman then cuts off the brush, the pads, and the nose, and sometimes the ears, which are shared as trophies of the day. He returns with the pack, by the nearest route, to the kennel, where, during his absence, everything has been carefully prepared for the reception of the hounds.

The greatest trial of the abilities of the huntsman, is a bad scent. All his exertions are then required, and

must be brought into full play. The abilities of a skilful man will be then crowned with success, whilst an indifferent huntsman would totally fail, and disappoint the whole field. If the scent lies well, he has comparatively little to do; for the hounds will then work best by themselves, without being spoken to; and when they find, they will rush away at a tremendous rate. Some gentlemen hunt their own hounds, and do away with the post of the huntsman. It is, however, questionable whether they can hunt the hounds so well as a regular huntsman; for the gentleman who hunts his own hounds cannot be so well known to them as the huntsman, unless he performs *all* the duties which pertain to that office; and for this they seldom have the leisure or inclination.





THE WHIPPER-IN.

INTIMATELY associated with the important post of the huntsman, is that of the whipper-in. In fully and effectually performing all the duties which belong to his office, in giving the highest degree of satisfaction to all, and in raising his own reputation amongst the followers of the hounds, he must bring to the task no small portion of personal exertion. His labours, indeed, are very severe, when the hounds, from the great extent of the covers, or some other unavoidable circumstances, are not in their proper position; and it is especially requisite, that, in addition to his qualities as an ex-

cellent rider,—possessed, like the huntsman, of nerve, skill, and resolution,—he should display incessant perseverance. Like him, also, he must be continually upon the alert; and ever watchful, cautious, zealous, and untiring in his vocation, with the view of making the run as perfect and as gratifying as possible.

Each pack of foxhounds has two whippers-in—sometimes three—to afford their aid to the huntsman on all occasions; for it is as necessary that they should act in concert, as it is needful that the hounds should run compactly together. The whipper-in is attired in the same manner as the huntsman, with a scarlet coat, black velvet cap, bearing also in his hand a long and powerful whip. On the days on which there is no hunting, he exercises his horse, or attends on foot with the huntsman,—the hounds on those occasions being taken out for air and gentle exercise. He has besides to ride to the earth-stoppers, to inform them when the hounds are coming, that all the earths may be stopped. In proceeding with the pack to the appointed place of meeting, one of the whips goes before, and the other keeps behind the pack, which closely surrounds the huntsman. By this arrangement, the hounds are kept together, and the gates are more conveniently opened. As soon as the huntsman casts the hounds into the

cover, one whip is placed on one side of the wood, and one on the other, where they are all silence and attention. He marks whether the fox breaks cover, and the hounds go away; and is particularly cautious



that the fox is not headed. Some of the hounds will perhaps follow a hare. In that case, they are stopped, and whipped back into the wood. If a hound gives mouth in the cover at a hare, he rates him soundly

for this error. In case a brace of foxes should start up, and the pack become divided, he proceeds to whip off one section of the pack, and compel them to follow that which is taken away by the huntsman. If a single fox is found, the huntsman goes away with the hounds, followed by one of the whips; and the other stops behind to bring up the tail hounds. This requires very great exertion, especially if the cover be extensive. He is then obliged to ride very hard to bring up the stragglers, which he rates pretty soundly, and makes the best of the way he can after the main body of the pack, which has already gone away to a considerable distance; and to reach them requires no small share of skill and exertion. If he is left so far behind as to be beyond the reach of the cry of the pack, he must scheme as well as he can to catch them. When the hounds come unavoidably to a check, the exertions of the whipper-in are then particularly useful in keeping the hounds together for the huntsman to make his cast. When a check occurs, the whipper-in who is following with the stragglers, is enabled to reach the pack and to increase its strength; and thus, running compactly together, the energies of the whole field are brought into play, which, after a brilliant run, are crowned with perfect success, to the high praise of the pack, the skill

of the huntsman, and through the labours and unceasing attention of the whipper-in.

It is not, however, during the run only that the exertions of the whipper-in are required. To perform his duty well, his labours must be incessant. If, after drawing the cover, no fox is found, the huntsman blows his horn or halloos "Come away!—come away!"—sounds which are well known to the main body of the pack, and they immediately obey the summons. Still, if the cover be large, the whipper-in must bring up those which have been hunting wide, and rate them severely for their transgression, in order that, getting the hounds in one body, the huntsman's next cast may be more effective. In short, throughout the whole of the day's proceedings, the exertions of the whipper-in never cease. But this continual exercise, while it makes him perfect master of his business, schools him for the summit of his ambition,—the post of huntsman. It is said that a good poacher makes a good gamekeeper. The same rule applies to hunting. A good whipper-in makes a good huntsman: for effectually to have performed the duties which appertain to that office, he brings with him ample experience under all circumstances; whether these regard the difficulties of the cover, the slyness of the fox, the character of the country, the capabilities of

the hounds, the difficulties of a check, or all the many unavoidable casualties which arise in the course of a brilliant or an unfavourable run.

The best whipper-in that ever mounted a horse, or followed a pack of hounds; the brightest example in the way of his arduous calling; the most perfect pattern to all his successors,—was the celebrated **TOM MOODY**, the hero of the famous hunting song which bears his name: and it will not be deemed out of place here, to say a few words about so extraordinary a character. Many were the echoes which his shrill, matchless voice awakened in valley and hill, in copse and woodland; many the hearts which he animated in the chace; many the almost insurmountable dangers and difficulties which he overcame to the astonishment of the whole field, until his name, esteemed and honoured by all, has become, among the lovers of the chace, as familiar as household words.

Tom Moody was a poor boy, the son of a poor widow. He was born at Broseley, in Shropshire, near the residence of Mr. George Forester, of Willey, who then hunted the Shropshire country. Tom, when a lad, was employed by a maltster of the name of Adams, who resided at Broseley, to carry out malt. Among the customers of this maltster was Mr. Forester. One

day, Tom—who little knew how much would hang upon the events of that day—had taken two sacks of malt upon the back of a horse to Willey, which he carefully delivered. In returning home, he came to a gate adjoining the park, and tried to leap his horse over it. He made many attempts, and failed; but, determined to accomplish his purpose—evinced, at the same time, the resolution and energy which distinguished his future career—he at length succeeded, and rode his horse clear over the gate. This extraordinary proceeding on the part of a mere boy, was accidentally witnessed by Mr. Forester. He was struck with his courage and perseverance, and made immediate enquiries who the lad was. He was told that it was the maltster's boy, and that his name was Moody. Mr. Forester, having marked him for his own, sent a messenger to ask Adams if he would part with the boy; and that he wanted to see him at Willey. The maltster complied; but when his mother learnt that Mr. Forester wanted to see him, she was sorely afraid that Tom had been committing himself, and trembled for the consequences. The result was that Tom was engaged as a stable-boy; and, from his attention to his business, his courage in riding, and that extreme good nature and kindness which always accompanied him, he was eventually made

whipper-in, and placed under the direction of John Sewell, the huntsman. He was delighted with his post; and performed its duties in a manner so satisfactory, not only to his master, but to every one who hunted with the hounds, that the fame of Tom Moody, as the best whipper-in in England, spread far and wide. And Tom was, undoubtedly, the best whipper-in that ever mounted a horse. Like him, no one could bring up the tail end of the pack from the closest, the most extensive cover; like him, no one could surmount obstacles which appeared terrific to attempt; like him, no one could preserve that equanimity of temper and of bearing, which drew about him the hearts of all; like him, no one could sustain the long burst of a long chace; like him, no one could manage his horse in such a manner as to present the circumstance, that however difficult may have been his position, however numerous the obstacles which presented themselves,—there, at the death of the fox, with every hound well up, and without tiring his horse, was Tom Moody!

Unfortunately, the brightest day is liable to be dimmed by some obscuring cloud. Tom Moody—the “observed of all observers” in the chace—respected by all who shared in the pursuit of the fox, for his uniform civility and good nature, even when the chance of

success seemed hopeless, and disappointment the unavoidable consequence—Tom Moody was addicted to deep drinking. Famed in all the country around, and respected by all who witnessed the display of his many good and superior qualities, his good nature paved the way for this sad and daily growing evil. Tom, however much he might have drunk, was himself again whenever he got astride his horse; and, under these circumstances, was never thrown, and never fell off. For some reason or other, he was induced to leave his post at Willey; and for two seasons engaged himself to Mr. Corbett, of Sunder, near Shrewsbury. At the expiration of that period, he returned to his old situation under Mr. Forester, with whom he continued to live for the remainder of his days.

Tom Moody stood about five feet eight inches high. He was a strong muscular man; and possessed extraordinary personal courage and untiring resolution. He was much marked with the small-pox; and had eyes as small and as quick as a ferret. He was a very superior horseman; and possessed a voice so shrill that his view-halloo could be heard at a mile's distance. Though addicted to liquor, he was the best tempered fellow in the world, and uniformly civil and obliging to everybody. He never reached, nor, indeed, did he

wish to reach, the post of huntsman. He was never married, and could neither read or write.

When Mr. Forester gave up his hounds, poor Tom Moody was completely worn out with hard work and hard drinking; but continued to live with his old master at Willey. At length, he was taken dangerously ill, and took to his bed; but he did not lie above three weeks, when death closed his career. When he found that his end was approaching, he expressed a wish to see his old master. When Mr. Forester approached his bedside, he said, knowing not that his end was so near, "Tom, what dost thou want?" "I have," replied the feeble sufferer, "a favour to beg of you, sir, which is the last I shall ever crave." "Well, what is it, Tom?" He rejoined,—“My time here won't be long. When I am dead, I wish to be buried at Barrow, under the yew-tree in the churchyard there; and to be carried to the grave by six earth-stoppers; my old horse, with my whip, boots, spurs, and cap, slung on each side of the saddle, and the brush of the last fox when I was up at the death at the side of the forelock, and two couples of old hounds, to follow me to the grave as mourners. When I am laid in the grave, let three view-halloos be given over me; and then, if I don't lift up my head, you may fairly conclude that Tom Moody's dead.” He

expired shortly afterwards, in the forty-first year of his age; and his request was followed to the very letter. The reader who is acquainted with the famous song which bears his name, will mark how correctly the writer has adhered to the actual circumstances.

Beneath the yew-tree in the churchyard of Barrow rest the bones of honest Tom Moody, who was honoured for his matchless skill and resolution, and esteemed for his civility and good nature.

The kindness of a Gloucestershire gentleman, who “knew Tom Moody well,” enables us to insert a letter written by his master a few days after his death:—

“D^r CHAMBERS,—On Tuesday last, died poor Tommy Moody (as good for *Rough and Smooth*) as ever enter’d Wildman’s Wood—He died *brave* and *honest*, as he liv’d—Belov’d by all—Hat’d by none that ever knew him.—I took his own orders as to his Will, Funeral and every other thing that could be thought of. He died sensible, & fully collected, as man ever did, & in short, died *Game*, at ye last—For when he could hardly swallow, ye poor old Lad took ye farewell Glass, *for success to Fox Hunting and his por old Master* (as he term’d it) for ever—I am sole Executor, and ye Bulk of ye Fortune is left to me—Six and twenty Shillings, real and bona fide *Stirling Cash*, free from all incumbrances, after every debt, discharg’d to a Farthing— Noble deeds for Tom, you^l say. The poor old Ladys at the Ring of Bells are to have a knot *each*, for Remembrance of ye poor old Lad.

“Salop Papers will show you ye whole ceremony of his Burial—but for fear, you should not see that Paper, I send it to you, as under—

“*Sportsmen attend.*—On Tuesday 29th Inst was buried at Barrow, near Wenlock, Salop, Thomas Moody, y^e well known Whipper-in to G. Forester Esq’s Fox Hounds for 20 years.—He had every Sporting Honour paid to his Memory.—He was carried to y^e grave by a proper number of Old Earth Stoppers, and attend’d by many other Sporting Friends, who heartily mourn’d for him.

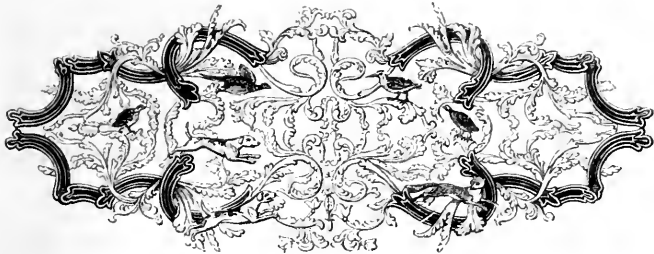
“Directly after the Corpse, followed his old favourite Horse (which he halways called *his old Soul*) thus accoutred — carrying his last Fox’s Brush in y^e front of his Bridle—with his Cap, Whip, Boots, Spurs and Girdle, across his saddle. The Ceremony being over—he (by his own desire) had three clear, rattling View Halloos given him over his Grave: and thus ended y^e Career of Poor Tom, who liv’d and died an *honest Fellow*, but, alas! a *very wet one*.

“I hope you and Family are well, and you^{ll}
believe me, much yours,

“G: FORESTER.”

“WILLEY, 5th Dec^r 1796.”





THE EARTH-STOPPER.



PREPARATORY to the enjoyment of fox hunting, the business of the earth-stopper is of the greatest importance; as, without due care in the performance of his duty, a good run cannot be obtained. His occupation, indeed, is not one of the most agreeable description, and the extent of his labour is little known; yet, in producing good sport, he is an essential agent.

For the purpose of effecting the preparatory duty of earth-stopping, the manager of the hounds applies, at the commencement of the season, to the keeper, who sometimes fulfils the duties of the office himself, or he

engages a substitute,—generally an agricultural labourer upon whom the fullest reliance can be placed. The keeper receives a small salary; and must be diligent in his attention that the earths are properly stopped, and at the proper time, and opened on the following afternoon or evening. Previous to a day's hunting, intimation is conveyed to the earth-stopper, by one of the whips, that the earths must be stopped on a certain night,—the one immediately preceding the day when the hounds are expected.

The foxes generally leave their earths about ten o'clock at night, in pursuit of food. If, however, the weather be extremely boisterous and stormy, they will not leave the earths. Foxes will travel to a great distance if game be scarce in their own neighbourhood. The hen-roosts of the farmer are then often visited, as well as the out-houses where ducks and geese are kept; and if they have been left in an insecure state, a rich booty is obtained; for an old fox, like your ancient alderman, has no objection to a goose or a turkey at Christmas. If, however, game is plentiful—and, in that case, he evinces his superior judgment—he flies to that in preference. Foxes will not trouble themselves much about hares, if rabbits be plentiful; but they seldom return home without a supply of some

description, particularly when they have cubs. Even before sunset, they are extremely bold if pressed by hunger, and have been known to seize fowls belonging to the farm in the immediate neighbourhood of a cover.

The natural gorse, no doubt, forms the best fox cover; but, as Mr. Blaine observes, it is slow of growth, and does not suit all soils. He therefore recommends Mr. Cradock's plan, of forming artificial covers where there is a deficiency of gorse; for which purpose, a piece of dry land, lying well to the sun, and from two to three acres in extent, should be fixed upon. Here, some very strong black-thorns are stuck into the ground, and plashed, and laid down within about two feet of the surface. In a very short time, if the land is strong, the thorns will be almost hidden by grass and weeds, and the foxes will make their runs and kennels under them.

About eleven o'clock at night, the earth-stopper leaves his cottage, wrapped snugly in an old great coat, and provided with a spade and lantern. Thus equipped, he sallies forth, and takes the nearest direction to the covers. Unlike Puck, the "merry wanderer of the night," he enters the wood with great caution, and "treads softly that the blind mole may not hear a foot-

fall," lest Reynard, who is remarkably quick of hearing, should mark his approach, and return, as he would do, to the earths before he arrives. This occupation is not unattended with much inconvenience and some danger; for he must go out at the proper time, whatever the state of the weather; and he is liable to be assaulted by poachers, who can mark his approach by the light he carries. In order to avoid an attack of this nature, a dark lantern, with the shade turned, is sometimes used, until he enters on the intricate paths of the wood.

The earth-stopper must be possessed of nerve and fortitude. There is something extremely solemn in entering a large wood at the "witching time of night, when churchyards yawn." The winds, whistling through the leafless branches, utter an awful dirge; or breathe, through a mass of Scotch firs, a low, hollow, and sepulchral moan. As he proceeds, he hears now and then a rustle among the underwood; but he is not startled by the sound, knowing that the noise is made by hares and rabbits, alarmed at his approach; and as, with the assistance of his light, he threads the intricacies of the dense mass, his ear is often assailed by mysterious noises, by the "Ho-ho-hoo-o! Ho-ho-hoo-o!" of the owls,—a sound not very musical at that time of night, and calculated to startle the unaccustomed ear;

and to cause, amid the thick darkness, an indescribable



thrill to run through the whole frame. On reaching the earths, he proceeds to work by the dim light of his

lantern. The holes are stopped with bundles of sticks, large stones, or old gate-posts, previously provided for the purpose. Upon these he throws a considerable quantity of earth, so that the foxes on their return cannot effect an entrance. The earth-stopper then proceeds to the earths situated in other directions, until the whole are, in like manner, effectually stopped. He is fully acquainted with all parts of the woods; and, by the assistance of his lantern, he is enabled to return home by the nearest route. Stopping, perhaps, for a moment to listen, he hears the foxes barking at each other, at a considerable distance, particularly during the month of February, and knows that they are shut out from the earths,—that there will be a gallant run the next day,—and that the whole field will be convinced that he has done his duty. A suitable recompense will be the consequence. Thus, after the labour of several hours, and before “the morning opes her golden gates,” the earth-stopper reaches home and retires to bed, perhaps weary enough. But,—

“Weariness

Can snore upon the flint, when restive sloth
Finds the down pillow hard.”

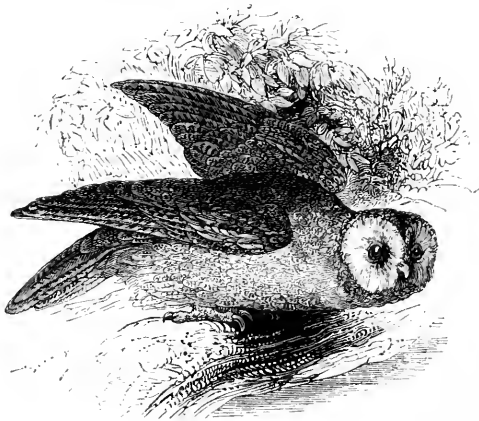
An old game fox, thus shut out from his abode of security, knows what is coming; and, as he is reluctant

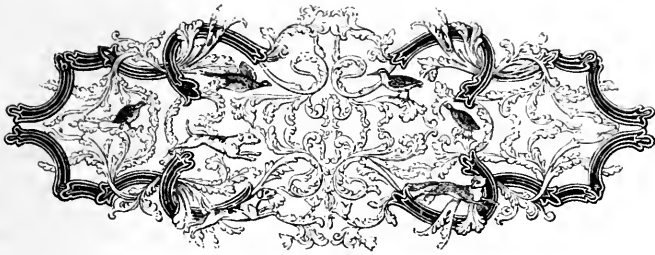
to leave home, he resorts to means of eluding the vigilance of his pursuers. He secretes himself in some secluded part of the cover; in the thick hedge-row; or in the turnip-fields, until the hounds rouse him from his lurking place; but when hard pressed, he is compelled to flee from his home, perhaps never to return.

Nothing is more annoying to the genuine fox hunter than the unnecessary or careless destruction of the object of his pursuit. Many foxes fall a sacrifice to the practice of the rabbit-catcher, who sets his traps in the rabbit-holes. By these and similar practices, the foxes in some situations have been wholly destroyed, to the great mortification of the owner or follower of hounds. In some counties, however, the covers have been stocked by the owner of the estate making earths for their reception in the most appropriate parts of the wood. These, at the sides and at the top, are formed of stones, trenches being branched out at the extremities in several directions, for the more perfect security and accommodation of the inmates. A number of cubs are then procured from a country where they abound. These are secured in the summer, and placed in some suitable outhouse, and are regularly fed and provided with water. In the course of August, they are taken to the earths thus formed, where a supply of water is

provided for them, as well as food; and when they refuse these provisions, it is evident they can provide for themselves.

At the termination of the season, an entertainment is given, called the fox dinner. This meeting is invariably a merry one: the health of the owner, and success to the pack, are cordially drunk; and the evening is spent in that free, hearty, convivial, and harmonious manner, which belongs to the character of the English fox hunter.





HARE HUNTING.



ANY a true sportsman partakes in the pleasures of hare hunting, although it must be admitted that this sport is not now so fashionable as it was a few years since, and consequently packs of harriers or beagles are not so generally kept as formerly. The neighbourhood of Doncaster will afford a sufficient proof of this.

At the close of the autumn of 1839, the old corporation of Doncaster, who never dreamt of such a thing as the Municipal Reform Bill, but ate and drank, and slept in conscious security, kept a pack of harriers. They were hunted within seven miles of that town, and

were joined regularly by the tradesmen and others. When the season was over, the hounds were quartered on the tradesmen and innkeepers until the following year. These, and seven other packs of harriers, all in the same vicinity, are now given up. Occasionally, two or three of these packs joined, and drew together an immense field of horsemen and pedestrians. The town of Wakefield at that time also supported a subscription pack. The best pack, however, was kept by Sir Rowland Winn, at Nostel. They were not only very highly bred, but well trained, and well managed throughout; and were hunted in a very superior style. These have all been discontinued. Great changes have taken place in habits and in fashion, and death has done his work. The only pack now remaining in the neighbourhood of Doncaster is that of the owner of Temple Bellwood.

Hare hunting presents a striking contrast to fox hunting, for the qualities brought into play are totally different. In the former, great speed is not required, although a superior nose is of the first importance; in the latter, the utmost rapidity of speed, acting in concert with a correct nose, is essentially requisite to enjoy the diversion in its best form; and hence it is of a more daring, more exciting, and more adventurous

character. The dash and speed of the modern fox-hound would too much overmatch the efforts of the hare.

Somerville has aptly remarked,—

“A different hound for every different chace
Select with judgment; nor the timid hare,
O’ermatched, destroy.”

The form of the hare, for speed, is truly admirable. The slightest inspection of this timid creature will at once convince the observer of this. For, as has been quaintly remarked by an old writer upon this subject, who flourished in the time of James the First—a devotee to everything connected with hounds, pointers, setters, or springers; with hawking, hunting, fishing, fowling—“the head of the hare is round, nimble, short, yet of sufficient longitude, prone to turn every way. The ears long and lofty: for Nature hath so provided that every fearful and unarmed creature should have long and large ears, that, by hearing, it might prevent its enemies, and save itself by flight. The neck of the hare is long, small, round, soft, and flexible. The shoulder-bone is straight and broad, for her more easy turning; her legs stand broader behind than before, and the hinder legs longer than the former; a breast

not narrow, but fitted to take more breath than any beast of that bigness; a nimble back, and fleshy belly; hollow sides, fat buttocks filled up, strong and nervous loins. The eyes are brown, and they are subtle, but not bold,—seldom looking forward, because going by jumps. Every limb of a hare is composed for celerity, and therefore she never travelleth, but jumpeth. Her ears lead her the way in the chace; for with one of them she hearkeneth to the cry of the dogs, and the other she stretcheth forth like a sail, to hasten her course; always stretching her hinder before her former, and yet not hinder them at all; and in paths and highways she runs more speedily.”

Although the hare is formed for great fleetness, which she brings into the most judicious exercise during a severe and determined course, never wasting her powers, but reserving them for the proper occasion; yet, when pursued by harriers, the hare evinces, in addition, no small portion of dexterity and cunning. The latter qualities, indeed, are brought into operation more during hunting than in coursing. The speed of the hare would far out-distance that of the most superior pack of harriers. It is by an incessantly constant pursuit by the *slot*, through every character of ground—wood or copse, meadow or corn-field, brake or common—that the

victim is defeated by a pack of well-trained harriers, under the direction of an experienced huntsman, and not by rapidity of speed. The hare, therefore, resorts to every expedient for the purpose of throwing her pursuers off the scent, and saving her own life. The fox, when sorely pressed by the hounds, will forsake his own country, and seek for refuge at a distance of many miles. The hare will not do this, but will remain generally in her own locality. Hence, persons on foot are enabled, if not to keep up with the hounds, to be there or thereabouts, by the frequent doublings, and twistings, and turnings, to which poor puss, hearing the cry of the hounds, continually resorts.

The pursuit of the hare affords excellent diversion to the country gentleman, his surrounding friends, and the farmers who are tenants upon his estate. The field of sportsmen is not so numerous as in fox hunting. Nevertheless, so far as mere *hunting* goes, there is more diversion in the one than in the other; and the riding is less desperate, less bursting, and less dangerous. It is a sport, one might imagine, in which Diana herself might joyfully participate,—attired in her hunting costume, with the crescent upon her head, the bow in her hand, and the buskins on her feet,—surrounded by nymphs eagerly pressing onwards, or halting beneath

the statues erected to her honour on the cross-ways,
and exclaiming,—

“We will, fair Queen, up to the mountain’s top,
And mark the musical confusion
Of hounds and echo in conjunction.”



The pack, when thrown off—not in cover like fox-hounds, but in the open country, or in turnip fields—display a pertinacity of purpose truly remarkable. The

hounds are all eagerness, attention, and alacrity. Every nook and corner are visited,—one hastening hither,—another rushing thither,—all busily at work. Should one of the leading hounds find the scent, he immediately opens; and, with the assistance of the huntsman, the whole pack are soon well laid on. Away they go: not, however, with the rapidity of the foxhounds,—but giving mouth, awakening the echoes of the adjacent woods, and exhilarating the spirits of those horsemen who join in the chace. Nor are those on foot far behind, or left at a considerable distance during the greater part of the run, in consequence of the frequent checks which occur, and the impossibility of the pack getting through or over some description of fences, like the impetuous foxhound. A remarkable feature in the quality of the harrier is however presented. Although, in the course of the run, the pack may cross the *slot* of several hares, they turn not aside, but continue in pursuit on the original scent, unless a hare jump up before their very noses. In this case, she is sometimes killed and devoured by the hounds.

The pursued hare, hearing the approach of the hounds, and loth to leave her own neighbourhood, resorts to every expedient of craftiness and cunning, for the purpose of eluding her pursuers. She twists, and

turns, and doubles, and, probably, contrives to return to the very spot where the scent had been first found. She will rush along one side of a hedge-row, dash through any opening, and retreat on the other side. She will run up one furrow, and return to the same place by another. She will also double and twist in a wood or plantation, break away at a tremendous pace, and then squat down,—whilst the hounds, eager on the scent, will run over her. Still the faithful pack, if judiciously hunted, are not to be defeated. They again approach her, and she resorts to another expedient. She will run on a highway at a great speed. There the scent lies badly, and the hounds are at fault; especially if, during the night, there has been a slight frost, and a thaw has taken place; for her feet actually *click* up the earth, and no scent remains. When hard pressed, she will seek for safety in the centre of a flock of sheep, which, terrified at the cry of the hounds, have assembled closely together. There the scent becomes lost. She will secrete herself in a hovel, or in a rabbit-hole, or fox-earth, which is termed *going to vault*. On all occasions, the huntsman, carefully watching his hounds, should not force them very rapidly onwards, especially over some descriptions of ground, lest they should over-run the scent, and come to a check in such

a manner as to prevent the possibility of their regaining it. They should be hunted steadily, and managed judiciously; and if there be a few of the leading hounds of very superior nose, they will direct the operations of the whole pack to a successful termination, without any unnecessary interference on the part of the huntsman.

It often happens, when a hare is first found, that she will rush to cover. The hounds will follow,—and there lies an objection, on the part of the fox hunter, to the keeping of harriers; for the pack disturbs the cover in such a manner as to induce the foxes to forsake that part of the country,—for they do not like to be disturbed by dogs of any description. A good pack of harriers, however, will hunt a fox very steadily; but they are deficient in that rapidity of speed and impetuous resolution which distinguish the foxhound, and give to the character of that pursuit its greatest attraction to those who, well mounted and good horsemen, are enabled to ride well up to the pack.

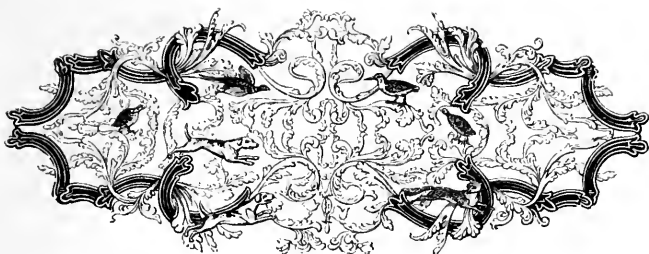
Nevertheless, excellent diversion may be found with a good pack of harriers; but the superior sport of fox hunting, though heavy the expense, has, in a great measure, thrown hare hunting into the shade. At one time, the pursuit of the hare was a passionate diver-

sion, especially if the pack were of a superior description,—

“With ears that sweep away the morning dew;
Crook-kneed, and dew-lapped like Thessalian bulls;
Slow in pursuit, but matched in mouth-like bells,
Each under each;”—

A sport, indeed, which at one time was enjoyed with as much eagerness as the pursuit of the wild hog of India, the antelope of the Cape, the chamois of the Alps, or the capercaillie of Sweden.





COURSING.



LINUS says, that the flesh of the hare, properly cooked, causes sleep; and that those who partake of that favourite dish look fair and lovely for a week afterwards; the best recipe in the world, therefore, for that frightful disease, ugliness. The ancient Britons, we are told, held the hare sacred; and in proof of the important qualities which this interesting animal possesses, besides the wonderful effect already mentioned, it need only be observed, that the success of Boadicea, in her encounter with the Romans, was attributed to a hare which she had secreted in her bosom, and contrived to

let slip at the required moment. But whatever extraordinary qualities may, in by-gone ages, have been attributed to this timid creature, the hare, although still, and probably destined for ever to be, one of the greatest favourites for pursuit or for the table, is without a single friend. The hare is extremely timid, shy, and fearful. She is the inflictor of no punishment on any other creature; but she is surrounded by enemies of every description. She is not only the prey of the dog and the fox, the weasel, and other sorts of vermin; but she escapes not the talons of various birds of prey. The eagle has been known to carry off a leveret; and the weasel will contrive to seize the hare by the back of the neck, and there hang on until the unfortunate victim falls from exhaustion by loss of blood. But man, armed with the deadly tube, or assisted by greyhounds, is her most formidable enemy. If, however, the hare, harmless and inoffensive as she is, be exposed to all these dangers and disquietudes, Nature, completing the wide chain of existence, has bountifully provided this persecuted creature with the best means of being aware of the approach of danger, and of escaping from the stratagems or the pursuit of her merciless destroyers.

The hare is constantly watchful by night and by day. She is provided with long ears, the sudden eleva-

tion of which enables her to mark the most distant sound of the approach of danger. Not only is her fine full eye remarkably quick, but her sense of smelling is also very acute. Her colour, too, renders her extremely difficult to be distinguished, especially in the fallows, or among grass, ferns, or vegetable productions of a brownish hue. By day, the hare places herself upon her seat or form, the situation of which is so contrived as to afford the readiest means of noting the approach of danger, and of securing a safe retreat. The hare feeds at evening and during the night; and in one part of the season will travel to a considerable distance in search of the doe, always returning to her form, by the readiest roads, before the "morning opes her golden gates." It is beyond dispute, that those hares which proceed to the farthest distance to feed, are invariably the most difficult to kill. In winter time, when the ground is covered with snow, the hare is extremely cautious in reaching her form, which she accomplishes by a series of long bounds, so as to leave behind no traces of regular footsteps. It is delightful to see these interesting and timid creatures, at the approach of sunset—when a silent gloom is thrown over the woods—steal, with noiseless step, from the retired and preserved covers, to feed upon the young wheat. They occasion, how-

ever, great injury to the farmer, and indirectly to the owner of the estate, who ought, in justice, to afford ample compensation, in some shape, to the industrious cultivator. In all quadrupeds—including, of course, the high-bred race-horse—the great propelling power is derived from the hind-quarters. The hare is admirably provided in this respect, as the large muscles of the thigh, and the length of the hind, as compared with the fore, legs, amply testify. The importance of this conformation, in providing for her safety, is particularly distinguishable on rising ground, towards which she generally flies, and is then enabled to outstrip all her pursuers. The breast, too, is very capacious, and the action of the lungs, for the burst of a long and vigorous pursuit, is admirably contrived.

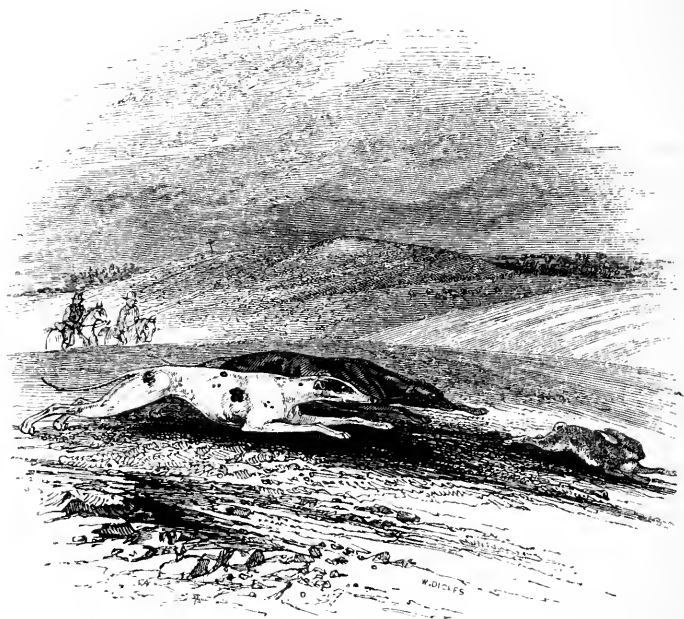
The fleetness of the hare, considering the size of the animal, is not more remarkable than her dexterity in turning during a severe course. Nor does she waste her powers by any unnecessary exertion. She is aware of the degree of speed possessed by her pursuers, and acts accordingly, reserving herself for the fitting opportunity of defeating her antagonists. In this respect, the hare presents a striking example for the jockey—especially in such a race as the St. Leger—not to throw away the powers of his horse in the early part of

the race, but to reserve them until they are required towards the termination of the struggle, when they may be effectually brought into the fullest and the most successful operation. As to the dexterity of the hare, it is a matter of surprise how she can turn during the course, and when, to a casual observer, there seems no chance of escape; her dexterity in this respect—puzzling and annoying as it is to her determined pursuers—enables her frequently to defeat all her enemies, and to escape with comparative safety. For,—

“She can turn, and turn, and yet go on,
And turn again.”

Some years ago, when the diversion of coursing was more fashionable than at present, two ardent lovers of the sport, who had bestowed great pains and attention on the breed and management of greyhounds—both of them knowing hands in this respect—accidentally met whilst riding on the turnpike road. The subject of conversation was coursing, and, particularly, the comparative speed of the hare and the greyhound. One boasted—and not without good reason, too—of the decided superiority of his dogs over any hare; and unhesitatingly declared that no hare could possibly escape them. “I can,” said the other, “shew you a hare that neither

your dogs, nor any other dogs in Yorkshire, however superior, can, so far from killing, even give her a turn.” “I’ll lay twenty guineas to one,” rejoined the other, “that you are wrong.” “Done!” was the reply.



The wager was laid, and the time of meeting appointed, with this condition,—that one was to bring his best dog, and the other to do the same. They accordingly met. The hare was soon found on her accustomed

form, on the ridge of land in a fallow field. "Now," said the one who had accepted the wager, "we will even take, for this time, an advantage of her position." One dog was placed in one furrow, and the other in the next,—the hare occupying the centre of the land. Both dogs were placed even; the hare was put up; and the dogs were slipped at the same moment. Away went the hare, still continuing to run on the ridge of the land, and the dogs, of course, occupying the furrows on each side. Neither could come near her. On reaching the extremity of the field, both dogs flew over the hedge at the same moment: the next field was grass. The hare, carefully watching her pursuers, then increased her speed; and, leaving them far behind, the dogs lost sight of her, and, panting, stood with their tongues hanging out, gazing at each other. The loser of the wager was satisfied; and declared, such was the superiority of his dog, that, if he had not seen the fact, he would not have believed it. This hare, which had been coursed some scores of times, was afterwards shot, and weighed ten pounds and a half.

Amongst country gentlemen, however, the custom of keeping greyhounds is not so general as it was formerly, although, in some parts of the country, amongst a few remnants of the old school, coursing is still an

object of great attraction. But many of the more respectable class of farmers continue to pursue the diversion with unabated attention; and, amongst them, the pursuit of the hare by this means is the occasion of calling together a number of neighbouring friends and acquaintances for the enjoyment of a day's sport, and for the interchange of friendly and social feeling. In large towns, too, greyhounds are kept by several of the more wealthy merchants and manufacturers, chiefly, however, for the purpose of coursing matches. In this respect, the late Major Topham stood conspicuous, and earned a deserved notoriety; and the fame of his celebrated dog, Snowball, is not yet forgotten. He was a black dog, and obtained his cognomen from the man who had the care of him, whose name was Snowball. At that period, the prizes were contended for—at Malton, for instance—in a manner different from that which is at present adopted. As many as six or seven couples of dogs were put down at one time on the Yorkshire Wolds, where the hares, small in size, lying a long way from cover, or from places of feeding, were remarkably fleet. The dogs were slipped from the leash by signal, namely, the dropping a hat from the hand of the starter on horseback, often in the presence of some hundred horsemen. At the present

time, all coursing prizes are contended for in classes. The lovers of this diversion display no small portion of skill and attention in the breed and treatment of their dogs; and they are as particular with respect to the former, as are lovers of the turf with respect to their horses,—carefully noting all points, and equally attentive as to their management. The Duke of Norfolk, in the reign of Elizabeth, when coursing was in high repute, thus describes the shape of a greyhound a year and a half old:—“His head must be lean and long, with a sharp nose, rush-grown from the eye downwards; a full clear eye, with long eyelids; a sharp ear,—short and close falling; a long neck,—a little bending, with a loose hanging weasand (the larynx); a broad breast; straight fore-legs; hollow sides; straight ribs; a square, flat back; short and strong fillets; a broad space between the hips; a strong stern, or tail; a round foot, and good large clefts,”—a description which shews that, at that period, particular attention was paid to the conformation of the greyhound. Nor were the nobility and gentry of that age less attentive to the matters of food, exercise, airing, and kennelling, as well as to “the laws of the leash, or coursing,” as will be seen by the following extract, which, subscribed by the Duke of Norfolk, is given on the authority of Markham:—

THE LAWS OF THE LEASH, OR COURSING.

I.

It was ordered, that he who was chosen fewterer, or letter-loose of the greyhounds matched to run together into his leash, as soon as he came into the field, should follow next to the harefinder till he came into the form: and no horseman or footman, on pain of disgrace, to go before them, or on any side, but directly behind, the space of forty yards or thereabouts.

II.

That not above one brace of greyhounds do course a hare at one instant.

III.

That the harefinder should give the hare three "So-hos" before he put her from her lair, to make the greyhounds gaze and attend her rising.

IV.

That the fewterer shall give twelve-score law ere he loose the greyhounds, except it be in danger of losing sight.

V.

That dog that giveth the first turn, if after the turn be given there be neither coat, slip, nor wrench extraordinary; I say, he which gave the first turn shall be held to win the wager.

VI.

If one dog give the first turn, and the other bear the hare, then he that bare the hare shall win.

VII.

If one give both the first and last turn, and no other advantage be between them, the odd turn shall win the wager.

VIII.

That a coat shall be more than two turns; and a go-by, or the bearing of the hare, equal with two turns.

IX.

If neither dog turn the hare, then he which leadeth last at the cover shall be held to win the wager.

X.

If one dog turn the hare, serve himself, and turn her again, those two turns shall be as much as a coat.

XI.

If all the course be equal, then he which bears the hare shall win only; and if she be not borne, the course must be adjudged dead.

XII.

If he which comes first in to the death of the hare takes her up, and saves her from breaking, cherisheth the dogs, and cleanseth their mouths from the wool, or other filth of the hare, for such courtesy done he shall in right challenge the hare: but, not doing it, he shall have no right, privilege, or title therein.

XIII.

If any dog shall take a fall in the course, and yet perform his part, he shall challenge the advantage of a turn more than he giveth.

XIV.

If one dog turn the hare, serve himself, and give divers coats, yet in the end stand still in the field, the other dog, without turn giving, running home to the cover; that dog which stood still in the field shall be adjudged to lose the wager.

XV.

If any man shall ride over a dog, and overthrow him in his course (though the dog were the worse dog in opinion), yet the party for the offence shall either receive the disgrace of the field, or pay the wager; for between the parties it shall be adjudged no course.

XVI.

Lastly, those which are chosen judges of the leash shall give their judgments presently before they depart from the field; or else he in whose default it lieth shall pay the wager by a general voice and sentence.

Such were the laws of the leash in the reign of Elizabeth. Many alterations have, from time to time, taken place. A meeting of the lovers of coursing was held recently, at the Thatched House Tavern, St. James's, for improving the set of laws published in 1838. On this occasion, Earl Stradbroke presided; and the meeting was attended by Lord Rivers, Mr. Goodlake, Mr. Etwall, Mr. Calvert, Mr. Agg, Mr. Cripps, Mr. Biggs, Mr. Heathcote, Major Bowles, Mr. Bagge, Mr. Gillett, Dr. Scott, &c., all true lovers of the diversion

of coursing. These alterations are subjoined, so that the reader will be in possession of the ancient and the modern laws of the leash. It should, however, be premised, that some valuable suggestions were furnished by Thomas Goodlake, Esq. :—

THE NEW LAWS OF COURSING.

I.

Two stewards shall be appointed by the members at dinner each day, to act in the field the following day, and to preside at dinner. They shall regulate the plan of beating the ground, under the sanction of the owner or occupier of the soil.

II.

Three or five members, including the secretary for the time being, shall form a committee of management, and shall name a person, for the approbation of the members, to judge all courses: all doubtful cases shall be referred to them.

III.

All courses shall be from slips, by a brace of greyhounds only.

IV.

The time of putting the first brace of dogs in the slips shall be declared at the dinner on the day preceding. If a prize is to be run for, and only one dog is ready, he shall run a bye, and his owner shall receive forfeit: should neither be ready, the course shall be run when the committee shall think fit. In a match, if only one

dog be ready, his owner shall receive forfeit: if neither be present, the match shall be placed last in the list.

V.

If any person shall enter a greyhound by a name different from that in which he last appeared in public, without giving notice of such alteration, he shall be disqualified from winning, and shall forfeit his match.

VI.

No greyhounds shall be entered as puppies unless born on or after the first of January of the year preceding the day of running.

VII.

Any member, or other person, running a greyhound at the meeting, having a dog at large which shall join in the course then running, shall forfeit one sovereign; and if belonging to either of the parties running, the course shall be decided against him.

VIII.

The judge ought to be in a position where he can see the dogs leave the slips; and to decide by the colour of the dogs, to a person appointed for that purpose: his decision shall be final.

IX.

If, in running for prizes, the judge shall be of opinion that the course has not been of sufficient length to enable him to decide as to the merit of the dogs, he shall enquire of the committee whether he is to decide the course or not: if in the negative, the dogs shall be immediately put again into the slips.

X.

The judge shall not answer any questions put to him regarding a course, unless such questions are asked by the committee.

XI.

If any member make an observation in the hearing of the judge respecting a course during the time of running, or before he shall have delivered his judgment, he shall forfeit one sovereign to the fund; and if either dog be his own, he shall lose the course. If he impugn the decision of the judge, he shall forfeit two sovereigns.

XII.

When a course of an average length is so equally divided that the judge shall be unable to decide, the owners of the dogs may toss for it; but, if either refuse, the dogs shall be again put in the slips, at such time as the committee may think fit; but, if either dog be drawn, the winning dog shall not be obliged to run again.

XIII.

In running a match, the judge may declare the course to be undecided.

XIV.

If a member shall enter more than one greyhound, *bona fide* his own property, for a prize, his dogs shall not run together if it be possible to avoid it: and if two greyhounds, the property of the same member, remain to the last time, he may run it out or draw either, as he shall think fit.

XV.

When dogs engaged are of the same colour, the last drawn shall wear a collar.

XVI.

If a greyhound stand still in a course when a hare is in his or her sight, the owner shall lose the course: but if a greyhound drop from exhaustion, and it shall be the opinion of the judge that the merit up to the time of falling was greatly in his or her favour, then the judge shall have the power to award the course to the greyhound so falling, if he thinks fit.

XVII.

Should two hares be on foot, and the dogs separate before reaching the hare slipped at, the course shall be undecided, and shall be run over again at such time as the committee shall think fit, unless the owners of the dogs agree to toss for it, or to draw one dog; and if the dogs separate after running some time, it shall be at the discretion of the committee whether the course shall be decided up to the point of separation.

XVIII.

A course shall end if either dog be so unsighted as to cause an impediment in the course.

XIX.

If any member or his servant ride over his opponent's dog when running, so as to injure him in the course, the dog so ridden over shall be deemed to win the course.

XX.

It is recommended to all union meetings to appoint a committee of five, consisting of members of different clubs, to determine all difficulties and cases of doubt.

The following general rules are recommended to judges for their guidance:—

The features of merit are—

The race from slips, and the first turn or wrench of the hare (provided it be a fair slip), and a straight run up.

Where one dog gives the other a go-by when both are in their full speed, and turns or wrenches the hare. [N. B.—If one dog be in the stretch, and the other only turning at the time he passes, it is not a fair go-by.]

Where one dog turns the hare when she is leading homewards, and keeps the lead so as to serve himself, and makes a second turn of the hare without losing the lead.

A catch or kill of the hare when she is running straight and leading homewards is fully equal to a turn of the hare when running in the same direction, or perhaps more, if he shew the speed over the other dog in doing it. If a dog draws the fleck from a hare, and causes her to wrench or rick only, it is equal to a turn of the hare when leading homewards.

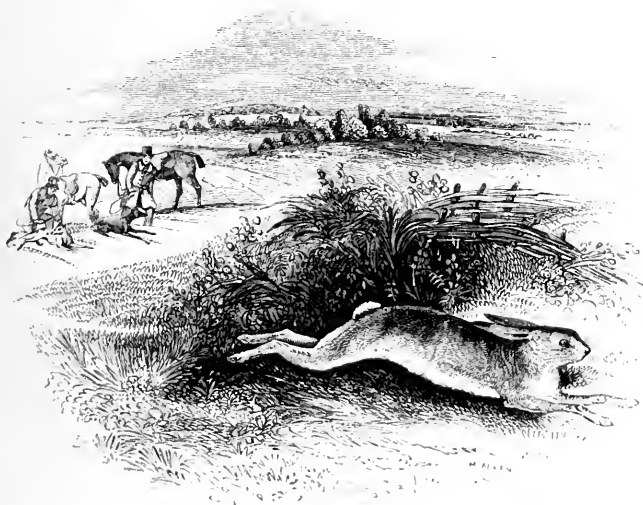
When a dog wrenches or ricks a hare twice following without losing the lead, it is equal to a turn.

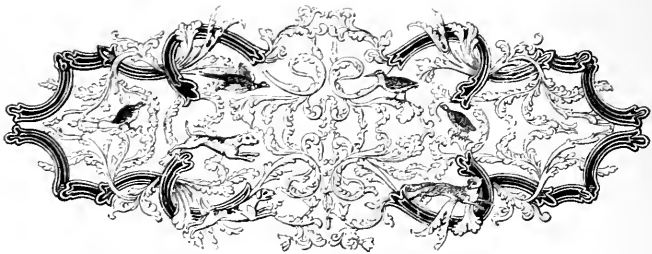
N. B.—It often happens when a hare has been turned, and she is running from home, that she turns of her own accord to gain ground homewards, when both dogs are on the stretch after her; in such a case the judge shall not give the leading dog a turn.

There are often other minor advantages in a course, such as one dog shewing occasional superiority of speed, turning on less ground, and running the whole course with more fire than his opponent, which must be left to the discretion of the judge, who is to decide on the merits.

The high-bred greyhound, like the high-bred race-horse, possesses no chance of victory, unless proper attention has been paid to training and to condition. The kennel should be made perfectly warm and comfortable, by having a flue to run nearly round it, with a supply of the cleanest wheat straw for the dogs to sleep upon. Particular attention should be also paid to the quality of their food. A strong jelly, made from beasts' or calves' feet, slightly warmed, with the addition of a portion of the best oatmeal, is the best, the most nutritious, and the most strengthening diet for greyhounds. They should only be fed once a day, with occasionally a small quantity of mutton, cooked upon a gridiron, or boiled. They should be as regularly exercised as the race-horse, on some open space of ground, by being let slip from some elevated position after the person under whose care and attention they are placed. Whilst his attendant holds the dogs in the slips, he should proceed on horseback to some distance; and, on his raising his voice, the dogs, to whom the sound is familiar, should be slipped after him. He should start off immediately at full speed, and gallop, with the dogs in pursuit, for a distance of two miles. It is better, too, before the day of trial comes, that the dogs should not have seen a hare during the preceding

fortnight. By the adoption of the most judicious means of bringing the dogs into perfect condition, the greatest degree of satisfaction will be enjoyed by the lover of coursing. The necessity of this is indeed obvious, for, on a comparison of the speed of the hare with that of the greyhound, the fleetest hare can defeat the fleetest dog.





OTTER HUNTING.

WITH the progress of civilisation, involving the necessity of providing for the wants of an increased population by the labours of agriculture, several descriptions of wild animals, the pursuit of which occupied much of the time of our forefathers, have become wholly extinct in this country. Amongst these may be mentioned the wolf, the wild hog, the wild cat, the bear, and the beaver. The badger, it is true, still occupies his retreat in some of our largest and most sequestered woods; and if the breed of foxes were not preserved by those who are engaged in the exhilarating pursuit of that

wily denizen of the cover, it would doubtless soon share the fate of those just mentioned, and be known only by its name; for the gun, the trap, or the poison of the keepers would be unsparingly used, under the very plausible plea, that the hen-roosts of the farmer would be rendered more secure, and the quantity of game much increased.

Otter hunting, once a favourite diversion, is now but little practised, in consequence of the great scarcity of that species, many of which have been exterminated on account of their destructive habits amongst the fish of our rivers, preserved ponds, and beautiful lakes. The otter, however, is still pursued in some parts—especially in certain districts of Ireland. The destruction of the otter cannot be matter of surprise or of much regret. The quantity of fish, indeed, which a couple of otters require for their support is very considerable; they therefore contrive to take up their abode in those situations where the greatest number of fish abound. Some of these destructive animals have been known to carry to their dens salmon of twelve or fourteen pounds weight, especially during the period when they have to provide for their young.

The "Plompton Correspondence," published by the Camden Society, contains the following letter from Sir

Henry Savill, K. B., of Thornhill and Tankersley, in which an allusion is made to the otter. This document bears the date of 1544:—

“To my cousin Plompton, of Plompton, this be delivered.

“Cousin Plompton,—I recommend me to you, and as I perceive by my son Robert’s servant, ye say ye will come over and hunt with me; and it please you so to do, ye shall be as heartily welcome as any man that came here of a good space. Ye shall see your arrow fly, and your greyhound run, and all those that come with you, winter and summer, when it please you to come, as long as I live.
* * * * When ye intend to come, let me know what time, or else ye may hap neither to have me then, nor my son at home; but my wife ye shall be sure to find, and she will send some with you that shall let you see both red and fallow, if ye will take the pain. I have killed a hind or two of late, and they are very fat this year, both in the woods at Tankersley, and in my garden at Thornhill. I think ye were never yet in no ground of mine, and I never say no man nay. Therefore, the fault is in you, and not in me: ye may amend the fault when it please you. The cause of my sending of my servant at this time, is this: he informs me that in your country there is a man that can kill otters very well; wherefore, I have sent him to get him to me for a week. I assure you, they do me exceeding much harm at divers places, and especial at Woodkirk and Thornhill, and lye in small becks. My folks see them daily, and I cannot kill them, my hounds be not used to them. From Sothill, the 8th of November, 1544. By your assured kinsman,

“HENRY SAVILL, Knt.”

The burrow or den of the otter is formed in the bank near the edge of the water, and is carried to a

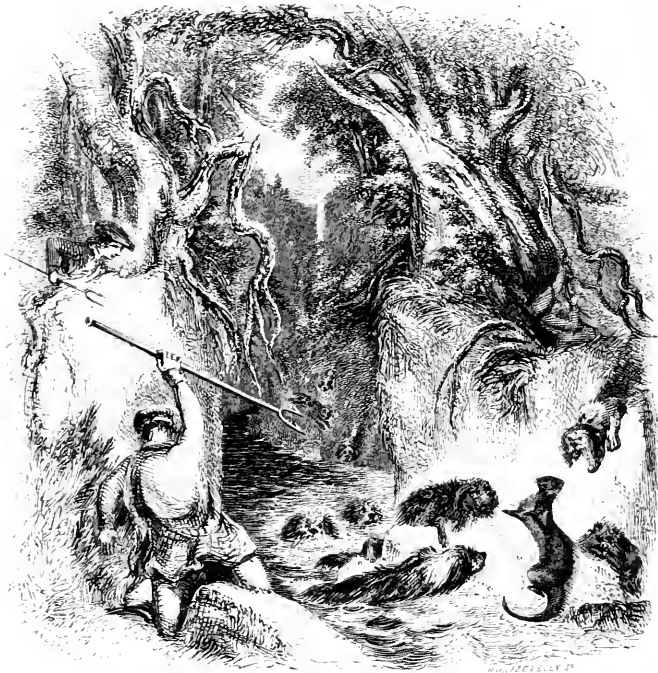
considerable extent, and partly hidden from observation by over-hanging branches, or roots of trees which the current of a river has bared, or by reeds, sedges, and other aquatic plants. The farther extremity of the den is lined with decayed grass and leaves, and forms a secure situation for the purpose of rearing their young—generally about four or five at a litter—which are extremely voracious, and call into exercise the utmost labours of the parents; the latter evincing, as they always do, the greatest degree of care and affection to their progeny, until they can provide for themselves. The otter is admirably adapted by nature for its predatory habits. Its body possesses remarkable flexibility, and is terminated by a tail so formed, as wonderfully to assist its movements in the water. The limbs and ears are short; the eyes are large, and possess much intelligence; and it is furnished with mustachios or feelers at the lips. The feet are webbed for the purpose of swimming and diving. Its coat is furnished next the skin with a water-proof fur, from which spring out rather long and shining hairs. Thus provided with a formation of body and limbs, and with a covering to pursue its nocturnal and destructive habits, the otter possesses, besides, remarkable courage and untiring resolution. Its movements in the water are extremely rapid.

Plunging at once over head, it pursues its victim with a pertinacity of purpose, which is remarkably striking to the attentive observer. When the otter has the object of pursuit fairly before him, provided it is a large fish, the pursuit is not given up until, after doubling and twisting, the unfortunate victim is completely exhausted and eventually secured. The otter returns to his den with the fish in his mouth, and again dives into the water to capture another prize. Sometimes he will dash into a whole shoal of fish, and secure several at one time, of which many instances have been observed. When the otter is thus pursuing his destructive habits, it is in vain for the angler to attempt to kill a fish; and he may leave that locality as soon as he likes, unless he is desirous of watching the activity and alertness of the otter. To the qualities of courage, resolution, and speed in the water, it adds those of dexterity and caution; avoiding, if possible, the approach of danger, and shunning the presence of man as well as of the hound. But the otter is so bold and rapid in the water, that—especially during May and June, when they have their young to provide for—he often wounds more fish than he kills; and hence the destruction which is caused in the vicinity of their abode is immense. A pair of otters, indeed, forming their burrow in the bank of a preserved

pond, would soon accomplish the extinction of the whole of the finny tribe; and, in that case, they are compelled to change their quarters to some more plentiful locality. It cannot, therefore, be a matter of surprise, that every expedient should have been resorted to, besides hunting them with hounds, for the purpose of exterminating these destructive visitors.

The training and keeping of a pack of otter hounds is now uncommon in this country, although at one time it was a favourite diversion with many lovers of field sports. The late Sir Harry Goodricke, however, had a pack in Ireland; and it was unhappily in the pursuit of the otter that that highly-esteemed and true-hearted sportsman lost his life, in consequence of plunging into the water whilst his hounds were hunting, and thus catching a severe cold, which brought on an inflammation that soon proved fatal. The hounds employed in the pursuit of the otter are of a rough-haired breed, and fearless of water. When the otter is forced from his retreat, he immediately plunges into the stream, in order to avoid pursuit and to baffle his enemies. The hounds follow, and are exposed to severe exertion. As they cannot dive with the velocity of their victim, they are compelled to swim about until the otter rises to the surface for the purpose of breathing. The hunters,

who are provided with spears, place themselves on the banks, animating their dogs, and ready to use their

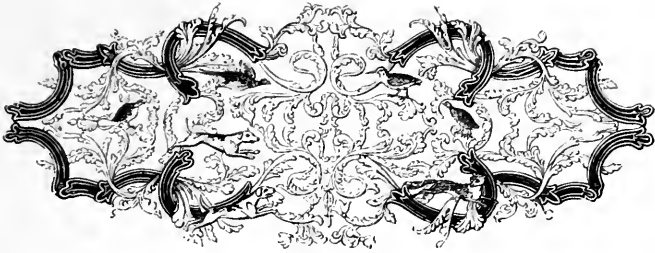


weapon. If they do not take fatal effect, the otter again descends, and proceeds with great velocity to a considerable distance, trying all the means within his power to elude the vigilance of his pursuers. On again rising

to the surface,—if he fails to obtain a lodgment where he can be safe,—the attack is renewed by the hounds and the hunters, until, full of wounds and exhausted, he is secured; but he displays, to the very last, the utmost degree of resolution and courage, and, from the severity of his bite, often wounds some of the hounds. Otter hunting, however, is a dangerous pursuit, and differs in one respect from all other hunting; for water being in a manner the native element of the otter, to that he flies on the approach of danger; and, from this circumstance alone, the utmost exertions are required, not only on the part of the hounds—which, unassisted, could effect little—but also of the hunters on the bank. In the excitement of the scene, the hunter is often induced, in some situations, to be up to the middle in water for a considerable time,—a circumstance which, coupled with great personal efforts, as opposing objects present themselves, exposes him to the liability of illness which may prove fatal. The otter, amply provided by nature for the purpose, may be considered as an expert fisherman, killing more fish than any brother of the angle, the setter of night-lines and trimmers, or the user of the drag-net. His extermination on the banks of preserved ponds and pools has been nearly, if not wholly, effected. On the lines of the larger rivers the

otter now forms his retreat; but even in these situations he is become extremely scarce; and it is probable that, in the course of a few years, he will be much less known even in those localities, however favourable they may be to the nature of his habits. Otters, indeed, have no friends, in consequence of the extensive destruction which they occasion. However subtle, courageous, and persevering, they are the object of the especial hatred of the keeper, who, in order to secure their capture when their haunts have been discovered, uses traps and snares. They are detested by the owner of the estate where preserved waters abound. They are held in abhorrence by the scientific fly-fisher and troller, as well as by the humble fisher with the float. To all these parties indeed,—excepting only the lover of natural history, to whom every animal is an object of interest,—their total extermination from our rivers would not be a matter of much regret.





THE TRUE SPORTSMAN.



HE true sportsman is invariably, in the fullest acceptance of the term, a real good fellow. Animated by no selfish motives; impelled by no resolutions which approach the character of cruelty or oppression; his thoughts, his feelings, his actions, his desires, are those which find a sanctuary in a really good heart. In the pursuit of his favourite diversions—whether they may be connected with the heart-stirring employment of hounds, or the quieter use of the fowling-piece—he is invariably the same. His generous heart shares in all with a perfect harmony of feeling.

If the knowing and practised hand at the gun spreads around him an indiscriminate slaughter, it is not the case with the true sportsman. If the pot hunter shoots, right and left, at everything he sees in the shape of game, it is not so with him. If the owner of a cover be a tyrant, shunned by all within his immediate circle, and hated by those who are placed beyond its precincts, it is not thus with him. These pleasures are not his pleasures; these sources of gratification are none to him. Upon the cruel and the grasping—whether they be of noble or of meaner birth, or whether they belong to that class of men which has suddenly sprung up amid the toil of manufacturing industry—he looks down with a feeling of contempt. He esteems himself rich in the possession of a more precious treasure, and happier in the enjoyment of a more substantial good—the love and attachment of all those by whom he is surrounded. The delights of moderation and prudence are his constant handmaidens and companions. He is an enthusiast in his favourite pursuits, but not their slave. He is a zealous lover of all the sports of the field, but not the indiscriminating destroyer. In all his actions he exercises the inestimable qualities of mercy, forbearance, and moderation. He is blessed with vigour of limb, elasticity of spirit, and length of life. The bloom of health is

upon his cheek; a quick, yet cautious, watchfulness is in his eye; his hand is steady, his heart resolute; wasting not his powers in unnecessary exertions, he presents a perfect picture of manliness, strength, and courage. In all his dealings with the well-disposed stranger, whom he accidentally meets in his rambles, he is invariably respectful and courteous, and possesses and enjoys the good opinion of the whole neighbourhood.

The genuine sportsman is a good shot, and can kill every description of game that comes within his reach; but he acts mercifully, and he puts his victims to no punishment that he can possibly avoid. Possessed of that placidity and equanimity of temper, which, unruffled by any fortuitous circumstances, is in itself a pearl of high price, he takes all matters as they arise with a kindly and complying spirit. If the weather turns out unfavourable for the enjoyment of his diversion, he reconciles himself with the thought of a brighter and a happier day, and employs the interval in his library or in looking after his guns, ammunition, and shooting gear. If one means of gratification should fail, he is not without other resources.

How well a leisure hour is sometimes employed by the keenest of fox hunters, is shewn in the following spirited lines from the pen of Mr. F. P. Delme Rad-

cliffe, who, until very lately, was himself a master of fox hounds :—

Some love to ride on the ocean tide,
There are charms in “the dark blue sea;”
But nerve at need, a gallant steed,
And the life of a hunter for me.

We plough the deep, or climb the steep,
With a heart and a hand as brave
As those who steer their bold career
Far o'er the foaming wave.

There is that in the sound of horn and hound
Which leaves all care behind;
And the huntsman's cheer delights the ear,
Borne merrily on the wind.

Oh! give me a place in the stirring chase,
A dull sky and a southern breeze;
You may rove in vain o'er the mighty main,
Ere you find any joys like these.

If he has “a giant's strength,” he scorns “to use it like a giant.” He is, indeed, invariably the same generous, the same kindly being, through all seasons, and through all circumstances,—the same in thought, the same in feeling,—more ready to give than to receive,—more disposed to forgive injuries than to inflict punishment,—and more desirous to pour from a full heart the

expressions of thankfulness and of gratitude, than to put into full operation those laws which have made many a tyrant, and those enactments which have turned their victims into slaves. Yet is he watchful and attentive withal. It would be a difficult matter to deceive him. There is no intricacy of the wood which he cannot thread,—no character of country with which he is not acquainted,—no turn in the rivulet but is to him well known,—no description of soil or quality of produce but is to him familiar, and he well knows how they may be applied to the preservation of game. Whilst others, from want of skill and observation, are doomed to endure disappointment in their pursuit of the denizens of the copse, the field, and the stream, he can fill his bag with game, and return home perfectly satisfied with the diversion of a day, or the enjoyment of a few hours, and without that fatigue which the less skilful invariably experience.

The owner of a family estate, possessed of these qualities, is a fair specimen of the English country gentleman. There are, besides, other advantages arising from his many favourite diversions. His love of the sports of the field renders him familiar with every part of his extensive grounds. His covers are, therefore, in excellent order; his fences, gates, and water-courses in

good condition; and his stock of game, under the care of a skilful, honest, and judicious keeper, is ever abundant. Spending his days upon his own estate; visiting all its localities; giving employment to many industrious labourers; living on the kindest terms with his neighbours around him, and with the farmers who are his own tenants; not harsh, and proud, and overbearing,—but civil, kind, and forgiving; ever ready to act as the adviser and the generous friend, and not as the high and selfish tyrant;—his good name is respected and cherished by all.

The exercise of these qualities enables the true sportsman to possess a larger quantity of game than falls to the lot of one who acts differently; and even the poacher is less disposed to visit his preserves than he is to clear those which belong to a tyrant owner and his domineering and insolent keeper.

The true sportsman thus possesses the means of gratifying a few true friends—the companions, perhaps, of his school-days, or the comrades of a profession passed amidst scenes far removed from the family mansion, the cherished home of his childhood. To meet, under these circumstances, is to open the pure fountain of true feeling, from which flow the bright and sparkling streams of gratification and delight.

Accompanied by his old friends and associates, he sallies forth in the morning to enjoy his favourite diver-

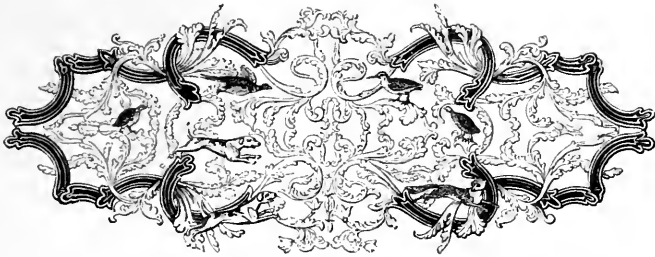


sions. Fully successful in the pursuit of his game, he is no despiser or inattentive observer of every object which is presented around,—the imposing stillness and

solemnity of the ancient wood; the beauty of the sloping valley, or the majesty of the towering mountain; the gentle whisper of the hidden rill, or the shout of the headlong torrent;—each are subjects of pleasing association; and he returns homewards refreshed in spirit and invigorated in health.

Nor, surrounded by his bosom friends and his own family, is he at all churlish. His board is plentifully, but not lavishly spread. The feelings of his own generous nature are cordially shared in by the happy guests by whom he is surrounded, with that spirit of frankness, joy, and hilarity, which is unknown to the selfish. The pure light of his own heart is reflected from those of his jocund guests; and the fount of kindness, benevolence, and good will, gushes with increased power, with more sparkling waters, and with more melodious music.





STAG HUNTING.

IN the midland counties, stag hunting is a sport which is now much pursued, particularly in Norfolk, Suffolk, Berkshire, Essex, Hampshire, and Gloucestershire. In former years, the royal staghounds and the North Devon, which were of very old standing, were the only packs known. The latter hunted the wild deer only, but they have lately been given up, either on account of a deficiency of subscription, or in consequence of the farmers having destroyed the deer for the protection of their corn lands. A few words upon the subject of this hunt will not be uninteresting. The hounds were

of a very large size, more like the bloodhound than any other description of the present day, with long ears, and a very deep note. They were, no doubt, a cross of the bloodhound,—slow in pace, in comparison to the hounds of the present day, but sure of their prey.

In hunting, the practice was to throw into cover a few tufter dogs, who roused the deer. When he broke cover, which was known by the sound of the tufters, who hunted by scent, and gave tongue, the pack was laid on, and never left the foil of the deer until they ran into and killed him. The runs varied from twenty to thirty miles, and occupied the best part of the day,—as the hounds met about nine o'clock in the morning, and the sport very often was not brought to a conclusion until near dark. So stout and staunch were these wild stags, that it was scarcely ever necessary to draw for a second. How different is the present system of stag hunting! The turn out is at twelve o'clock; the deer is taken in an hour or an hour and a half (except in a few instances of recorded long runs), and then home to a good fireside dinner, or the enjoyment of those refined pleasures which the immediate vicinity to the metropolis of the meets of the royal staghounds bring within the reach of those who follow them.

Staghounds of the present day consist of drafts from foxhound kennels. The deer are generally caught in parks by means of a couple of lurcher dogs, aided by a man who is expert in throwing the lasso,—or they are driven by the lurchers into a barn, or shed, left open for that purpose. When required for hunting, they are fed exactly like a hunter, upon oats, the best white peas, and hay. Their turn for being hunted is about once in a month, with the exception of a few instances of very strong constitution, such as the Ripley and Copthall deer, the latter having been hunted ten or eleven times in two successive seasons. The Copthall stag was not a large deer, but of beautiful proportions; his head was small, his neck very thick and of great power; his back and legs short, and his loins of unusual size and strength. The racing performances of these two animals will be found recorded in the sporting journals of about ten years back.

In loading a deer in the cart which conveys him to the place appointed for the turn out, much difficulty exists with one unused to ride in his own carriage. The deer is driven into a shed or loose box; the cart is then backed against the door; two men, with large shutters, then attempt to drive him into the cart, either by means of persuasion, or hunting whips. The

shutters are for the purpose of protecting the men against the attack of the deer, whom he invariably attempts to belabour with his hind legs. The kick of the deer, being more forcible than that of a horse, causes no trifling contusion. After having been carted two or three times, the deer will jump into the cart as a matter of course; and, when taken, is glad to seek shelter in the same vehicle.

To those who have been accustomed to hunt with her Majesty's hounds, it will be scarcely necessary to enter into a detailed account of the wonderful performances of the Ripley deer; but to those who may only recollect to have heard of his fame, some particulars may be interesting. The sketch from Mr. Davis's picture is a faithful representation of his peculiar form and shape, and was probably taken about 1830, when he was seven years old. This deer was bred in Windsor Great Park, and at the age of a few days was made a havier,—to which early operation must be attributed the circumstance of his never having had horns; and, possibly, the very peculiar and immense development of muscle which he exhibited in after life. His head and neck were beautifully small; and, being without horns, he was repeatedly mistaken for a hind; his countenance was singularly intelligent; and his

thighs and hocks, latterly, as large as those of many thorough-bred horses. When matured, his shape was



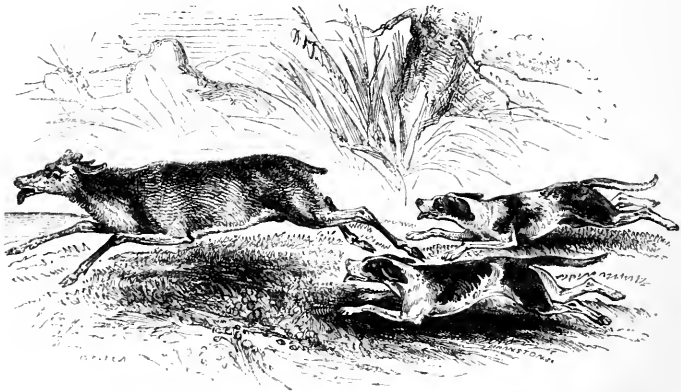
faultless; but at three years old he was very unsightly, and so unlike a *runner*, that, on the 26th of October, 1827, he was turned out of the paddocks at Swinley, before the whole pack, nearly in view, for the purpose

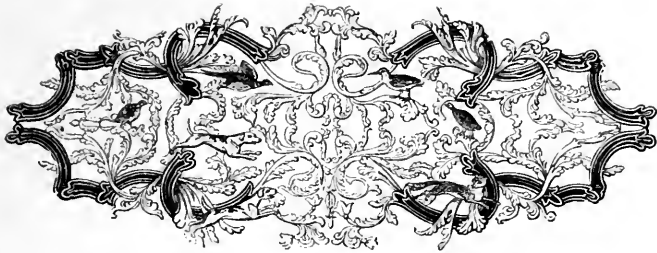
of blooding the younger hounds, after what was expected would be a short run. In this maiden effort, however, he disappointed the calculations of his pursuers; and, after running upwards of thirty miles in three hours and a half, was taken below Henley, at a distance of more than twenty miles, in a direct line from the place of starting. On the 17th of December in the same year, he was again taken in Oxfordshire, after a severe run. In the early part of February, 1828, he gave a most surprising run of three hours, from the New Lodge at Winkfield, to Ripley in Surrey; from which day's sport he derived his name. From this period, for ten successive seasons, he was hunted three or four times a year, invariably giving good runs, and, as invariably, knocking up horses, hounds, and huntsmen. Three times he was left out at night, having ran till dark; and once, in 1832, being lost near St. Albans, he was at length found late on the eighth day, when again he beat the hounds at night, near the Thames, and was not retaken until the following day, in the vicinity of Staines; and this, be it remembered, after a week's very indifferent board and lodging, although, when sleeping out upon these *larks*, he generally contrived to quarter himself near some bean or pea-ricks.

It would be as tedious to enumerate all his exploits as it would be difficult to particularise any one day's sport as most severe: but the run he gave on the 8th of April, 1830, is perhaps the most extraordinary on record. He was turned out near Maidenhead, on the Berkshire side of the Thames, which he immediately crossed; and, passing by Sir George Warrender's, he ran over an immense and magnificent tract of country, under a burning sun, to Finchley, where he was taken at five o'clock in the evening, the hounds having been laid on at half-past eleven o'clock in the morning. The hounds returned to their own kennel the same night; and, even supposing his line to have been quite straight, an inspection of the map will make the distance appear almost incredible.

To detail all his peculiarities would exceed our limits. Some of the habits of this animal are, however, too remarkable to be forgotten. With a ticklish scent, his tricks were more than a match for any pack, and their huntsman to boot. He would generally run hard for the first half hour,—then stop to listen,—and, if time allowed, would run his line back for a quarter of a mile or so, and then start off in a fresh direction at the top of his speed; in which case, if the hounds were held forward at their check from a reliance on his

usually straight mode of running, he ensured an immense advantage, and knew well how to make use of it. Another *ruse* was,—after running an hour or more, to take soil in some large piece of water, and, crouching under the bank, to hide every part of himself but his nostrils: and in this way he has often been lost for hours. He was fond of leaping, and very averse to roads, till the winter of 1838, when he turned cunning, as it is termed, and would seldom leave them. This naturally caused dissatisfaction; and after a fair trial in different parts of the country, poor Ripley was destroyed in the summer of 1839.





DEER AND DEER SHOOTING.

WHAT innumerable — what delightful associations arise at the bare mention of the words—noble stag! fat buck! hart of ten! The mind reverts to the days of old, when the royal forests were spread over the land in all their primeval magnificence,—the secure abode of the “native burghers”—the deer. Then, the giant oak—the patriarch and monarch of the scene—reared his magnificent head, defying all the powers of the tempest, or courting the cloudless glance of heaven; whilst, beneath its wide-spread shady boughs, reposed, in all their beauty, the watchful herd. Then, the noble elm, the

silver ash, the spreading chestnut, the beautiful beech, the graceful alder, intermingled with the mournful yew and the solemn holly, thrived in all their rich luxuriance,—forming, in some parts, a cover and security so dense as to be almost impenetrable, and affording a secure home for all the denizens of the wooded scene.

With the remembrance of these scenes, too, are associated the companions of the sylvan spot: the grand forester; the chief woodward; the forester of the three bailiwicks; the verderers; the regarders; the agisters,—clothed in green, and bearing the bow and the quiver of shafts; the bugle and the hatchet; the staff and the baldric; and all the paraphernalia connected with the ancient laws of the forest. Then lived, in the merry greenwood, those bold outlaws, the daring opposers of the royal will—who led a life of unrestricted freedom—bidding defiance alike to every authority—civil, ecclesiastical, or military—Robin Hood and his merry men all!

Nor do these associations rest alone on the mere splendour of forest scenery; for, in later days, connected with noble deer, is the name of Shakspeare—the glory of our land and language; the read of all readers, and the admired of all admirers; one whose

matchless fame acquires, like the avalanche, increased strength and power at every period of its descent.

These scenes have passed away to be no more witnessed in what was then termed merry England; but their memory is still living,—fresh and green and beautiful. The axe of civilisation and improvement has levelled the monarchs of the forest. What was once the source of enjoyment to kings alone, is broken up and divided amongst the modern “lords of the manor.” The cultivation of the soil, the extension of arts and manufactures, and the application of skill and industry, now provide for the wants of all; and the ancient laws of the forest have become merged in that system of progression which has limited the power of the throne, and which, in the provision for the wants and necessities of an increased and increasing population, has been accelerated to an astonishing extent. Yet, “the native burghers—the poor dappled fools” of the forest—are still subservient to some classes of the community,—not to all, but to the fortunate and privileged few.

To the enclosed parks of our nobility and gentry, the herds of deer are the greatest ornament. They fill up that delightful picture of park scenery which nothing else would so effectually supply. Beautiful beneath the shade, or in the open sunny space, is the

appearance of the stag, starting up from his repose, with his magnificent and noble head, and with an eye beaming with intelligence, ready to bound away at the least indication or approach of danger or alarm. Beautiful, too, beneath the wide-spread branches, or on the bright green sunny slope, is the whole dappled herd, ever watchful, coy, and cautious.

In some districts of the Scotch Highlands, the deer still run in their wild and unconfined state; and the hazardous and daring diversion of deer-stalking—a graphic and interesting description of which has been lately written by Mr. Scrope—is occasionally pursued.

There are two descriptions of deer in the enclosed parks of this country,—namely, the red deer and the fallow deer. The latter are spotted, or beautifully dappled: the former are more uniform in colour; and their appearance in the park, in whatever position they may be placed, whether partly hidden beneath the waving boughs, or wholly exposed to the sunny glade, affords a delightful treat to the lover of the picturesque. Always watchful and upon the look-out for danger, and avoiding the footsteps of man, or of the canine species, they are difficult to approach. The stag, especially, with piercing eye, and full palmated antler, erect, intelligent, and enterprising, is remarkably swift of foot,

and can bound over the earth with a light and elastic tread, clearing the highest fence which may oppose his rapid and impetuous career.

No buck should be killed until he is six years of age, when he possesses a full head. In arriving at this state, he advances step by step. During the first year, he is a *fawn*. At two years old, he is called a *pricket*, from the shortness of his horns; at the third year, a *sorel*; and the year following, a *sore*. At the fourth year, he is a *buck of the first head*; and at the fifth, a *buck*. At the sixth year, he is a *buck of the full head*. Shakspeare, in "Love's Labour's Lost," thus makes Holofernes "affect the letter:"—

The praiseful princess pierced and pricked a pretty pleasing pricket;
 Some say, a *sore*; but not a sore, till now made sore with shooting.
 The dogs did yell; put 1 to sore then *sorel* jumps from thicket;
 Or pricket, sore, or else *sorel*; the people fall a-hooting.
 If sore be sore, then 1 to sore makes fifty sores; O sore 1!
 Of one sore I a hundred make, by adding but one more 1!

The horns are cast every year, generally about September; and when they fall off, the buck, surprised at thus losing his greatest ornament and means of defence and attack, starts suddenly, and stares around in perfect astonishment at what has occurred. In October, he possesses what is called the velvet horn. In

the following month, the velvet begins to come off, and he will rub the horns against the branches of the trees until it is all removed. The antlers afterwards grow rapidly, and soon become hard and varnished, when he again assumes his noble appearance.

Thus, arrived at a state of maturity, he becomes the object of particular attention to the park-keeper, whose duty it is to watch, during the whole year, the respective herds, park fences, and other matters pertaining to his vocation. The herds browse during the day, straying from one part of the park to another, but always avoiding the approach of any one.

When the keeper proceeds to kill a fat buck, he is obliged to exercise much caution and cunning. For the purpose of shooting them the more readily, holes are made at stated distances in the park wall. These apertures are wider in the inside than the outside of the wall, in order that the rifle may be more easily directed either to the right hand or to the left. It very frequently happens that it is difficult to get a shot; and, when that is the case, the keeper is obliged to get an assistant or two. These either walk or ride in the direction of the herd so as to induce them to move towards the spot where the keeper has placed himself in ambush; sometimes behind the park wall, or

behind trees; sometimes, too, he will climb a tree, if it be so situated as to answer his purpose. A herd of



deer cannot be driven; but they may be induced to change their position, so as to come within the range of the rifle. The part at which a clever keeper takes

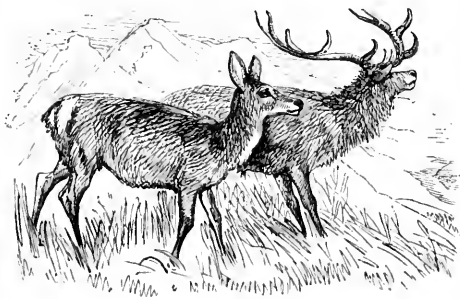
his steady and deliberate aim is the head, near the ear, or at the neck. When a buck receives the well-aimed ball, he jumps up to a considerable height, and falls down dead. When not effectually killed, he will bound away to a considerable distance, and then, perhaps, begin to stagger: another ball finishes the business. The keeper instantly runs up to him and cuts his throat. Sometimes the herd is approached by using a stalking-horse, which will stand fire well; or they are shot from the back of a steady pony, which has been trained for the particular purpose; sometimes out of the window of an old chaise, which is concealed near the haunts of the herd. The proper time for killing a buck is the latter end of July or the beginning of August. In some parts of the country, bucks were formerly hunted by bloodhounds which were trained for that purpose. When this was the case, the buck was induced, by resorting to proper means, to leap the park palings. The hounds were then laid on the scent; and, after running to a considerable distance, he would, perhaps, return to the park, with the hounds close at his heels. To shew the superior nose of this description of hound, as well as its pertinacious qualities in the pursuit of its victim, it need only be stated, that it will continue on the scent after the same buck,

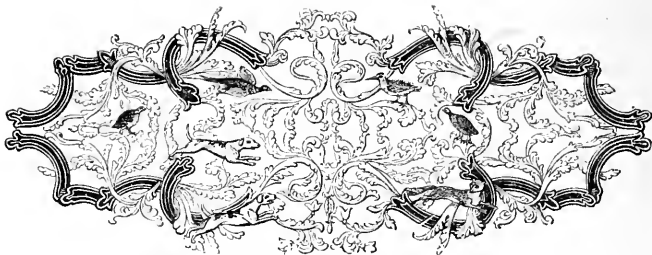
although he may pass several times through the whole herd, who, however, generally try to avoid the unfortunate animal. When the hounds have seized their victim, the keeper's knife is at once applied, and he is despatched as speedily as possible. The doe season commences about the middle of November. Does are more difficult to shoot in the right place than the bucks, in consequence of their herding more closely together. They are, besides, extremely shy; and know a gun as well as the keeper who bears it. It frequently happens that they are shot in the shoulder, if the head or the neck does not present a fair mark. Venison is not fit for the table unless it has been kept three weeks; but if it be wrapped up in a cloth and buried in the ground, it will keep much longer, and become more tender; the venison of a hunted stag, however, will not keep so long as one that has been shot with the rifle.

The bucks, particularly those of the red description, are extremely savage during the rutting season, at the end of October, and will attack anything that approaches them. Before this particular season commences, many severe battles take place between them. These determined onsets will sometimes last during an hour, in which the respective combatants display as much dex-

terity in the use of their antlers, as two scientific fencers could do with their foils; and the sound arising from the crash of antler against antler may be heard at a considerable distance from the scene of action. These contentions take place until one or two prove what is termed the master deer. The victor then selects twenty or thirty does from the whole herd, and marches round and round them, not one of which dares to leave her companions. If, however, one should desert, the infuriated buck immediately bounds after the runaway, and if she will not return to her associates, he plunges his antlers into her body, and kills her upon the spot. During almost the whole of this season, the buck is rarely seen to eat anything. Towards the end of the time, he is generally driven off by the younger bucks. The master deer then retires into the closest cover, and remains there in solitude for some time. The fawns are dropped about midsummer, amongst beds of fern, thistles, or rushes; and the doe, after suckling her fawn, leaves it in its secret place, but returns two or three times during each of the following days for the same purpose, until the fawn can provide for itself. At the expiration of three or four days, a fawn can bound away at an astonishing speed; and it would require a swift dog to overtake one, even so young.

Although the splendour of the royal forests have passed away, and with it the most arbitrary enactments which called into existence the bold and daring outlaw—who was threatened with a ruffle of rope and with oaken sauce—the admirer of nature can yet be delighted with the numerous herds of deer which adorn the modern enclosed parks, and his mind can be amused and instructed by observing their peculiar habits,—their caution, vigilance, intelligence, activity, beauty, and truly noble bearing.





THE GAMEKEEPER.



ANY good qualities are necessary to the formation of a good gamekeeper. He must be kind and courteous; respectful to strangers; zealous in his vocation; and have the good-will of all the tenantry on the estate, with whom he has so frequently to come in contact. He is their welcome visitor; and, on all occasions, they are ready to evince their respect to the landlord by a show of civility and friendship for this his humble, although active representative,—who visits every part of the manor without being subjected to captious interruptions. Many of this fraternity of the gun,

however, clothed in a little brief authority, are noted for their overbearing conduct and officious insolence.

The duties to which the gamekeeper has to attend are innumerable; and if he fail in the proper accomplishment of any of them, he is not fit for the situation which he holds. It is essential that he should be a good shot—an attainment not acquired without much practice, perseverance, and skill. Not only has he to take his many daily and nightly rounds throughout the whole of the property embraced in the terms of his certificate, but there are other matters which require his close attention. The keeper should be a good trainer of dogs—an essential qualification; for the successful and gratifying enjoyment of every description of shooting, whether in the wood or the field, the moor or the marsh, depends much upon the capabilities of the dog under judicious management. To this quality, which requires much toil, perseverance, and attention, he should add a perfect knowledge of the several diseases to which dogs are liable, so that he can arrest their progress at the first manifestation of the symptoms, or apply the best remedies in each decided case.

The keeper should also be a good vermin killer. He should be acquainted with all the habits and the localities of the stoat, the founmart or polecat, and the

weasel, as well as all kinds of birds of prey, including the whole of the falcon tribe, the jay, the carrion crow,



and the magpie, and be able to accomplish their destruction in the most judicious manner; setting traps and dead-falls for the former, and—which is the less cruel way—destroying the broods of the latter. He should

likewise be a good fisherman—competent to take pike by trolling or by the trimmer, or to use the fly in those waters to which this mode is, at the proper season, particularly applicable.

Towards the proper preservation of game, the attention of the keeper should be continually directed. He should especially prevent, by unwearied vigilance, the incursions of strangers and poachers, keeping the fields and woods undisturbed; encouraging the safety of the young broods of partridges, and feeding the pheasants in the woods by forming small stacks of beans, buckwheat, and peas,—a plan far preferable to that sometimes adopted of spreading about loose grain, a large portion of which is wasted,—whereas, by plucking from the stacks, the birds obtain no more than is necessary. The keeper, besides, should be perfectly well acquainted with the game laws, so far as his own duty is concerned; as he will thus be enabled to avoid the hazard of committing himself, and of preventing any injury to his own reputation, or to that of his employer.

The keeper should be acquainted with every covey on his estate, their number and haunts, and the peculiar habits of the parent birds; the direction in which they generally fly in case of danger or surprise, and the

particular spots where they feed, or where they may be most readily found. It must be highly gratifying to the owner of the estate to see his grounds abound with these favourite birds, as well as his covers plentifully supplied with the most beautiful of all the winged game of this country—the pheasant. Not only are the care and skill of the keeper shewn; but the means of good sport, throughout the whole season, are abundantly afforded; and while, in case of a backward harvest, he is willing to forego his diversion for a month, for the sake of the corn crops, as well as for the growth of the birds—he looks forward, with pleasing anticipation, to the enjoyment of the shooting season, entering into its many and varied gratifications with a light and joyous heart, and with feelings of kindness and goodwill to all with whom he is surrounded.

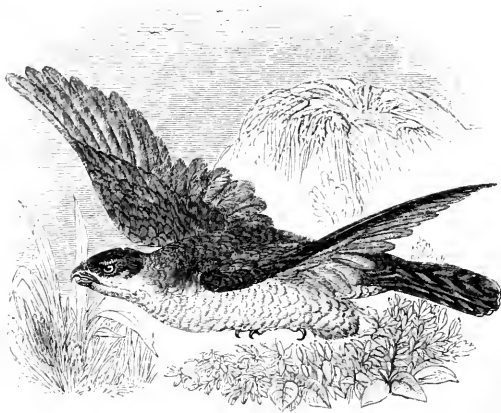
The keeper should endeavour to merit and acquire the respect of all persons,—not only of those with whom he is more immediately associated, but of strangers. Unfortunately, many of them are deficient in this respect, and are esteemed by no one,—a circumstance which has tended to engender a bad opinion of the whole fraternity. Colonel Hawker, one of the best shots in the kingdom, and the best acquainted, too, with all sports in which the gun is used, says, in re-

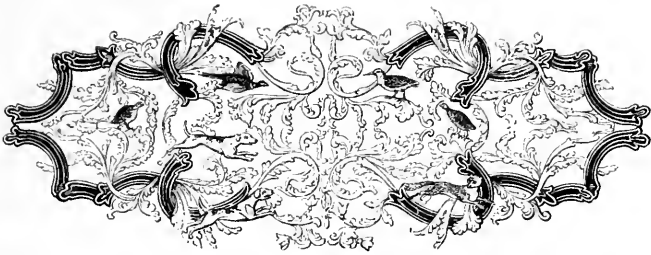
ference to keepers,—“ Be careful how you trust any of them with guns, under the pretence of their killing vermin; for it is an undoubted fact, that many of those who are considered very honest men by their employers, are yet so much the contrary, that they will take every opportunity to destroy game, when not under the immediate observation of their master. For instance:—a gamekeeper is in a cover: he fires his gun, and *pockets* a pheasant or a partridge, or kills a hare and conceals it. His master, who is perhaps not out of hearing of the gun, comes up, and says, “ John! what did you shoot at?” “ A d—d hawk, sir,” replies the trusty guardian of the preserves. “ Did you kill it, John?” “ Oh no, sir, he was too far off; but I am sure I properly peppered him.” “ Where is he now?” “ Lord bless you, sir, he’s been out of sight for these five minutes.”

Whatever degree of skill the keeper may possess in the use of traps, &c., for the destruction of vermin; in the breaking-in of dogs; and in the preservation or pursuit of game,—it is equally requisite that he should be on the best possible terms with the tenantry of the estate. If to them he be respectful, civil, and obliging, he is doing more than he could accomplish by any other means, not only to establish his own reputation, and

that of his employer, but to ensure the safety of the eggs of the partridge and the pheasant.

A keeper possessing and exercising the good qualities enumerated—and, at the same time, knowing his business well—will never experience a deficiency of game: the preserves will be less visited by the midnight poacher; the tenants will consider the interests of the keeper as identified with their own; while, through his instrumentality, the enjoyment of the several pleasures connected with the sports of the field, will be extended; and the sportsman, the farmer, and all who are in any way connected with him, will become participators in the benefits thus produced by the keeper.





PRESERVATION OF GAME.

IN order effectually to contribute to the true enjoyment of the several sports of the field, it is essentially necessary that the most judicious means should be adopted for the preservation of game. Much in this particular depends upon the character of the owner of the manor. If a gentleman, who spends his time and money upon his estate, is held in high estimation by those with whom he is surrounded—the farmers, the labourers, and the poor;—if to them he invariably behaves with civility and kindness, ready to offer his advice and assistance on all occasions, and to alleviate

the wants and distresses of the needy,—he will find far less difficulty and annoyance in preserving his numerous covers and fields, than is experienced by one who—boisterous, headstrong, severe, and tyrannical—is hated and despised by the whole neighbourhood. The exercise of every good and kindly quality towards the inhabitants of the whole district will at all times awaken those feelings of attachment and gratitude which are totally opposed to the performance of any deeds which will ever have the tendency of diminishing the diversion of their liberal benefactor. They know that he is their friend, and, consequently, they will be averse to the destruction of game, either on their own part or by poachers who may come from a distance. The poacher, indeed, knows full well, that he has more obstacles to encounter on the estate of a gentleman of this description, than on that of one who acts differently, and that he runs a greater risk of detection from the zealous attachment to the landlord on the part of those with whom he may accidentally meet. A gentleman possessing so strong a hold on the affections of his dependants, and backed by a civil, clever, and honest keeper, will always have game in abundance. One, however, who acts in an opposite manner, will be continually exposed to annoyances of every description,

not only from the poacher, but from the occupier of the land, and from those who are in his employment. Under these circumstances, the supply of game will be diminished season after season; and if it be preserved by resorting to the most tyrannical proceedings, or the employment of a number of keepers, who are continually on the look-out for intruders and trespassers, the chances are that, after being at considerable expense, the covers will be nearly cleared during one night by a gang of desperate and revengeful poachers,—too formidable for the keepers and the watchers, or by the more scientific among them exercising their skill, in the most secret manner, in defiance of all the vigilance of the guardians of the preserves.

It would be far better to stop the operations of this daring and determined class of men by secretly watching their movements previously to leaving their homes, than to encounter them, as too often happens, in the woods and grounds belonging to the estate. If a night has been fixed upon by these nocturnal depredators to visit the covers in a large body, some previous intelligence of such a visit may be obtained in some way or other, provided the keeper is always alert and at his post, unless the marauders come from a large town which is situated at a considerable distance from the point of

attack. It is requisite, for this purpose, to have an eye upon the old village ale-house and the modern beer-shop. In the latter receptacle, no doubt, many poaching plans are concocted by the members of that worthy fraternity; but, it may be fairly questioned whether, under all circumstances, these places are so numerously resorted to for the planning of depredations as many persons—enemies of the Beer Bill—are willing to believe. The late returns, indeed, with respect to convictions connected with beer-houses, are so comparatively small, as fairly to confute all persons who have looked upon them as the means of encouraging the meetings of either burglars, robbers, or poachers. Nevertheless, although the poaching convictions have of late years wonderfully decreased,—partly through the operations of the sale of game act,—partly through the dreadful risk of life which is run,—and partly through the old hands being wearied out of their dangerous propensities,—there are many who cannot be weaned from their bad habits; and it is very probable that, at the present time, there is more destruction effected amongst the game by the system of solitary, or nearly solitary, poaching, than by any other method. The chances of detection are less,—the profits greater,—the convictions more remote.

To ensure the complete preservation of game, much also depends upon the destruction of vermin, of hawks



and other birds of prey; a museum of which often forms the appropriate ornament of the back of the kennel. If, indeed, the keeper were to search at the proper seasons for the nests of all the birds of prey,

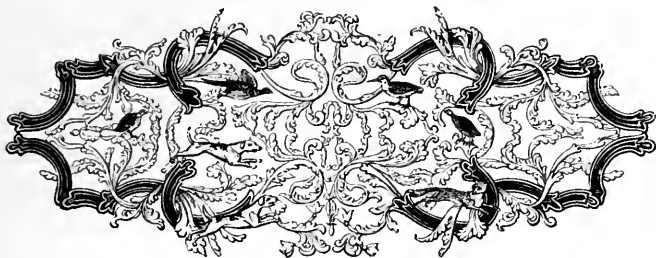
and fire at those containing the eggs or the young broods, he would thin their numbers far more effectually than by shooting them as they casually come across his path; besides, in the end, it would be a less infliction of pain: for, if the parent birds only were destroyed, the broods would be doomed to a lingering death from not receiving a supply of food.

To keep the covers and adjacent grounds free from the intrusions of the marauding visitor; to preserve the pheasants and partridges from being disturbed or destroyed during the important process of incubation; to protect the young birds after they have left the parent nest, as well as when they are enabled to mount upon the wing; to provide, at the proper season, food for the beautiful inhabitants of the young plantations and the woods, near a supply of water;—in short, to be continually vigilant in all matters which may conduce to the preservation and the security of game of all descriptions,—these are the duties which the true lover of field sports should see fulfilled by the keeper, without exercising severity either to strangers or the tenants of the estate. The silent and solitary wanderings of the mole-catcher and the earth-stopper—the habits and pursuits of the rabbit-catcher, the woodman, and the charcoal-burner—should not escape his particular notice.

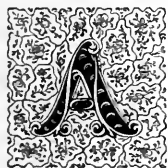
Thus securing, by his vigilance, the quietness of the woods and grounds, backed by the pure and unsullied character of the owner of the manor, whose good name is in itself a host, there will always be abundance of game for the employment of the gun, including, probably, as the proper season prevails, no small portion of both cocks and snipes: for these beautiful and interesting migratory favourites will abound most in those localities, which, suited to the nature of their habits, are free from the visits of many strangers and from the noisy clamour of a hasty and bad shot. To the owner of an estate thus judiciously managed, no disappointment will arise in ranging wood or coppice, stubble or meadow, hedge-row or low ground. To him the morning will shine with increased attraction; and evening close around with calmness and serenity. Possessed of an ample store of game of every description, he has the means, within the range of his own estate, of gratifying his friends with a day's superior diversion; and while the grateful visitor, under these favourable circumstances, will scorn to abuse, by unnecessary and indiscriminate slaughter, the kindness which has been extended to him, the owner of the well-preserved covers enjoys the delights of the day himself, and feels that he has also contributed to the enjoyment

of others. The wily fox may prowl through his covers without risk of trap or gun; for the loss of a few hares or rabbits is well compensated by the enjoyment of that mutual good feeling which should always exist between brother sportsmen, whether fox-hunter or pheasant-shooter.





THE POT-HUNTER.



AMONGST all shooters, the most despicable fellow that carries a gun is the pot-hunter. Whenever he leaves his home in the morning,—not for the purpose of recreation or of exercise, but of destruction and greediness,—his bosom is filled with feelings more base and selfish than even those of the poacher or smuggler. In estimating his character, he will be found to be beneath both. The former has to labour hard at an unseasonable hour, and to encounter innumerable difficulties. He is, at the same time, exposed to great danger of detection, and of severe punishment. The latter braves

the fury of the ocean, during the prevalence of the most violent storms, when death rides upon each foaming wave. His life is placed upon the hazard of a moment; and, in order to accomplish the objects which he has in view, courage, resolution, and even desperation are indispensable.

The pot-hunter is a braggart and a coward. No matter who suffers—if he can fill his bag and his capacious pockets with game by any means, however shabby—he chuckles over his success. How different the feelings of the generous sportsman! Accompanied by his faithful dog, *he* leaves the bosom of his family when the morning “opes her golden gates,” and,

“In russet mantle clad,
Walks o’er the dew of yon high eastern hill.”

The blessings of his own offspring go with him as he bids them farewell: the sprightly, the frank, the free, the generous-hearted boy; the timid, the affectionate daughter—that beautiful girl, who has more power in the glance of her eye, than is possessed in the arm of a giant. His heart is free and open; and, as a pure and unsullied mirror, reflects each image which is presented before it. With all objects, indeed, that

shew themselves, he feels a generous sympathy. To him, there is always the beauty of the season—for every season is beautiful—spread abroad with a bountiful hand. The wind may moan through the grove of fir, larch, beech, or sycamore; the storm—with its companions hail, snow, and sleet—may hurry past and obliterate the traces of his footsteps; he has sympathy with all—with the grandest, with the humblest. He delights in the graceful wave of each branch, in the breath of every breeze, in the tone of every sound. His mind turns not away from the contemplation of the simple dewdrop, whilst the commotion of the excited elements carries with it its wilder charm. The true sportman goes not out for the destruction of game alone: his purpose is chiefly that of exercise and health—the greatest of all earthly blessings. He kills, with an unerring shot, what he conceives to be needful, and no more; and, contemplating the preservation of broods for another season, he returns homewards, delighted with his efforts and his exercise.

The pot-hunter sets out in the full belief that all is fish that comes to the net,—or rather, that all is game that comes to his bag and capacious pocket; he is animated with one idea—to get as much as possible; no matter by what means,—only get it! He takes

every advantage which may be presented, whether in the cover among the pheasants, or in the fields among



the partridges. Your pot-hunter is seldom accompanied by a keeper. He, disinterested soul, generally selects one of the hangers-on of the tap-room, the beer-shop, or the wharf—the dangles at the skirts of the corn market or the tail end of the butchers' shambles—re-

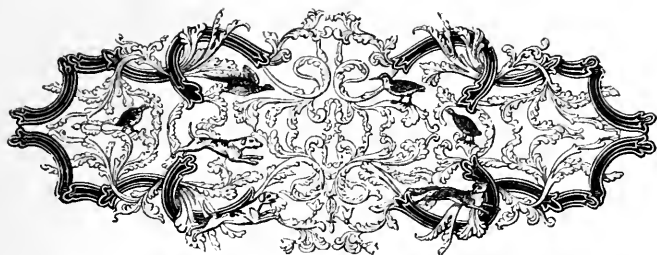
quiting his services with the generous gift of a mauled rabbit. The character of this rouser is enhanced if he can use a large stick in a dexterous manner for the purpose of knocking the game on the head, should an opportunity present itself. The pot-hunter, stealing behind a hedge, will fire at the birds on the ground. He will shoot at a hare upon her form. When the birds rise, he fires both barrels right into the covey, wounding far more than he kills. The genuine sportsman, on the contrary, singles out his birds right and left, and avoids wounding the others. The pot-hunter has not skill to kill a cock, or to bring down a snipe. He has no objection to set a snare in the morning, or to take it after sunset, exclaiming, if it has been discovered,—“I wonder what rascally poacher has done this!” He will not hesitate to kill the tame ducks that have strayed, in search of food, down a drain in the neighbourhood of the farm-yard.

Returning home, laden with spoil, he calls into exercise his talismanic powers, through the medium or instrumentality of the butcher. Thus, a pheasant is changed into a fillet; a brace of birds into slices from the buttock; a hare into a leg of mutton; a rabbit into a thick rib or so;—anything, and all things, provided it saves the weekly expenses. Such is the pot-

hunter! Despicable and despised: the inflictor of torture; and, cowardly and unmerciful withal, he has no music in his soul.



“ Let no such man be trusted.”



GROUSE SHOOTING.



THE pursuit of the beautiful inhabitants of the bleak and barren moors of England and Scotland, and especially of the latter, where hills rise above hills in imposing grandeur,—forming those ravines and valleys which receive into their peaceful bosoms the roaring torrents, or the gently whispering rills, presents a striking contrast to the diversion which is enjoyed in the localities of the partridge and the pheasant. In the richly cultivated fields and luxuriant woods of the estate, adorned and protected by the family mansion, there is that high degree of security, comfort, and enjoyment,

which is wholly unknown in regions where cultivation, breaking up the spontaneous productions of the soil, and destroying the ancient burghers of the district, has not extended its beneficial operations. But, whatever advantages might be presented in reclaiming the wastes of the wide-spread moorlands, and applying the soil to other purposes, the lover of grouse shooting would feel more grieved and mortified at witnessing the home of his favourites rendered desolate, than when he sees the ancient commons of merry England—once the resort of innumerable wild fowl, from many a foreign land—changed by act of parliament into purposes for which nature never intended them, and for which also they were never adapted,—thus banishing the migratory visitors to other more suitable regions; abridging the researches and the pleasures of the ornithologist, and destroying one interesting and legitimate source of amusement, without mentioning the grievous loss to the humble cottager in the ancient right of pasturage for his cow and his string of geese.

In the immediate neighbourhood of his residence, the country gentleman, who adds to his many other excellent qualities the character of a first-rate sportsman, can pursue his favourite diversion without much exposure to fatigue, and wholly free from those priva-

tions which have to be encountered on the wide-spread moors of the north. In home shooting—if such an expression may be allowed—there is little of that spirit of adventure which is called forth in grouse shooting; but it is in the spirit, which arouses all the energies, that the charm of grouse shooting mainly consists,—in addition to the gratification of forwarding from a spot, far removed from the scenes of polished life, a box of grouse to distant friends,—a present invariably received with feelings of the highest delight, not only as affording an excellent dish for the table, but from its awakening in the mind of the old and experienced receiver, the most pleasing reminiscences of his earlier and more youthful days, when the possession of health and vigour carried him successfully through a day's moor shooting; and when those advantages were seized and enjoyed at the proper season and time of life, before feebleness had approached with silent but certain steps,—before the winter of age had scattered its snows upon the devoted head,—before the eye had lost its quick, unerring, and eagle glance,—and before the hand had changed its steadiness for that tremor which generally accompanies the flickering evening of existence.

Grouse shooting takes the lead of all the numerous diversions in which the gun is employed; and, partly

from this circumstance, is looked forward to with more anxiety and enjoyed with a higher zest. The season commences on the twelfth of August, by which time the young broods are strong upon the wing, provided the season has been favourable. The sportsman, after having made every necessary preparation for the campaign, has to encounter rather a long journey before he reaches the place of his destination, especially if his visit extend to the moors of Scotland, where the best grouse shooting abounds. The moors in the north of England are of course more easily reached by the southern visitors; but the distance to the extreme point of the island has been now so much shortened by steam packets and by railroads, that the distance of a hundred miles is scarcely worthy a moment's consideration.

In many grouse districts belonging to noblemen and other wealthy proprietors, there are shooting-boxes prepared for their reception; where, comparatively speaking, every comfort is enjoyed within doors during the night or the prevalence of unfavourable weather. The moors, too, are strictly preserved by a number of keepers or watchers, who are sheltered in snug cabins placed in different situations, and who are instrumental in preventing the depredations of the poachers. Yet the latter, notwithstanding every precaution, come in for

a share of the spoil. In other situations, the sportsman, if not a good caterer, has to endure many privations at a small and inconvenient public-house, unlike to that of Meg Dodds. Nevertheless, his heart is not depressed, particularly if he be an old campaigner. Animated by the spirit of a true sportsman, he contrives to make himself comfortable; and, turning, as much as possible, every evil to his own advantage, enters upon his favourite pursuit with zeal and energy. Located in a spot which would sicken and disgust others, he feels himself at home, light-hearted, and joyous; where some would be ill at ease with the cookery of the cabin, he is his own cook,—and having had the precaution to provide himself with a pot of anchovies, a packet of cayenne, a bottle of Tarragon vinegar, or a flask of oil, he can provide a good and savoury dinner, when the poor, helpless, and merely fashionable shooter would absolutely starve.

Grouse shooting is a work of immense labour and difficulty, and to follow it up with perfect success requires the exercise of much courage, skill, and untiring exertion. The scene by which the sportsman is surrounded is peculiar, and fully calculated to awaken the most romantic feelings. He sees hills rise above hills, covered with heather of a sober brown hue, intermixed

with dusky purple. No majestic trees throw beneath a grateful and refreshing shade; no marks of cultiva-



tion are spread around; no traces of the abode of man, except the lone and distant cabin of the keeper. There is a solemn and imposing gloom in the depth of

the valleys—an awful murmur in the descent of the mountain stream—sometimes augmented into the roaring torrent; and when the masses of clouds roll over his head, spreading around increased gloom and darkness, the rays of the sun, which suddenly dart between them, present a contrast which gives to the scene its peculiar and striking characteristics, and awakens feelings of loneliness unknown in richly-cultivated spots.

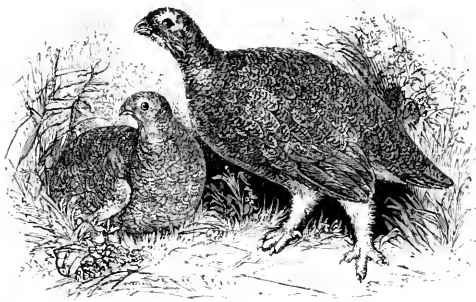
It is of great importance to the sportsman that the game should lie well; but this is seldom the case in unfavourable weather, or when the packs have been disturbed by poachers or unskilful shooters, and consequently rendered wild. Under these circumstances, they cannot be approached within the distance of four or five hundred yards; and it is no very gratifying sight, after hours of incessant toil, to see them skim over the top of a mountain at the agreeable distance of a mile at least. When this occurs, the best plan to pursue is, if possible, to despatch an attendant by a circuitous route to head them, and drive them back in the direction of their former position, whilst the gunner continues upon the advance. The game lies best during clear, unclouded sunlight; and, consequently, can be the more easily approached. Much then depends upon the qualities of the dogs, which should be staunch and

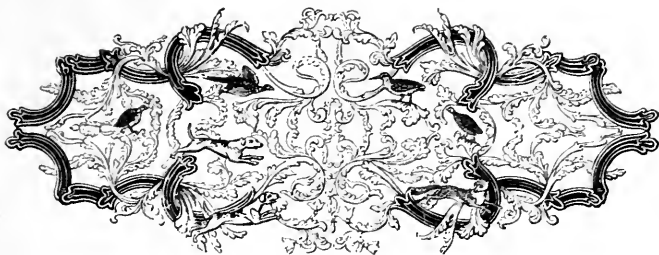
superior in every respect. A fine stout setter, standing high upon his legs, is of great advantage, especially if the heather be thick and high, — as he can be better seen by his elevated head and bushy stern, and possesses, besides, sufficient strength and spirit to carry him successfully through the fatigues of the day. When the pack is approached, there is often considerable craftiness evinced by the parent birds, and especially by the old cock. He starts off immediately in a direction to divert the attention of the unwary shooter from the whole family, as well as to entice away the dogs; but an experienced dog is aware of this trick, and will contrive to head him and drive him back. His career should be immediately stopped by banging at him at once. More destruction is, indeed, accomplished by killing the old bird first, if possible, for the pack is then divided, and the younger grouse, losing the care and direction of the parent birds, become confused; and, hesitating as to the direction of their flight, afford a better opportunity of bringing them down.

In approaching the birds, much depends upon the nature of the heather. In comparatively barren places they will not lie so well as when it is, as in Scotland, of considerable depth. But the labour of working a way through it is far more irksome both to the gunner

and the dogs, especially if the weather be hot and sultry, and not accompanied by the gentle and refreshing breezes which often prevail in those elevated and open situations. There are also to be encountered the ascent of high hills,—the broken ground, with black ruts, worn into deep holes by former stormy seasons, and checked by broken fragments of stones and rocks. But the true sportsman perseveres; and, noting every indication of the packs, as well as the state of the weather, succeeds, by caution and unerring skill, in securing as many birds as he desires; and, after having spent a laborious day, returns to his humble dwelling happy and contented. Nor, if the weather should prove for some time so rainy as to prevent his stirring abroad, does he despond. Confined within the precincts of an ill-furnished room, with peat fires, and a bed not quite so soft as down, the purely fashionable shooter is miserable in the extreme. But it is not so with the genuine shot—the real old campaigner—who contrives to make all things as comfortable as possible. With a patient and an enduring spirit, he has resources of amusement within the recesses of his own mind, as well as within the reach of his own hands; and while he can provide a good dish by an appeal to what may be called the stores of the commissariat department,—cal-

culating upon the way in which his future days of diversion are to be spent,—he contrives, if the weather be against him, never to spend an idle hour; but to find some sort of amusement, which will not only while away the otherwise heavy time, but tend to enhance his pleasure on a future occasion.





PARTRIDGE SHOOTING.



PARTRIDGE shooting is a sport in which a portion of almost all classes try their skill. In the September stubbles will be seen the owner of the manor; the learned in the law; the skilful of the lancet; and the tenant of the solemn shade of the wine vaults. Many a one, however—clever at the bond and conveyance; experienced in the veins and arteries; or in the contents of the pipe and the puncheon—is a desperately bad shot. Hence the coveys of birds—particularly at the commencement of the season, and in the neighbourhood of market and manufacturing towns— are

doomed to a life of persecution,—from bad shots on the one hand, and from the extensive slaughter of some destructive old shot—who is but one remove from the poacher and the pot-hunter—on the other. Not so the genuine bearer of the fatal double-barrel. His proceedings in the enjoyment of this most agreeable diversion are always marked by skill, judgment, and an acquaintance with the peculiar habits of the objects of his pursuit. He knows how they are influenced by the state of the weather; the time and place of their feeding; and the expedients to which they resort in case of danger. Thus the true sportsman is generally enabled to kill as many birds as suits his purpose, provided the coveys have not fallen by the fatal net of the poacher; whilst, on the contrary, the busy bungler will toil all day without obtaining a tithe of what he had expected, and will probably return home tired and dissatisfied.

In the vicinity of large towns, the lovers of this diversion evince much anxiety to be first in the field, and commence operations on the first of September even before the day has dawned; thus, in the most injudicious manner, marring their success as soon and as effectually as possible. The scientific gunner, on the contrary, first suffers the dew to evapo-

rate from the stubbles before he proceeds on his interesting and healthy diversion. The former disturb the coveys very probably whilst they are feeding, and



render them wild and shy for the remainder of the day. The latter, by commencing his operations later in the morning—at nine or ten o'clock for instance—is enabled to approach the coveys with greater cer-

tainty of obtaining a good shot; for, the birds, having fed without being disturbed, lie better during the remainder of the day.

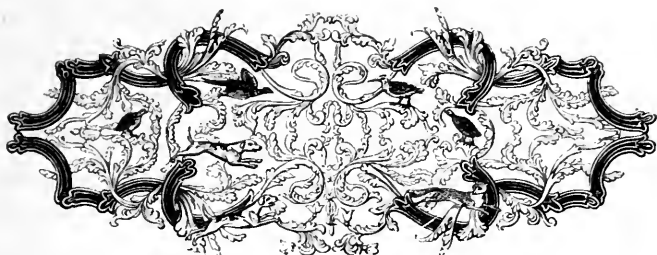
It generally happens, when a good covey is put up, that the parent birds, desirous of securing the safety of their progeny, will first spring upon the wing to lead the way for the rest of the family. It is then the shooter's object to bang at the first bird that rises; and if he can manage to kill both the old cock and the hen, and then divide the remainder of the covey, he may probably succeed in bagging every bird, as the young brood, losing the guidance of their parents, become confused and fearful, and are then easily killed. But, if the greedy shooter fires into the whole covey at once, with both barrels, wounding more than he kills—many of the birds probably dying a lingering death at the bottom of some hedge-row, or other place of fancied security, to which they may, in their distress, have resorted—the skilful shooter adopts a far different plan. He walks carefully and coolly up to his dogs; and, taking a deliberate aim, kills his birds right and left in the most scientific manner. His eye correctly measures the distance. If the bird he aims at flies immediately before him down the wind, rising at a very rapid rate, he fires just above him, or well

in advance, if he is crossing him, so that the shot shall strike the object in the most effectual manner.

In commencing the operations of a day's partridge shooting, it is judicious to try, in the first instance, the higher ground. If the exertions of the shooter be not there crowned with success, he will drive the coveys into the valleys, or the less elevated positions, where, proceeding with caution, he will, in all probability, be more fortunate. During stormy weather, the experienced sportsman, finding that the birds are so wild as to be difficult to approach, adopts a little generalship,—taking advantage of the wind, so that the coveys cannot hear him advance,—avoiding, on all occasions, the making of any noise—and, whilst advancing through the turnips, lifting his legs well up for the same purpose. He does not shout to the keeper or markers, or to his dogs, knowing that a motion with his hand, or a slight whistle, will obtain what he requires. Nor, though his manor abounds with game, does he spoil his diversion by continually following the birds day after day, as some too keen sportsmen are inclined to do; a practice which makes the coveys so extremely wild, as to render it a matter of much difficulty and labour to come within shot, and consequently forms a source of bitter disappointment.

Far better is the practice of going out twice or thrice a week during the most favourable weather, and of acting on all occasions with moderation, rather reserving the coveys for the enjoyment of a day's good diversion with a friend or two, than continually harassing the birds, which may compel them to leave their old haunts, and to seek for protection and quiet in an adjoining or a less disturbed manor.





PHEASANT SHOOTING.



MERRILY bounds the heart of the true old sportsman, as, on the first of October, he leaves his mansion in the morning to range through his well-preserved woods and plantations in pursuit of the pheasant, especially if accompanied by a faithful and long-tried friend. A bright October morning possesses peculiar attractions; a delightful freshness pervades all nature; the woods have not yet lost their summer beauty,—but, assuming an endless diversity of tint, present a picture of the most beautiful description. The maple may have put on her saffron robe; the ash, like a fading beauty, be-

gun to change the colour of her tresses; the beech to resume the russet dress of winter; and the gnarled oak to exhibit at the extremity of its branches little patches of a bright green hue, as though it were again renewing its youth in the spring-time of May. But the large mass of foliage is yet unbroken. The bright beams of the glorious sun, enlivening many a tint, or throwing others into deeper shade, light up the different ridings, and crossings, and the green knolls with which the woods are diversified, and contribute to form a scene fraught with a matchless variety of shade and hue,—charming the eye and gladdening the spirit. On such a morning commences the diversion of pheasant shooting.

The pheasant is a truly beautiful bird: the greatest ornament of the well-managed and magnificent wood. There is a dignity in his step,—combining the qualities of lightness and firmness,—as though he were conscious that he wore a brighter robe than is possessed by the most splendid eastern king. There is a smartness, a brilliancy, a quickness in the glance of his eye, as though he were jealous of the invasion of his sylvan kingdom by any ruthless and merciless foe. He is possessed of dignity, alertness, grace, and beauty. He is withal bold and resolute; and exhibits in his

mien an independence, which, claiming the undisputed admiration of the stranger, seems to defy the approach of any of his feathered congeners of the wood. In short, he is the uncontested lord of his own sylvan domain.

In the diversion of pheasant shooting there are not so many participators as in that of partridge shooting. The reason is obvious. The habits of the pheasant confine him within the precincts of the woods, or, at all events, their immediate vicinity. They range not, like the partridge, from place to place over the open country; nor, even when flushed by their pursuers, do they forsake their home for some other more distant and more safe retreat. Neither is it every estate which is possessed either of the requisite woods, or which is sufficiently preserved, to ensure a large number of these beautiful birds. Hence, the diversion of pheasant shooting is chiefly confined to large and well-wooded estates, the proprietors of which employ a number of scientific keepers, who, by adopting the best methods for their preservation, invariably ensure a large number of these attractive and favourite denizens of the woods.

The pursuer of the partridge errs in commencing operations very early the morning: the pheasant shooter,

on the contrary, may commence as soon as he pleases, without incurring any risk of wasting either time, strength, or labour. The immediate abode of the pheasants may be ascertained by watching their locality at feeding time on the previous evening; and there then remains nothing to do but to proceed at once to the spot in the morning, when good sport will almost invariably follow. But in this, as in all other rural sports, much depends upon the state of the weather. For instance: if there has been a rainy night, the birds will betake themselves to the adjoining hedge-rows, to escape the incessant drippings from the trees; if, on contrary, the night has been calm and clear, they will not forsake the woods, but rather resort to the adjoining young plantations, where they select their roosts, so as to effect an immediate and uninterrupted flight, in case of the approach of danger. In order to ensure excellent sport, it is necessary, on entering the wood, to proceed with caution, and with that calmness and steadiness which are invariably shewn by the genuine lover of field sports. Some prefer an old, steady, and stanch pointer: others, a spaniel possessing the same qualities. But cover shooting with pointers spoils them for work in the open fields, from the very nature of the pursuit. The best dogs to be employed, under all

circumstances—whether of locality, weather, or otherwise—for this favourite and interesting diversion, are

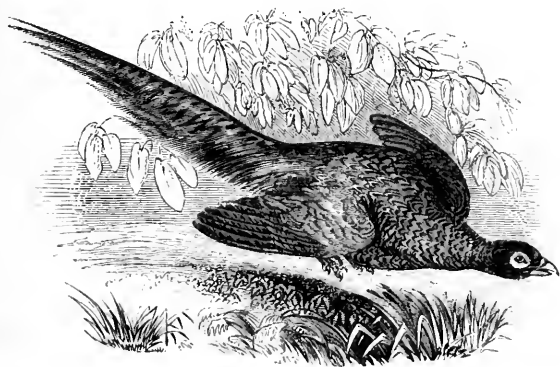


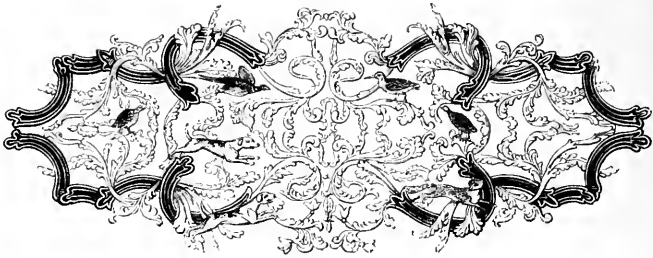
those well-trained and beautiful little springers, for the breed of which the late Duke of Newcastle was so famous. They are indefatigable and untiring,—never

open, but hunt mute,—and never leave the shooter above twenty or twenty-five yards. Nothing escapes them: they hunt in every nook and corner, through the thickest cover or the most intricate underwood; and, whether there lurks woodcock or pheasant, game or vermin, they are sure to arouse it.

On some occasions, however, it is necessary, in commencing operations, to beat along the hedge-rows which adjoin the wood, directing an assistant to proceed on the line of the outer side,—the shooter, with his dogs, occupying such a position as will intercept the flight of the birds to their old habitation. By adopting this means, and proceeding with care and caution, the effect of a skilful hand will be apparent in the well-filled bag. But the scientific bearer of the double-barrel always knows what he is about,—he is no random and indiscriminate destroyer,—he selects his birds,—he is more careful of the hen than the cock bird; and kills his game in the neatest, but, at the same time, the most fatal manner, and at the proper distance, without blowing the birds to ribands, or firing at so long a distance as only to wound his birds, which is too often the case with the bungling shot. In working through a plantation, it is requisite to pay strict attention to the dogs. A pheasant will not rise so readily at the

approach of the shooter as of a dog. From the former they will run incessantly, and many will be driven into a corner; but a well-trained springer will make every bird rise, so that the gunner will have innumerable good shots, without that destruction, in the corner of a planting, which is little better than the murdering battue, — a practice so destructive, that the sooner it falls into disuse the better.





THE BATTUE.



HE battue is that description of wood shooting in which are assembled a large number of sportsmen; and, in addition to the keepers, many beaters. Hence the designation *battue*. The whole party form a line in the well-preserved woods and plantations, and drive everything before them. All—whether bad or good shots—fire away—bang, bang, bang—right, centre, left—at the pheasants, woodcocks, hares or rabbits. This sport, however fashionable, is not relished by the true sportsman, who is desirous of preserving as well as of killing his game.

In the pursuit of grouse on the bleak moors, an inspiring charm is found in the adventurous nature of the diversion; for, in proportion to the toil and risk, is the value of the reward which falls to the lot of the zealous and indefatigable lover of field sports. Far removed from the accustomed haunts of men, the moor-fowl shooter, surrounded by bleak and barren moors, has, on many occasions, to endure numerous and unforeseen privations, not only with regard to food, but to accommodation, so far as lodging is concerned. Happily, however, Nature herself steps in and smooths the pillow. Hardy toil brings with it sound and refreshing sleep;—

“The innocent sleep;

Sleep, that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care;
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great Nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast!”

The battue shooter knows nothing of this; yet the battue is everything to him. The party assemble, by invitation, at the mansion of the proprietor, whose abode is the picture of comfort, plenty, and hospitality; and with the keepers and beaters proceed to the well-preserved woods. This occasion is generally called a public day. The perils and difficulties of deer-stalking

are nothing to this; and, compared with it, Colonel Crockett's bear-hunting is merely child's play! The



shooters, on reaching the woods, advance in a line as nearly as possible,—the beaters being rather in advance, for the purpose of rousing the game. The rule is, to

fire immediately in front, and to take cross shots only when crossing immediately before the ground occupied by the shooter. If one misses his mark, which may have been presented before him "as plain as a haystack," his next companion brings down the bird, and, perhaps, makes some unfortunate beater jump to the smart of a few shot-corns. For the purpose of taking up and securing the game, some of the servants follow the party with a shooting-pony or a steady old hack, provided with pannier-like bags, in which the glorious spoil is deposited. The slaughter which is made in this way is very extensive. On some occasions, if the party has been large, the woods well stored, and the shooters skilled in the use of the gun, two or three hundred head of game, or even more, have been shot.

The practice, however, is met by many objections. There is a great risk of inflicting personal injury,—from the rash, hasty, and precipitate way in which death and destruction are dealt around, especially if the nature of the cover be such as to split the party into knots, or unavoidably to divide them. Many fatal accidents have occurred in this way; and some of the beaters have received a portion of the contents of the barrel which had been levelled at a hare or a pheasant, and have been severely wounded. The party, too,

often comprises several young and inexperienced shots,—equipped in the first style of fashion; decorated with the most beautiful shooting gear; ornamented with kid gloves; and perfumed like milliners,—who never wet the soles of their boots, and condemn all lowlands as base and vulgar, declaring, at the same time, that

“The sovereign'st thing on earth
Was spermaceti for an inward bruise.”

It is from such characters as these that the greatest degree of danger is to be apprehended. There prevails, also, much rivalry as to who shall *kill* the most—the *wounded* are left out of the question; and this feeling produces rashness, and destroys all judgment and prudence. In the battue, indeed, there is not that degree of pleasure experienced which almost invariably arises from the enjoyment of a day of quiet diversion, or from the excitement of adventure. As to peril,—the only peril in the battue is that of being shot. One object alone is sought to be attained; namely, to effect as much destruction as possible—the more extensive, the more admired. Wonderful! For, in a day or two after the slaughter, the provincial journals, in lack of more edifying matter, announce in all “the pride,

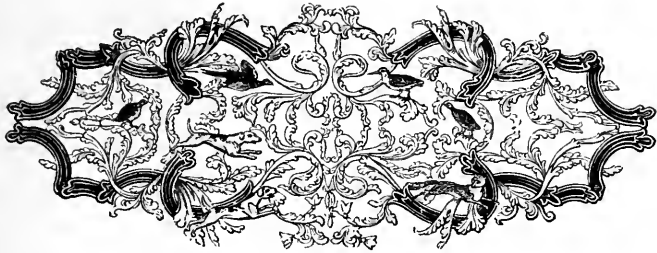
pomp, and circumstance of glorious war," that at the battue of Lord This—and Sir That—three hundred and fifty-five head of game were killed (slaughtered); commemorating, besides, the wonderful exploits of some wonderful shot; thus:—"The Honourable Augustus Frederick Fitz-Fulk, at the battue of the Marquis of So-and-So, killed, with his own gun alone, the astonishing number of seventy-five head." Astonishing! Perhaps he might have killed as many in a dove-cote!

On the following day, the keepers, accompanied by some of the establishment, proceed to the woods—the scene of the previous day's murderous slaughter—to find, by the aid of retrievers, the game that has been lost, or that large portion which, during the night, has died a painful death from the severity of their wounds. If the battue cannot be called pot-hunting on a large scale, it is to be condemned for its indiscriminate and extensive slaughter, as well as for its infliction of suffering and liability of sacrificing human life. It is, indeed, little better, after the extensive woods have been carefully preserved, than forcing the whole of the poultry of the farm-yard into a corner, and firing at them until they are all destroyed.

The battue party return to the hall, elated, no doubt, at the destruction which has been accomplished

by ten or a dozen double-barrels; and the spoil is afterwards shared by the shooters, or forwarded to their respective friends. There is, however, one advantage connected with the battue. It brings together an agreeable party from distant parts; and the diversion is closed by a splendid dinner. Afterwards, the day's slaughter forms the subject of conversation; and its incidents are dwelt upon with the warmest eulogium. But, by the true sportsman, possessed of skill, judgment, and discrimination,—animated, too, by a spirit of adventure,—the slaughterous scene presented by the battue is held in detestation and abhorrence.





VERMIN OF THE WOODS.

EVERY description of game, whose habitation is either in the close cover or the open field, has to encounter or to avoid the unceasing attacks of the vermin of the woods, particularly the weasel, the stoat, and the founart or polecat. These, indeed, are their deadliest enemies; and it is the duty of the keeper to effect their destruction by all means in his power.

They take up their abode in the intricate depth of the woods, where they are warm during the winter—when the earth is clad in her mantle of snow—and cool during the summer, when the golden rod hangs out its

blossoms, and the campanula is ringing its bells for the bee—that industrious, untiring, unceasing little creature, who revels, with incessant hum, over all the sweets of nature.

The weasel, the stoat, and the founart, form burrows in the earth for the purposes of repose and security. These burrows sometimes extend to a considerable distance; but their entrances are so small as to render it impossible for any larger animal to disturb their secure and quiet dwelling-place. They generally sleep during the day, and emerge on the approach of evening, or during the night, in search of their prey. When impelled, however, by the cravings of hunger, they will go abroad in the open daylight, especially during the afternoon, and commence their destructive operations.

Of these vermin, the weasel is the smallest: the founart or polecat the largest. The length of the body of the weasel, including the head and neck, does not exceed seven inches. The legs are extremely short, as well as the tail, which is pointed, and without a tuft at the end. The stoat is of the same form, but rather larger; and its difference from the weasel is thus obvious, as well as in the formation of the tail, which is clubbed, and the end black, even when, during the winter time, the stoat has changed its coat to a cream

colour, or rather a very pale primrose. The length of the founart is seventeen inches; the tail six; and the colour deep chocolate. The legs, too, are short; the nose pointed; the eyes bright and quick.

How admirably the great Author of Nature has adapted these vermin of the woods for the purposes for which they were created, is evident on the least inspection! The weasel is remarkably active, quick, and intelligent,—possessing a superior nose; the most resolute courage; the most untiring perseverance; and the most unflinching resolution. There is a degree of elasticity and suppleness in its frame which enables it to enter places which seem a matter of impossibility. It can climb walls, fences, and trees, pursuing its victims with the most pertinacious determination. The weasel preys upon small birds, mice, rats, and every description of game. It will dart upon a rabbit; and seize its victim at the back of the neck, the veins of which are so fatally struck, as to occasion its destruction from the loss of blood. Nor will it cease its hold until its purpose be accomplished; and, although the rabbit will instantly flee, the weasel still holds on, and is carried away, until the rabbit falls from exhaustion, whilst its determined little enemy is exhausting its life's blood. Nor does the timid and watchful hare escape.

The weasel will approach her form in the most cautious and secret manner; though the hare, from her extreme timidity and watchfulness, can frequently mark the advance of the enemy, and, when danger approaches, strikes the foe with her hind legs, and often succeeds in pitching him to a considerable distance. The attack, however, is renewed,—the hare prepares herself accordingly, and has been known to kill a weasel by a powerful stroke from her hind legs. Generally, the weasel will approach so cautiously as to elude the vigilance of its victim; and, darting upon its neck with a most resolute grasp, will, like the stoat, hang on while the poor terrified hare will flee with its determined enemy, until she falls from the loss of blood, and eventually dies. Partridges and pheasants are also attacked on their nests; the eggs are sucked; and the sitting bird killed upon the spot. In short, no description of bird escapes the attack of the weasel, small as it appears in comparison with some of those animals and birds, the destruction of which it can effectually accomplish. The weasel is a deadly enemy of the rat. The rat, indeed, is terrified at his approach, and in a conflict has not the slightest chance against its opponent, whose courage, quickness, and resolution, soon accomplish its destruction. It is, indeed, a matter of

surprise how soon a weasel can kill the largest rat, which is twice its own size,—following it through all its holes, so that there is no probability of the rat effecting its escape. A few weasels could soon effectually clear a farm-yard of every rat about the place. But, although this might be the case, a greater mischief would ensue; for the weasel makes sad havoc in the hen-roost or in the pigeon-cote, whenever it can effect an entrance into those places. When attacked, it fights with the most determined resolution, and shews the utmost activity,—emitting a disagreeable odour, which has the effect of inducing many dogs to turn away from the attack.

The habits of the stoat are somewhat similar to those of the weasel; but the latter is, if possible, the more active and resolute of the two, particularly when she has her young to provide for.

The fougart is also very destructive in its habits,—killing all kinds of game, including hares and rabbits, besides rats, and every description of poultry. If the fougart can make its entrance into a rabbit-warren, it occasions the most extensive destruction in the course of a short time,—killing its victims one after the other with great rapidity,—sucking their blood without mutilating the carcass. It is extremely resolute when

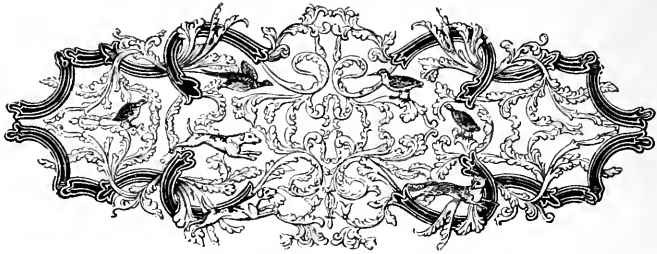
attacked by a dog, and will fasten on its nose with so severe and pertinacious a hold, as to induce its enemy to relinquish the attack,—throwing out at the same time, the most offensive smell. Like the weasel and the stoat, it is extremely supple in its body; can climb trees, run up walls, and effect an entrance into out-houses by a very small aperture in the roof or elsewhere. The force with which the foomart springs upon its victims is truly surprising. Its bite is unerring and fatal; and it appears to gloat over them with a keener relish than belongs to the other vermin of the woods.

The keeper effects their destruction in several ways; sometimes by shooting them, or by traps and dead-falls formed in the woods, baited with the entrails of fowls, or pieces of flesh which are nearly in a putrid state, and to which these vermin—particularly the foomart—are attracted by the strong effluvia. Unless they happen to be pressed by severe hunger, which makes them more resolute and less cautious in satisfying their insatiable appetites, each species exercises great caution, especially when baits are placed for effecting their destruction.

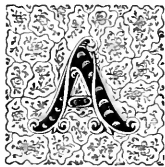
Thus, every description of game, whether feathered or furred, is continually exposed to the attacks of these fatal and indefatigable enemies, whose vigilance it is

difficult to elude, and whose activity and resolution enable them to overcome obstacles of no ordinary character. They are detested by the true sportsman; and he is ever watchful in effecting their destruction.





THE MOLE-CATCHER.



AMID the many occupations connected with field sports and country life, the vocation of the mole-catcher must not be forgotten. From the progress of change and reformation, which has extended even to those in high places, the humble mole-catcher has not escaped; for, although, as heretofore, he pursues his occupation in the same manner, and employs the same means as of old, he is remunerated in a different way. Formerly, he was paid out of the poor-rate, or the funds of the old body corporate,—and pretty well paid, too. Now, he receives his emolument from the farmers or

owners of estates, in proportion to the extent of their grounds. Formerly, he engaged to clear several parishes from the ravages of the mole, for a certain annual amount. Now, his payment is regulated by the terms of his separate engagements. He continues, as of old, to use the wires; but he can no longer hang himself upon the poor-rate. He still applies the trap; but he catches no underminers of the old corporate funds.

Your mole-catcher pursues his vocation, which partakes of a lonely and solitary character, with a certain degree of slyness and cunning. His dress is peculiarly characteristic. It is neither that of the keeper, nor that of the agricultural labourer. Yet it partakes, in some degree, of both. His hat is weather-beaten and slouched over a brow and face which bear the traces of many a keen and bitter day,—many a drenching storm, and many a burning sun. His jacket, made of fustian, seems all the worse for wear, and is fashioned somewhat after that of the keeper, with large pockets inside and outside; yet it hangs upon him in a less comely style. His nether garment is buttoned at the knees; and he wears long gaiters, with huge-nailed shoes, or half-boots. He bears in one hand a basket or small sack, which contains his traps and wires: in the other he holds a small hand-spade. Thus attired

and equipped, he rambles over the fields in search of the haunts where the moles have located themselves, and which are easily discovered by the numerous small



hillocks which are thrown up in every direction. These are often near the banks of rivers, or small streams, or water-courses, especially after the prevalence of a flood, upon the bosom of which the moles, driven from

their habitations by the rising waters, are sometimes compelled to swim, seizing, however, the first opportunity, after having been carried to a considerable distance, of striking into the ground which is suited to their purpose.

The mole-catcher, busily employed in setting his traps, or plodding the fields in search of his victims, has little sympathy with the beauty of the scenes by which he is surrounded. To him, there is no feeling of awe, no solemnity in the still depths of the woods through which he passes; no attractions in the varied songs of its inmates, from the humble note of the chiff-chaff, to the sweet and pure melody of the woodlark; no splendour presented over the face of the country,—the cultivated field, with its fertile promise; the old and untouched meadow, with cattle grazing or ruminating beneath the shade of the ancient thorn; or the river, stealing its silent course along, like a silver thread, interlacing the rich and bountiful landscape. To him, there is no music in the rill,—no glory in the sunbeam; no attraction in the bud or the blossom,—in the graceful wave of the poplar, or the sterner aspect of the wide-spread gnarled arm of the giant oak. The rainbow may bestride the scene with its transient but many-coloured arch,—spanning town and tower, hall

and hamlet, rill and river. He recks not of the scene— as he stands beneath the thick-foliaged boughs of the ancient yew which crowns the brow of the highest hill, —farther than that he thinks the storm has passed, as the thunder rolls in the long distance, and that he shall get home before nightfall. The smooth and bright mirror of the lake, reflecting the matchless hues of the great retiring luminary, with a mighty host of clouds— his pursuivants, arrayed in crimson, purple, and gold —is nothing to him. His occupation is of the earth— earthly. But his eye delights in the moonbeam,—not for its beauty,—but because the pale lamp of night lights the path to his cottage door,—sometimes, perhaps, to the roost of the pheasant, the especial preserve of his unsuspecting friend, the keeper, provided he be not allured to the village ale-house, of which he is often the hero, and where he is as well known as any character of the whole country around. Nevertheless, many a mole-catcher is a pattern of uprightness, kindly feeling, and honesty. At any rate, he does not destroy the foxes, like the rabbit-catcher; nor “physic” them, like the keeper.

The mole is a great under-drainer; and the celerity with which he can accomplish his purpose is truly remarkable. Nor is his foresight less so, in securing the

safety of his *run* from the visitation of the water, by forming cup-like hollows in certain situations, for the purpose of drawing it off in the proper quarter and leaving the passages comparatively dry. A communication is thus formed beneath from hillock to hillock. These, which in some situations abound to a considerable extent, are of much injury to the farmer, not only in checking the progress of vegetation, but in making the ground uneven, and making it a matter of difficulty for the mower to proceed with his laborious occupation. The mole-catcher, from his great experience with regard to the habits of the under-drainer, knows the very spot where to set his trap, and can find the required run in a moment. This is fixed in the thoroughfare of the colony; not, as it were, in the bye-streets and remote lanes of the subterranean city, but in those places where moles "the most do congregate,"—knowing, as he does full well, that his chance of destruction is better where the passers-by are more numerous. The mole-trap is rather an ingenious, but simple contrivance. It is composed of a small piece of wood, much longer than it is broad. At a little distance from each end, a tape-like piece of wood is bent breadthwise, forming two arches underneath. In some instances, it is wholly formed of a tube. The wires are placed towards the

extremities, near, as it were, the inverted little arches, by passing through a hole in the centre of the trap. In this hole, a peg is placed, which secures the wires in their position. The trap is then placed in the rear of the thoroughfare, and fastened down by a hooked peg. A piece of stout cord is tied to the wires; a hazel-stick from the neighbouring plantation is then stuck into the ground, and bent. To the smaller end of this stick the cord is attached which has hold of the wires. The trap, thus set, is then covered over with earth, and left to be afterwards visited by the mole-catcher. The peg which passes through the centre of the trap intercepts the passage of the mole along his runs, and, in rooting it upwards out of its position, in order to pass, the bent hazel is set at liberty and springs upwards. By this operation, the mole is caught in one of the wires, and strangled. Sometimes, when the spring of the hazel is too powerful, it will bring both the mole and the trap out of the ground, suspending the whole in the air. But this should not be the case, as, under ordinary circumstances, the mole-catcher can easily tell when the trap has gone off, and the mole is secured, and acts accordingly. It is, however, remarkable that the beautiful skin of the silky mole is not made more use of than is at present the

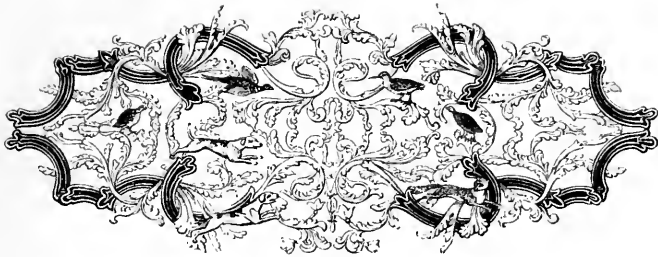
case, as, from its texture, it might be converted into several articles of use or ornament. Their skins are sometimes exhibited for sale in the markets of some parts of the kingdom, being stretched on the twigs of a bough,

The habits of the mole-catcher, from his peculiar character, have the unhappy tendency of leading him to secure not only these "small deer," but game of a higher mark. Your thorough-paced mole-catcher is, in many instances, an arrant poacher; and, perhaps, he has more anxiety in the pursuit of the swift four-footed dwellers above, than the silent and active miners underground. The reason is obvious,—it pays better. The opportunities presented for poaching are incessant, and the temptations strong. Besides, his very occupation affords him the most decided advantage in killing game; for he knows, as well as the most expert poacher, the use of the wires. He is also, generally, above suspicion. His rambles are free, and in every direction; and, consequently, he possesses the best opportunities of knowing where game is the most plentiful, as well as the whereabouts of the keeper; and, like all disinterested, pains-taking, and indefatigable persons, he takes care to seize the chances of benefiting himself in his solitary and unsuspected rambles. If he is observed

by the farmer stealing silently along the range of the hedge-rows, he is nearly disregarded,—it is only the mole-catcher! If he is seen by the keeper, proceeding along the side of the cover, or down the long ridings of the wood, he is partly unnoticed,—it is only the mole-catcher! If the owner of the estate comes across his path by accident, still surprise is lulled, if, at the first sight, it had been awakened,—it is only the mole-catcher! The mole-catcher is silently cunning: peacefully and quietly does he pursue his solitary occupation; and, at nightfall, by the nearest path, he returns to his cottage. To his cunning, he adds courage, and to his slyness, nerve. On the approach of midnight, he turns not aside from the old oak where the keeper was murdered by a gang of poachers, although the spot is shunned by all the labourers of the village. Yet the ghost of the keeper is said to hurl denunciations against the mole-catcher, who, under the circumstance, might appropriately use the words of the Danish prince,—

“Well said, old mole! canst work i’ the earth so fast?
A worthy pioneer!”





WOODCOCK SHOOTING.



THE most exciting of all sports connected with the gun, is woodcock shooting. To the sportsman, therefore, no sound is more joyful than the announcement from the keeper, that during the prevalence of the last foggy weather the woodcock has arrived. The woodcock visits us from the shores of the Baltic towards the end of October, but more frequently in November, and usually departs in March, or early in April; but the precise period depends much upon the state of the weather. Like the swallow, and other migratory birds, the cock occupies the same locality, season after season,—a cir-

cumstance which has been incontestably proved, by shooting birds to which a small piece of wire had been fixed on the previous season.

The haunts of the cock are generally on the lower parts of the woods, in the immediate neighbourhood of such springs and running brooks as are seldom frozen during the severest winters. It is in these localities that its succulent food abounds. In a remarkably mild season, he visits the more open situations on the low and exposed grounds. In severe weather, he seeks the protection of the woods and plantations. In his habits, the cock is shy. When flushed, he takes wing with the greatest rapidity; but soon alights behind the first place of apparent refuge. He then runs with much alertness to hide himself; and for the purpose of concealment, the colour of his plumage is admirably adapted. Two species visit this country. One is called, in some districts, the muff-cock; the other is a smaller bird, whose flight is more rapid, and he is more difficult to kill. The cock feeds by night, when all is still and serene around, save the deep and mysterious tones which the winds occasionally breathe through the woods, rustling the entwining ivy, and shaking the leaves which still cling to the parent tree; whilst the stars are shining in their brightest splendour, and the heavens, "fretted

with golden fire," present every indication of a pure and frosty atmosphere. Meanwhile, the well-dried fagot is blazing on the cheerful hearth of the woodman, and the tired sportsman, secure from the freezing air, is probably relating to listening and delighted ears his morning's adventure, never forgetting to extol the superior qualities of his faithful canine companions.

More than any other description of game the cock escapes the ravages of the poacher; for, although he is easily caught with nets and springs, by those acquainted with his habits and localities, yet the pursuit of him by these crafty setters of snares—the close observers of the run of the hare and the roost of the pheasant—would expose them to too great danger of detection to risk the experiment. Cock-shooting, indeed, seems to come within the peculiar province of the *gentleman* sportsman. The blood of the shooter must dance merrily in his veins as he sallies forth, fully equipped for the pursuit, not

“In a wood of Crete, to bay the bear,
With hounds of Sparta;”

but with his favourite dogs, in his own well-preserved woods and plantations. The best dogs to be employed on these occasions are springers; low in height, with

long bushy stems, and large drooping ears. It is worth a day's long ride to see the unwearied diligence and perseverance which these little creatures display in hunting, provided they have been well trained. They seldom leave the gunner beyond the space of twenty or twenty-five yards, and should never give mouth. It is surprising, too, how readily they meet the wishes of their master. The encouraging expressions, "Seek 'em, Sprightly,"—"Go along, Tom,"—"Find 'em out, Rover,"—"Good dogs,"—are constantly responded to by these untiring creatures with renewed activity. Not an inch of ground escapes them; whatever game lies concealed, the little springer is sure to raise it. A very superior dog of this description has been known to sell for thirty guineas—a fact which presents sufficient proof of the estimation in which the little springer is held for the purpose. On some occasions the pointer is used instead of the spaniel; a small bell is then attached to his neck, by the sound of which, in a close covert, his position can be ascertained. When the sound ceases, he is pointing at his game, and the shooter, of course, prepared for the anticipated rise. The practice, however, of using pointers is objectionable, as wood-hunting spoils them for the open field or moor. When a bird is flushed, the cry is uttered by the assistants, "Mark—

cock:”—bang goes the fowling-piece, and the echoes of the wood, as the mottled favourite falls, dance merrily



to the sprightly tune of the sportsman's heart; who, as he secures his prize, feels reanimated for further exertion. The mull-cock is more easily shot than the smaller

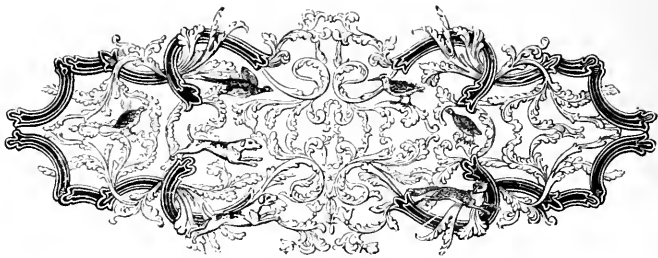
species; for, if the part of the wood where he ascends be very thick, his flight is rather heavy, especially when compared with his congener, when the cover is of a more open character. The cock is not very tenacious of life; and it is generally considered that a single pellet will be sufficient to bring the bird down. However dense may be the spot where he falls, the little untiring and indefatigable springer soon bears the trophy to his master's feet.

Cock-shooting may be pursued from the beginning of November till the end of March; and, as has been before remarked, under nearly every variety of weather. If the severity of the season be such that field and wild-fowl shooting is too hazardous or trying, recourse can be had to the woods, whither the favourite bird resorts, and where the shooter, sheltered from the storm and the keen blast, can follow his exciting diversion, without traversing so large a space of ground as is required in the pursuit of the brent-geese, the mallard, the widgeon, or the teal, and without being exposed to the dangers, the extreme rigour of the season, or all the difficulties inseparable from wild-fowl shooting. The lover of this diversion, after having secured a few of his favourite birds, may return home, with gladness in his heart and health in his whole frame, as the gloom

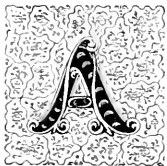
of the evening is stealing around, and the half-domesticated rooks are returning, with heavy wing, to the stately avenue. Surrounded by his faithful dogs, he reflects,

“How many things by season seasoned are,
To their right praise and true perfection.”





THE POACHER.



POACHER carries his life in his hand. Having little sympathy with his fellow men, and less of all the obligations due to society, he pursues his course with a fixed determination of purpose and a recklessness of consequences peculiar to himself, and worthy of a better cause. Tracing him from his sylvan haunts, he will be found the frequenter of the tap-room, the alehouse, and the beer-shop—the hero of the band with whom he associates, and listened to on all occasions, because he has surmounted extraordinary difficulties and braved extraordinary dangers.

The village poacher is generally what is termed a labouring man; and he makes use of his occupation to serve his own purposes. He has a keen and penetrating eye; he is the personification of cunning,—possessing at once the silent stealth of the cat and the ferocity of the bull-dog. His knowledge of all the habits of the several species of game is remarkably correct. He knows the track of the hare, the haunts of the partridge, and the roost of the pheasant. He has little sympathy with the feathered creation: he flies at the highest game, and despises the rabbit where the hare abounds. During his occupation in the fields, his mind is bent on his nocturnal rambles. Nothing escapes his attention: his eye is rivetted to the “run,” and to the “sneuce:” his greatest feat is to elude the detection of the keeper, and to secure a rich booty.

During the poacher's leisure hours on a Sunday (for he seldom visits either church or chapel), he may be seen loitering on the roads in the neighbourhood of some well-stored preserve. He observes at feeding-time, about sunset, where the game is most abundant, and forms his plans accordingly; knowing full well that he has the best chance of success where game is the most plentiful. He uses the net, the snare, and the air-gun—and frequently the common fowling-piece, which, being made

to unscrew, he can secrete in his capacious pockets; and he often derives much assistance from a well-trained lurcher, which hunts mute. The snare is set by stealth,



not only in the hedgerows, but in the fields and in the woods, where the run is visible. His greatest danger is in taking them up; but his sense of hearing is remarkably acute; he can mark the slightest footfall, and is

never alarmed with the rustle of the beech leaf, or the deep moan of the Scotch fir. He has all the alertness of the North American Indian, and is almost as untiring on foot. If he be suddenly pounced upon, the loss of life is almost inevitable.

When the village is hushed in slumber, and the "drowsy tinkling" is no longer heard, the poacher, having gone to bed early, and therefore refreshed, sallies silently forth—not by the accustomed road, but by bye-paths, across gardens, and over fences—and seldom returns by the way that he set out. Care is generally taken by his fellow-poacher, with whom a plan has been previously laid, to secure the presence of the keeper and the watcher in some other part of the domain, in order that they may not only proceed with perfect safety, but with perfect success. They return to their respective dwellings secretly; and the sale of their plunder is frequently entrusted to their wives, who convey it to the neighbouring towns, and dispose of it to those who carry on a secret trade in the sale of game, not being licensed dealers. There is little difficulty in selling the largest quantity, and at a price, too, which amply remunerates the poacher. That the act empowering the sale of game has diminished the number of poachers to the extent which had been anticipated, may be fairly questioned.

When once the habit of poaching has been acquired, it is a matter of no small difficulty to shake it off. It has been frequently remarked, that the propensity for field sports is inherent in our nature; and there is, unquestionably, a certain charm connected with the practice of poaching—whether arising from the profit or the adventurous nature of the calling—which is seldom, under any circumstances, wholly obliterated. Once a poacher, a poacher he continues to the end of the chapter.

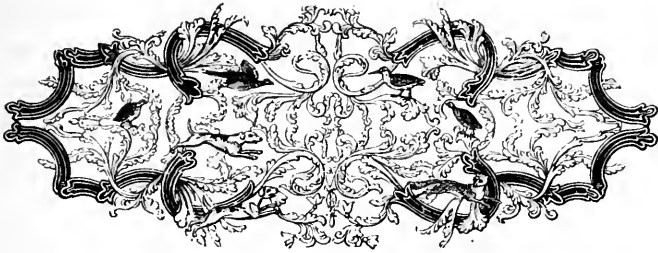
In prosecuting his lawless occupation amid these midnight and destructive plunder-scenes,—where all sense of shame and degradation is wholly disregarded, where passion is excited to the highest pitch, and where desperation is so far in the ascendant as to leave behind not only traces of the greatest destruction of the preserves, but of bleeding wounds, and even of the murder of his fellow-creatures,—the poacher displays a degree of circumspection and of courage worthy of a better cause. The mode of procedure is usually as follows:—A number of poachers—often connected with manufacturing towns—having previously met to arrange the plan of operations, agree to proceed, frequently to a long distance, on their dangerous excursion, in a body more formidable than that of the keeper and his assistants; and, carrying everything before them, occasion the most extensive

slaughter on all hands. The force of their opponents is duly calculated; the first point of operation is carefully laid down; the means of retreat, in case of danger, are agreed upon; and, in case of a determined attack from the keeper and the watchers, the former is marked for almost certain destruction, particularly if his previous informations have inflicted punishment on any one of the party of poachers.

The threatened visitation of the poachers at that period preceding Christmas when the demand for game is greater than at any other period, induces many proprietors of estates either to invite their several friends for a day's diversion, or to give directions to their keepers to kill a considerable number of all descriptions of game, from fear that they may fall into the hands of the poachers. For, however vigilant the faithful preserver of the covers may be—however cautious he may be on all occasions to keep them unmolested, free from the destruction of vermin of every description, and provided with every necessary security—it is impossible that he can exercise any effectual means to prevent the nocturnal visits of the poacher, although he may be acquainted with all the meetings of suspected persons at beer-shops, inn-kitchens, and tap-rooms, or even watch the cottages of those labourers who possess in

this respect a notoriety, which, whether well or ill founded, can never be shaken off. Besides, the keeper is exposed to other and more wily depredators, who proceed in their career, not in a body,—not by preconcerted arrangement,—not by a fixed determination of purpose to kill or be killed,—but *solitarily*. It may, indeed, be fairly questioned, whether a few solitary poachers, occupying their several peculiar localities—apparently honest men, regular at their daily laborious occupation,—men who, according to appearances, dare not say “boh to a goose,” but who are fully aware of the habits of every kind of game,—do not, in the course of a season, effect more destruction on a well-preserved estate, than is inflicted by the visitations of a whole armed force of regularly-associated poachers. The solitary poacher is incessantly at work,—he lets no opportunity slip; he knows the whereabouts of the keeper and his assistants; he is well acquainted with the character of the ground, the bye-ways, the broken fences, the gates, the short cuts through the woods, and the intricacies which may enable him to elude discovery.





SNIFE SHOOTING.



HERE is something peculiarly attractive in the pursuit of the snipe. To the more delicate sportsman,—one whose constitution is not the most robust, or whose frame is not made for the endurance of the more hardy sports of the field,—cock shooting in the woods, where there is plenty of shelter from the rude and boisterous blast, is the more suitable diversion. But the hardy sportsman pursues every description of shooting—whether in the wood or field; whether on the bleak and barren moor, or on the damp fen and the dreary marsh—with the same zeal and diligence. Braving the bitter blast,

he plods onward through the thick snow-drift, accompanied by his faithful dog; nor droops he amidst the descent of hail, rain, snow, or sleet. There is security in the range of the woodland: but there is an indescribable charm on the wide-spread lowland and the bleak common, which is only known to the generous sportsman. The migratory visitors are his especial favourites; and his pursuit of them is the most zealous. He knows all their haunts, and is acquainted with all their habits. His information is based upon experience; and it is very seldom that his judgment is at fault.

The habits of the snipe are similar to those of the woodcock. In comparatively fine open weather, it resorts to the more exposed situations; in severer portions of the season, it seeks the protection of the snugger or warmer valleys. Snipes inhabit low and marshy grounds, or along the course of streams; and, in very severely frosty weather, they congregate in large numbers, and resort to the heads of springs. In all these situations, their succulent food abounds. The snipe, like the woodcock, is a great delicacy, and is cooked in the same manner. Though migratory, they are frequently known to breed in this country. There are two descriptions of these birds,—the common snipe, and the jack snipe,

or jud-cock; the latter is only about half the size and weight of the former, but the habits of both are the same.

Thornhill, in his "Shooting Directory," mentions a Mr. Molloy, formerly a quartermaster of the Sixty-fourth Regiment, who, while quartered at Generva Barracks, Ireland, regularly equipped himself for shooting, and always sprung the same jack snipe, at which he fired. The bird used to pitch so close to him at times, that he was confident he had shot it, and used to run to take it up. He acknowledged that he fired, one day, eighteen times at this bird. After shooting at it for the whole season, he one day threw his stick at it, and killed it on the spot.

In fifty gunners, there is not one good snipe shooter. Many a good shot at the partridge cannot bring down the snipe. The best state of the weather for the pursuit of this interesting bird, is when it is rather cloudy, and when a brisk breeze is abroad. The best dogs to be employed on this occasion are small springers—the same as have been before alluded to in cock shooting; for they hunt so close that nothing can escape them. The gunner should advance over the marshy or low ground, and proceed with much caution, carefully observing the movements of his dog. The snipe is an

extremely watchful bird, and can mark the approach of its pursuers at a considerable distance. When the

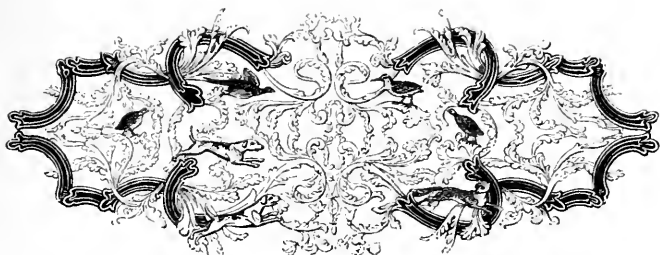


weather is not very wet or damp, it will lie remarkably close, and sometimes suffer its pursuers to pass it. The colour of its plumage enables the snipe to hide itself with much safety; every inch of ground should,

therefore, be carefully tried. When the snipe ascends, it utters a faint whistle, and its flight, for some distance, is zigzag—to which is to be traced the failure of many otherwise good shots in bringing it down. The best method to be pursued is this. When the bird rises, be patient for a little time, and avoid being flurried. The zigzag flight will soon terminate; the bird will fly straight; and then is the time to fire. But, on all occasions, the prevalence of the breeze favours the shooter; as the flight of the snipe, in encountering it, becomes, in some measure, suspended, and presents a fairer mark. Sometimes the bird will ascend at once to a considerable elevation, immediately over head, and no chance of a shot is presented. When it flies across the shooter, he should calculate the speed, and fire rather in advance. The successful pursuit of the snipe, however, requires the exercise of continued diligence and perseverance. When the state of the weather is favourable, they will, as has been before remarked, lie remarkably close, and suffer themselves to be almost trodden upon before they will take wing. The shooter, therefore, should be continually on the alert, and prepared for an unexpected rise; for, if he once permits himself to be flurried, he will return homewards with an empty bag. The snipe, like the

woodcock, can be taken with springes; but this practice is little resorted to, as there is much uncertainty of the birds remaining in the same locality. One day they may be observed in rather numerous flights, and, perhaps, the next, not a single bird can be found. In extremely severe weather, they may be met with in considerable numbers; as, driven from their accustomed haunts by the hard frost, they are compelled to resort to the springs which are not frozen over, or to those parts of the running brooks which have been sheltered by woods, or protected by overhanging trees, decayed sedges, or other vegetable productions.





THE RABBIT-CATCHER.



THE country gentleman, who is attached to the many healthy and invigorating sports of the field,—who prefers residing upon his own estate to the too general practice of spending his income in foreign countries, or dissipating his resources in the vain and heartless excitements of the metropolis, and who is kind and obliging to all around him, is a blessing to the whole neighbourhood. Nevertheless, even the kindest and most obliging landlord is liable to be robbed by persons whom, probably, he never suspects; and amongst these there is one who may poach his covers with far greater

security than the professed poacher. This is the rabbit-catcher.

It may excite surprise that, on those estates where two or three keepers are constantly engaged, a rabbit-catcher, who travels from one district to another, should be at all employed. It would, indeed, appear that the keepers possess sufficient time and skill to keep down the rabbits by employing the necessary means themselves, without any material interference with their other duties. This, however is not the case; and the rabbit-catcher meets with employment season after season for several reasons, of which the chief is the greater facility he possesses in killing and disposing of the rabbits. For, that the rabbit-catcher, in labouring at his vocation, is enabled to effect more destruction than the keeper, is evident from the fact, that he is not only provided with every requisite for the purpose, but he can devote his whole time to the pursuit; while the attention of the keeper is directed to other parts of the preserved grounds. The rabbit-catcher uses ferrets, traps, snares, terriers, and carries a spade. By means of ferrets, the rabbits are forced from their burrows into nets placed at the entrances, and are thus secured. Occasionally they are dug out, when they cannot be forced from their retreat by any other means. The

steel traps, covered over with sand or earth, are placed within the burrows, previous to evening, when the rab-



bits come out to feed, and left there during the night. The adoption of this plan, however, is attended with much destruction to other animals; as it not unfre-

quently happens that a fox, in search of his prey, is caught during the night, and found with a leg or two broken the next morning by the rabbit-catcher, who instantly knocks him on the head with his spade; and, for fear of detection, immediately proceeds to bury him in the most secret and retired place. The follower of hounds is frequently disappointed by losing foxes in this way; and, instead of having a brilliant run, after carefully drawing all the covers, he cannot find a single fox. Many such instances have occurred, while the real cause of the disappointment is, perhaps, never suspected, or he has moved off to another estate, to effect the like destruction there.

The rabbit-catcher, also, frequently occasions much destruction amongst the pheasants, that are induced to approach the entrance of the holes to sun and plume themselves in the sand, or to scratch amongst the mould like the common fowl. When the rabbit-catcher finds a pheasant in one of his traps, he pops him into his own pocket, and either has him cooked at home, or sold to tavern-keepers or private individuals, for some small price. He sets his snares, too, in the several runs from the margin of the cover, or the hedge-row, to the places where the rabbits feed on the young corn or clover, or other descriptions of grasses and vetches.

Here there is much destruction accomplished, not only amongst the rabbits, but also amongst the hares, which often get caught in the wires, and are soon strangled. The rabbit-catcher is fully aware of the chance which he thus has of securing a fine hare; and, provided he is not seen by the keeper, he pockets the unfortunate victim with as much avidity as any pot-hunter. If he be discovered, he gives up the prize in the readiest manner possible, and expresses his sorrow that poor puss has been caught.

It would be wrong to say that all rabbit-catchers are poachers; but the very nature of their calling enables them to get a hare, as well as pheasants and partridges, at any time: therefore, let the keeper have a sharp look-out upon this worthy. The rabbit-catcher tries to be on good terms with the tenant farmers, who, in many instances, suffer much by the destruction which the rabbit makes in his growing crops; and hence he is inclined to think that the trap-setter is a good friend of his, by occasioning much slaughter amongst a breed which is so prolific, that, if not sufficiently checked, would almost overrun the farm. Sometimes the occupier of the land is allowed by the owner of the estate to kill the rabbits himself; but, if a strong gorse cover is formed in any part of his farm, near the adjacent

woods and plantations, he finds it almost impossible to diminish the number to any considerable extent; and hence the labours of the rabbit-catcher are brought into operation to accomplish the purpose. The number of rabbits destroyed by him is often very considerable. They are sold in the neighbouring towns to the dealers in game, to fishmongers, and higglers, or sent to a considerable distance, where there is the best market. In some instances, the man of the traps and the ferrets takes the whole supply on his own account, which are retailed by himself, after a sufficient number has been left at the Hall, for the supply of the inmates.

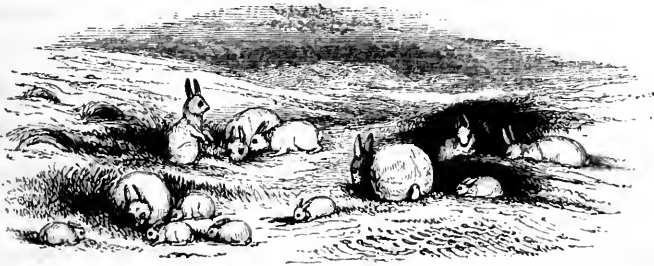
With the name of the rabbit is intimately associated the terms "warren," and "warrener." The warren is a small enclosed park, for the breeding and protection of the species. The man who occupies this piece of ground, which is carefully watched, is called "the warrener." This practice, however, has greatly fallen into disuse; arising, principally, from those parcels of land having been broken up and turned into farms for the cultivation of corn, although the warrens were taken at an annual rent. Several, however, still remain on the Yorkshire wolds, and in some parts of Lincolnshire. In the latter county, the most famous breed of rabbits, different in appearance from those which are

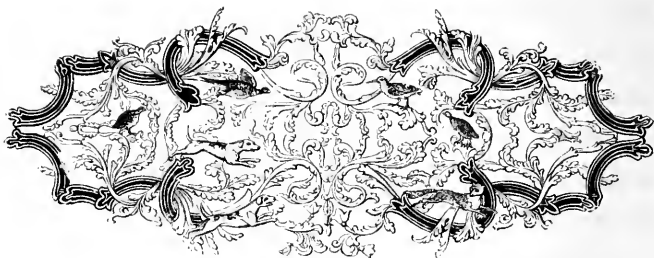
found in other parts, are of a brownish hue, somewhat approaching in colour to that of the hare. In the best warrens of Lincolnshire they are silvered—a mixture of black and white hairs—“a sable silvered.” From the extremely prolific nature of this species, they are a source of considerable profit to the warrener. The breed is encouraged as much as possible; and the way in which they are taken is different from the mode adopted in other situations. The rabbits, unless the weather is extremely stormy and severe, leave their burrows, on the approach of evening, to feed. Previous to the time of feeding, the warrener and his assistants, advancing in a direction between the burrows and the spot where their food abounds, unroll their nets, which extend to the length of two or three hundred yards, and leave them lying on the ground, perfectly flat. The rabbits hop over the nets, thus laid, without injury. In the course of a short time the warreners advance secretly on the line of the nets, and raise them upright, by means of stout sticks prepared for that purpose, in the same manner as sheep nets are secured. A dog, trained for that purpose, and who never barks, is sent to rouse the feeding rabbits; they instantly start off, with great speed, towards their burrows; they are stopped by the nets and become entangled; and then

the work of destruction commences by the warrener and his men, who will often secure several hundreds in thus, as it is termed, "folding" the rabbits. In this operation, great activity, as well as great care, is displayed. An old rabbit will sometimes make his escape, by biting through the cords which form the meshes of the net. On securing a fine doe, an experienced hand will throw her over the net, and thus allow her to escape to her burrow, for the purpose of promoting the breed.

Shooting rabbits—which, when compared with the other uses of the fowling-piece, is but indifferent sport—does not effect by far so much destruction as the more simple machinery employed by the rabbit-catcher. The best time, however, to shoot them is just before sunset, when they leave their burrows for the purpose of feeding. The gunner may have some good diversion in this way by placing himself in ambush—getting into a tree, or secreting himself, within shot, behind bushes of gorse, thorns, hedges, &c. But he must be very still, and wait patiently till he has a good shot—then bang at them, never leaving his hiding-place until he has killed a sufficient quantity. The shooter, thus placed, is sometimes much annoyed by a singular propensity of the nimble squirrel, which shews the fun and playfulness of that beautiful little animal. The gunner has

placed himself on the outside of a wood, in ambush, patiently waiting for the rabbits. The squirrel, seated aloft, has been watching his proceedings. As soon as the rabbits have made their appearance from the burrows—a movement which they often accomplish with great caution—the squirrel, as if to save the life of the rabbit and disappoint the shooter, when all is perfectly still around, will make a singular and indescribable noise, or cry. The rabbits, alarmed, instantly retreat within their holes, to the mortification of the gunner, who, however, vexed at being thus tricked, probably levels his gun, and down drops the squirrel dead at his feet.





DUCK SHOOTING.



HOWEVER numerous and varied may be the allurements presented by field and cover shooting, in the pursuit of the partridge, the pheasant, the hare, or, occasionally, the cock and the snipe, to the bearer of the Joe Manton,—to one who is desirous of enjoying every diversion which the revolving seasons present,—there is no greater attraction than wild-fowl shooting. In deer-stalking, much labour, privation, and caution are requisite. In attacking the wild and ferocious animals of the eastern jungle, much danger, hazard, and peril are involved. But, in the pursuit of the numerous class of wild-fowl

which visit our shores, there is open a wide field of adventure, upon which the true sportsman zealously enters.

There are about sixteen varieties of the duck. The habits of this class, however, greatly assimilate. Their plumage, indeed, is varied, but their habits partake of an uniform character. To a casual observer, an aquatic bird might appear heavy upon the wing, but it is not so; for the duck, when mounted on high, cleaves the air with astonishing rapidity. The eider-duck, at full speed, is supposed to fly at the rate of ninety miles an hour. The male bird of the common wild duck is called a mallard. The young broods are designated by the term flappers, which may be easily shot amid the reeds and sedges in the immediate neighbourhood of rivers, large ponds, and running brooks.

The beautiful lakes which adorn the splendid mansions and estates of the nobility and gentry, provided they are not disturbed by intruders, are the favourite inland haunts of the common wild ducks. During the day, they assemble, in large flocks, upon the bosom of the clear mirror of the lake, which throws back the varying forms and tints of the clouds, the margin of the woods that adorn each bank, or the islands in the centre of the water; but they take care not to come

within range of the gun. Sometimes, if they are not disturbed, they will congregate upon the banks, preening their beautiful plumage, and enjoying themselves in perfect security and quiet. If disturbed, they take wing in one compact body, and descend on the centre of the water; but if their haunts be not disturbed by the use of the gun, it is surprising how tame they will become. A striking instance of this is presented at the beautiful residence of Charles Waterton, Esq., the author of "Wanderings," and other interesting works connected with natural history. The wild-fowl which resort to his peaceful and beautiful lake, will even approach the drawing-room windows in conscious security. But no gun is suffered to be fired in the park—no annoyance is permitted to be exercised towards them—and hence a scene is presented which cannot, perhaps, be witnessed to the same extent in any other part of the kingdom. The habits of all wild-fowl are such as to make them always upon the alert, and ready to take alarm at the least indication of danger, unless their home presents the same degree of security as the lake of Walton Hall; but, if they be continually disturbed by the gunner, they will either leave the place at once, or be so extremely shy as to render it impossible to get within shot. On some of these lakes, small islands are formed.

These not only add considerably to the beauty of the scene, but form a security to the ducks and other aquatic birds during the proper season for the formation of their nests, and for rearing their young broods. Their nests, however, are liable to be visited by birds of prey,—although the female bird takes especial care to cover the nest over with decayed grass, reeds, and sedges, whenever she leaves it for the purpose of feeding. Their greatest enemies are the carrion-crow and the magpie; and, however incredible it may appear, these birds will carry off the eggs one by one to a place of security, and there devour the contents, leaving the shell empty. The way in which this depredation is accomplished, is by striking the egg with the beak, and making a small hole. The beak is thus inserted so tightly, that they are enabled to fly away with the prize. Some keepers have attempted to destroy these pilferers by contriving to insert a portion of arsenic inside the egg through a small aperture made at one end. When, however, the birds have carried it off in the accustomed manner, and devoured it, the contents have been immediately ejected from the crop; and they have returned to their prey as if nothing had happened.

The ducks do not feed so much by day as might be expected by the casual observer. It is during the

night that they feed, and at a considerable distance from their daily haunts. Shortly after sunset, they take wing in small parties, and, rising to a great height, dart away at an astonishing speed to some distant spot, where their food abounds. The places thus visited are low grounds—such as the fens in Lincolnshire or Norfolk. They there feed during the whole of the night; and, at the approach of morning, prepare to return to their place of abode. The gunner who is aware of their habits should secrete himself before daybreak in a suitable place, and patiently await their return. He will find them arrive by fours or sixes, perhaps more, and prepare to descend upon the lake, probably close to the spot where he lies in ambush. By being extremely watchful and cautious, he will have presented to him many favourable shots, and may soon fill his bag, without apparently having caused any diminution in their number. But the gunner should vary his position from time to time, otherwise the birds, aware of the danger to which they have been exposed in that quarter, will not descend there again, but find out a spot more undisturbed or more secure from the visits of their deadly enemy. During the prevalence of a very severe winter, the numerous class of ducks arrive from the north;—deprived of their usual places of resort, and frozen out

from the lakes, they seek the open rivers, or those spots where ice does not prevail. They may be followed in these quarters; and, provided the weather be very severe, they may be approached, if only due caution be observed, and the *coup-de-grâce* scientifically administered. On such occasions, if the ice on the lake be broken in a suitable quarter, near an island, for instance, where the gunner can lie in ambush,—the ducks will assemble there during the day, and many may thus, by a well-directed shot, be secured. In the fens of Lincolnshire and Norfolk, the duck shooters, who are well acquainted with their haunts and habits, wait their arrival patiently during the early part of the night; and, although it is so dark that they cannot see the birds, they are so accustomed to the sport, that, with a duck-gun, well charged, they are enabled to make great slaughter by firing at hazard amongst the birds as they descend: their only guide is the peculiar shrill noise which they make with their pinions, or their occasional call to their companions. The extensive progress which has been made in the drainage of low grounds has had the effect of destroying many of the favourite haunts of the duck, as well as diminishing their means of support. Hence several decoys, which were formerly rented, like rabbit-warrens, have been

wholly given up. Nevertheless, on the lines of coast, and on the broad inland pools and lakes, the gunner still finds means to pursue his favourite sport.

Connected with the subject of duck shooting, a slight glance at an extraordinary character may not, perhaps, be deemed out of place. His name was John Heppenstall,—a labouring man, who resided at Norton, near Campsall, in Yorkshire. During the winter, when there was a deficiency of employment, he followed duck shooting as the means of his support, and, for many seasons, supplied the tables of the late Colonel Harvey, of Womersley; Mr. Bacon Frank, of Campsall Park; Mr. Ann, of Burghwallis; and many other gentlemen. At that time, Rushy Moor, near Owston, Shirley Pool, and Sutton Common, were covered with water in the winter season; and, during flood-time, it was not unusual to see five hundred acres under water. This space was the yearly resort of a large number of wild ducks. John Heppenstall had in his possession an old mare, which he employed on these occasions as a stalking-horse; and, from long practice, she entered into the sport with as much eagerness and caution as her master, and invariably displayed a cunning and an adroitness which could not be surpassed by the best-trained water-dog. When a number of ducks had assembled at a

spot which it seemed almost impossible to approach, away went this veteran gunner, accompanied by his old



mare, to the scene of action. He wore an immense pair of water-boots, which reached nearly to the top of his thigh; and his weapon of destruction was one of those old-fashioned duck-guns, now but rarely seen.

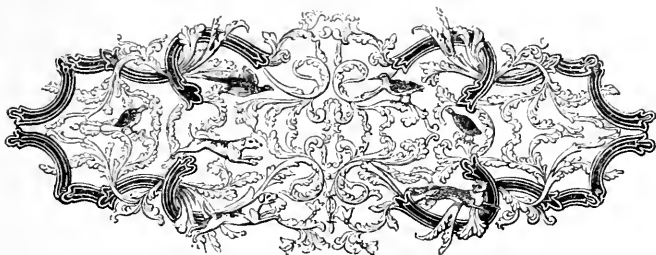
Thus equipped, the experienced veteran proceeded towards whatever flock might present itself. He walked on the off-side of the mare from the position which the flock occupied. She was perfect at this business. She would pause awhile, as if pretending to drink or to graze upon the rushes and sedges, then she would advance a little nearer, again stopping as before, until, pursuing the same plan, the birds were within shot. At one word of command from her master, she would hold down her head perfectly steady, in order that he might level his gun over her neck, with the most deadly effect. Bang went the old gun; and the number of the dead and the crippled was often such as to surpass the feats of the present day. The old gunner then, provided the water was getting rather deep, would mount his faithful companion; and she was so well acquainted with every part of the main drain which was fordable, that she would take him across in perfect safety; and no dog, however well bred or well trained, would evince greater satisfaction as prize after prize was secured,—an intelligence and a docility which made the old gunner declare that she was worth her weight in gold. This plan was successfully pursued during many winters. At length, however, some busy, malicious scoundrel—one of the many who could not earn his dinner before he

wished to eat it—laid an information before a justice of the peace, against the said John Heppenstall, for killing wild-fowl, contrary to the statute in that case made and provided, derogatory to the dignity of the crown, subversive of the peace of his Majesty's subjects, and so on to the end of the chapter of law. John Heppenstall was immediately summoned before this justice of the West Riding, whose table he had supplied for many seasons, and he was desired to bring with him his gun. He did so; and although he protested before the stern magistrate that he was no poacher,—that never, during the whole course of his life, had he either killed hare or rabbit, partridge, cock, or pheasant, but only wild-fowl, the property of no one,—the old gun was taken from him. This unfeeling and unjust proceeding, considering who wielded the power of the law, made a great noise at the time; and it was sadly felt in more ways than one by the honest old gunner. Afterwards, however, when the supplies to the table had, by this proceeding, been stopped, the stern justice began to relent, and John Heppenstall, the poor labourer, was sent for. His old gun was offered to be restored to him; but, in the tone and spirit of an insulted Englishman, he refused to accept it. "Let 'em keep it," said he, "and much good may it do 'em,

now!" But he was then stricken in years. Old age, with its attendants, decrepitude and death, were stealing silently onwards; and, in the course of a short time, not only were the remains of the adventurous duck shooter conveyed to the narrow and silent house, but those also of the inflexible magistrate!

"Pallida mors æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas,
Regumque turres. O beate Sexti!
Vitæ summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam,
Jam te premet nox, fabulæque manes,
Et domus exilis Plutonia!"





WOOD-PIGEON SHOOTING.



HE wood-pigeon is deservedly esteemed a good bird for the table, and, for this reason, is occasionally an object of pursuit. There are three descriptions of wild pigeons, namely, the stock-dove, the turtle-dove, and the ring-dove (queest, or cushat). The latter, which is by far the most numerous, is very generally known as the wood-pigeon. The wood-pigeon is a beautiful bird, and is remarkably swift in its flight,—cleaving the air with astonishing rapidity. It is extremely shy and cautious, takes alarm at the least unusual noise, and is upon the wing before the stranger can approach near

its haunts. In the winter season, these birds congregate in large bodies,—moving, during the day, from place to place in search of food; but they generally select, for a time at least, one roosting-place, which, sheltered from the winds by the neighbouring hills and eminences, affords that degree of stillness the breaking of which is more readily discerned, and in case of alarm, renders escape more certain and available. In the course of the day, they travel over an immense district, and return in the evening to their accustomed roosting-place. The expedients to secure these birds are various. The shooter, previously to their arrival for the night, should secrete himself beneath the boughs of a spruce-fir, or some other suitable tree, and patiently await their arrival, which sometimes will not take place before the expiration of a couple of hours, as the great distance to which they may have travelled during the day may delay their reaching home so early as might have been expected. But they are certain to arrive. He must be patient and attentive; and he will then mark the caution with which they approach. For some time, they will hover round and round before they alight upon the branches,—attempting, apparently, to mark that all is safe. If no unusual sounds prevail, they will descend,—though with considerable caution.

The gunner must not stir until some minutes after they have alighted; for, when the birds have done so, they



turn round and round upon the perch before they are still, and, as they suppose, perfectly secure. Emerging then from his ambush, with much caution, and making

no noise,—for the snap of a stick, or a rustle among the underwood, will instantly disturb them,—he selects the position from which to fire,—where he is certain of hitting the greatest number. The trigger is pulled; and, if he be a good shot, four or five, or perhaps more, will fall rattling about him. The rest of the flock will take wing instantaneously; and off they betake themselves in a body to a neighbouring wood. Probably only one shot can be obtained; if, however, another gunner is placed in an adjacent spot, to await their arrival after the first alarm, he may then, perhaps, also obtain a favourable shot; when the flock, again disturbed, will probably return to their former position; and thus alternately several opportunities will be presented, and a large number secured. During moonlight nights, especially when the wind is rather high, the roost may be approached without the previous ambush, and the pigeons shot without difficulty, exactly in the same way as poachers shoot pheasants. On some occasions, when the flight homeward has been partially broken by some untoward circumstance, they will return to roost towards evening like stragglers. When this is the case, an immense number may be bagged, by waiting their arrival and firing at them as they come home.

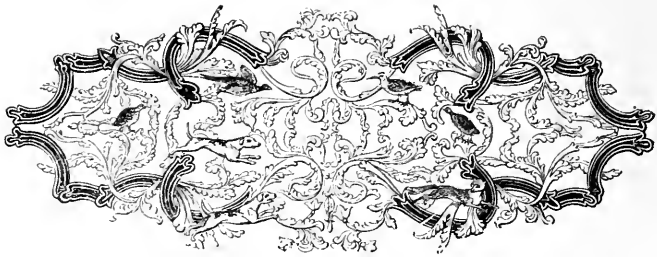
In severe weather, when the ground is covered with snow, and when the wood-pigeons are deprived of their usual food, they resort in large numbers to the rape and turnip fields, which form then, indeed, their only means of subsistence. Still, however severe the weather, deep the snow, or keen the frost may be, they evince the same degree of caution and wariness—in some instances perhaps more—as they know full well that their rambles are more confined to one locality, and their enemies are more numerous. When they are thus assembled in a field, the gunner may approach, under cover of a hedge-row or planting, until within shot; but it is rather difficult to arrive at the proper position. When, however, that position is once attained, by pointing the gun through the hedge, and taking a careful aim, several may be killed. In that case, he has only to secrete himself there and watch for their return, or a fresh arrival. But a dexterous hand—one who makes light of a little trouble and inconvenience—may approach them by degrees, by moving along the furrows, with his face as close to the ground as possible, frequently pausing and lying still, and never looking at the flock until he can reach so near as to fire at the whole lot. By following this expedient, he will be enabled to fill his bag more than once. Another way is commonly

resorted to, viz.—forming a sort of wigwam, or hut, covered with straw, in the centre of a turnip or rape field, with loopholes for firing through. But, if this is erected after the descent of snow, it will prove useless; for the wood-pigeons will not come near it. It should, therefore, be formed some time previously. The gunner then takes his post, thus secure and unseen, and, if he is blessed with patience, often receives a plentiful booty, as he has sufficient time to take the most deliberate aim, and at the period when he has the best chance of hitting the greatest number. Besides, he has the advantage of having the whole day before him, without stirring from the spot or being seen by the birds. During the prevalence of a long and severe storm, he may effect considerable destruction in this way. But he should take care, as soon as he secures each bird, to open the crop with his knife, and empty it of the leaves of turnips and rape, or the flesh will become tainted, and unpleasant to the palate.

The wood-pigeon makes a good dish. The best way to cook it is this:—When the bird is prepared, cut through the back lengthways; turn each part down to the right and to the left, level with the breast—thus forming a steak. Place it on a gridiron; but take care that it is not over-done, for that is soon the case, and

then it becomes hard and black. If hot through and through it is sufficient. The application of a little butter, pepper, and salt, completes the dish, which should be eaten immediately. When George IV. was asked respecting a *beef steak*, he said, the best place to enjoy it in perfection was the kitchen, with the table as near the fire as possible. The same remark applies to the perfect enjoyment of the *wood-pigeon steak*.





FIELDFARE SHOOTING.



FIELDFARE shooting is the favourite amusement of the hedge-poppers resident in large towns, like Birmingham and Sheffield, who do not aspire to any higher game, through their inability to obtain it. By these, the diversion is pursued with no small share of joy and alacrity; equal, indeed, to that which is felt by higher classes in the pursuit of grouse and other *fashionable* game. Leaving the confined air of the towns, they traverse the open fields, in active search of their favourite winter visitor; and, forgetting the strife and anxieties of business in a more exhilarating employment,

they yield themselves up to the free and unconstrained exercise of their limbs, and breathe the pure air of a frosty and unclouded atmosphere.

The fieldfare is a beautiful bird, and almost the last migratory visitor of the season. They come to us in flocks, from the north, about November. When the weather is mild, they disperse themselves over the fields and pastures, in search of worms and grubs; but when severe, they betake themselves to the hedge-rows, where they feed upon haws and other berries. They seldom breed in this country, but prefer going to the north. The call-note of the fieldfare is harsh, but his song is very melodious, and he soon becomes reconciled to confinement. When approached, the fieldfares, along with their interesting congeners, the redwings—taking wing and keeping together—all move off to some distant tree, on which they settle by scores, from whence, if again disturbed, they wheel off in a body as before; and, provided their pursuer does not possess a considerable share of perseverance, and caution in following them from one place to another, he will be doomed to disappointment, and not a single stray bird will be found for him to level at.

The fieldfare is a very shy and vigilant bird, and cannot be approached without the greatest caution. In

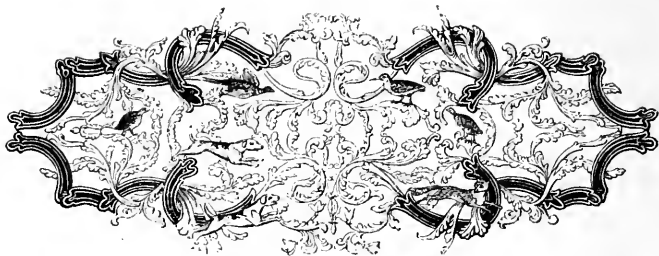
its pursuit, Colonel Hawker advises the shooter to conceal himself near a tree, to which they will probably fly on being disturbed, and on which they will settle,



while some one goes round to drive them to the point desired. Thus they are exposed to the full power of the gun; and when a large flock is collected on one tree, great destruction must necessarily follow.

But, besides the sporting mechanic, there is another who pursues this amusement with an almost indefatigable zeal and perseverance. He fears not the inclemency of the weather,—he heeds not the pinching power of frost, while he wanders from field to field and from hedge-row to hedge-row in pursuit of the fieldfare. This is the school-boy,—than whom none is more ardent in the pursuit of this winter visitor,—none more deaf to commands,—and none more reckless of consequences. When the labours and confinement at school, to which they have been obliged to wend their way, “creeping like snail,” have drawn to a close, and left them in the possession of that joyous time for youth—the Christmas holidays, numbers of these youthful sportsmen are to be seen hedge-popping in the different lanes and fields: although the birds are then scarcely tame enough for this diversion, unless there may have been a sharp frost or a fall of snow, and although their untiring efforts are seldom crowned with success, yet, they still adhere to the custom, pursuing the sport with renewed vigour.

“ He fears no bailiff’s wrath, no baron’s blame;
His is untaxed and undisputed game.”



ROOK SHOOTING.



WHATEVER may be the diversion which each succeeding season presents, the lover of rural life is ever ready to partake. He does not despise joining in the sport of rook shooting,—partly for the purpose of keeping his hand in at a time when there is no other shooting,—partly to thin the sable ranks, when they have become too numerous and troublesome,—but chiefly, to afford amusement to those of his friends who are, probably, strangers to the other descriptions of *game*, as well as for the opportunity which is thus presented of agreeable social intercourse.

Although the rook is so common a bird as to escape, or to be deemed unworthy of, the notice of the general observer, yet its habits are far from being devoid of interest. The rook is an aristocratic bird. There is a fancied nobleness in his step; and a contemptuous and proud bearing in his crest. He is extremely fond of fixing his habitation in high places,—in the immediate neighbourhood of some ancient baronial residence, or family mansion,—and eschews the abode of those whose new-built residences, however imposing in architectural grandeur, are unadorned with masses of large timber trees,—the production of ages, and the remnants of great antiquity.

The rooks resemble, in many respects, the human species. They live in large communities,—and so far are social. Their localities indicate that they consider themselves above the rest of their species,—noisily inhabiting the most noble and exalted stations,—despising the habits of the solitary crow and raven, who belong not to their gregarious family.

During the prevalence of the winter months, they assemble in large masses, leaving their summer abodes, and resorting to some well-known and extensive wood, which forms for the species the general rendezvous of the whole country around. In the early part of that

dreary period, they leave their winter quarters in large parties in search of food, and often travel to a considerable distance; but they invariably return in the evening to the same locality. Immediately before sunset, they may be seen hastening homewards, with heavy and silent flight,—sometimes in very considerable numbers, followed, at intervals, by parties of stragglers. Hence, Shakspeare, whose eye embraced the minutest object of nature, observes,—

“Light thickens; and the crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood.”

Before darkness wholly prevails, the wood which has been thus selected for the winter resort, will contain the whole rook family within the circumference of many miles. They then settle down into a state of repose, only broken by some unfortunate member of the community who has got a bad perch, or by another, as has been well observed, calling out “for a little more of the blanket,” as the night is perishing cold.

During the ploughing season, they will follow close upon the heels of the husbandman, and feed upon the worms and slugs which the plough turns up; and in this respect they are of great benefit to the cultivator

of the soil; but, later in the season, they effect much destruction amongst the young corn plants, or even before a single blade has made its appearance above the earth. Nor do the potatoes escape their ravages. When the ground is covered with snow, and their means of subsistence are almost entirely cut off, they resort to the heaps of manure in the fields; generally, however, fixing a sentry to warn the whole body of the approach of danger; or, in very severe weather, they place themselves in small groups upon the trees along the lines of the turnpike roads, especially those which are the more frequented by stage and other coaches, to feed upon the road drift.

Towards the end of January, they assemble in large flights upon some extensive piece of open common land, and keep up an incessant cawing. This precedes the pairing-time,—preparatory, no doubt, to the settlement of the amount of dower and patrimony. Whilst this interesting debate is proceeding, the assembly is continually becoming less numerous, as the high contracting parties become agreed, and the betrothed pairs depart—some taking off in one direction, some in another—until, as if in imitation of a certain assembly, the “pairs” are so numerous, that there not being forty members left, the house is adjourned.

Then commences the work of building their new habitations; and some curious facts are presented to the attentive observer. If an obnoxious member dares to occupy a seat to which the great body thinks that he possesses no claim, by bribery, corruption, or intimidation, or if he changes his seat from one side to the other, they immediately act upon the principle of privilege, and instantly demolish his borough of rotten sticks, amidst the cawing cheers of one side of the assembly and the counter cheers of the other. In proceeding to build, however, the large and overwhelming majority pursue precisely the same plan as is adopted by other persons of quality; viz.—“far fetched and dear bought;” for, although there may be an abundance of good rafters in the immediate vicinity of the tree which they occupy, they prefer travelling to a considerable distance; acting on the conviction, no doubt, that whatever is far fetched, or of foreign growth, possesses superior and enviable qualities. If any great difference of opinion should arise upon any important question of public interest, inimical to the vested rights of the whole community,—or if a party, headed by some reckless leader, not worth a *goat*, and beneath a *mole's worth*, should attempt to form another assembly in the immediate vicinity of the

commonwealth, it is considered a high crime and misdemeanour against the state,—subversive of order and discipline; opposed to the dictates of decency and propriety; and, also, a bad example to the rest of the community. These habitations are then instantly destroyed—not by the sergeant-at-arms, with the aid of his assistants—but by the whole unanimous posse of the insulted body; and the delinquents are compelled to quit the locality, or to take up their abode in the back seats of the ancient place of assembly—thus vindicating the insulted dignity of the power and supremacy of the laws, and passing a vote of confidence on the proceedings of the executive authorities.

During the progress of building, the rooks do considerable damage by breaking off the young branches, and spoiling the growth of the trees; for, if a rafter will not exactly fit, they make it do so by demolishing every obstacle. Hence, a large number of broken twigs will always be found strewed on the ground beneath.

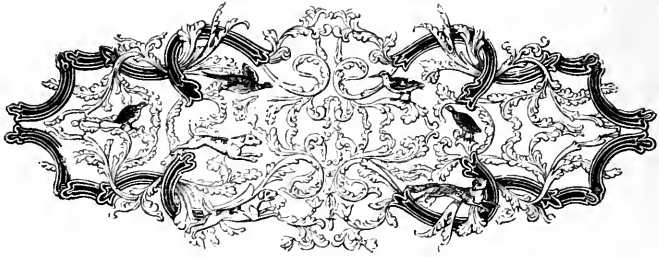
The rook is extremely attentive, during the progress of incubation, to his mate, who seldom leaves her nest until the eggs are hatched,—receiving the needful supply of food from the male bird. Before the young birds are fully fledged, both parents evince much solicitude and affection in providing them with sustenance;

and in doing so, occasion much good to the fields and pastures, by the destruction of the worms and slugs, which are secured in the small pouch which hangs beneath the lower mandible, and thus conveyed to the young brood. When the young birds are enabled to perch upon the outside of the nests, or upon the adjacent branches, and before they can mount effectually upon the wing, the diversion of rook shooting commences.

For this purpose, large parties of shooters assemble at the family mansion, generally by invitation. The day is called a "rook-day." It is not very difficult to bring down the birds with a good fowling-piece; but this weapon, although adopted by many sportsmen, should never be used for the purpose. The shot shatters the birds, and, likewise, does considerable injury to the trees. A well-made air-gun is far preferable. It makes less noise; and, from the small size of the ball, does little injury to the birds. Besides, it calls into exercise more skill than is required in the use of the common gun. A clever shot, with the air-gun, will bring down as many birds as are wanted; or it may be effectually used until the rookery is considered to be sufficiently thinned. The booty thus secured is generally distributed amongst the labourers upon the estate,

who are well satisfied with their recompense, and look forward from season to season to the "rook-day" as a day of social and cheerful merriment.





LANDRAIL AND QUAIL SHOOTING.



THE season when the landrail and the quail visit this country, abounds with beauty, fertility, and promise. Over hill and valley, through the woodland and the coppice, — along the margin of the streams, and the summit of the precipice, Spring has breathed her incense in honour of that mysterious Power from whom all power emanates; and the whole earth, renewed in her vigour, animates and gladdens the heart of man. The cheerful song of the lark; the delicious perfume of the flower; the sweet music of the crystal stream; the rich drapery, hung upon the trees; the blue arch

of heaven above, where the sun sheds abroad his full blaze of light and beauty,—contribute to the splendour and the glory of the day: while the night, shedding her dewy tears, is charmed by that matchless song, which, making the woods and the valleys ring, perfects this scene of joyfulness. But there is much evil mixed with much good. “The trail of the serpent is over them all.” Otherwise, there would be no use for the gun.

The sportsman, seeing what has been sent for use and for enjoyment, disregards no season. Each brings with it its peculiar objects and delights, and he shares heartily in the generous bounty. Hence, he turns not away from the pursuit of the landrail and the quail, especially, as no other description of shooting is then presented. The landrail visits us at the end of April or the beginning of May; but the period of its arrival, which is denoted by the well-known call of “crik—crik—crik,” depends upon the forwardness of the season. The landrail, like the quail, is the bird of the happy meadow. It escapes the parching heats of the south on the one hand, and the chilling blasts of the north on the other, and dwells with us till September. It is seldom seen upon the wing; and when compelled to take flight, appears by no means buoyant. Hence,

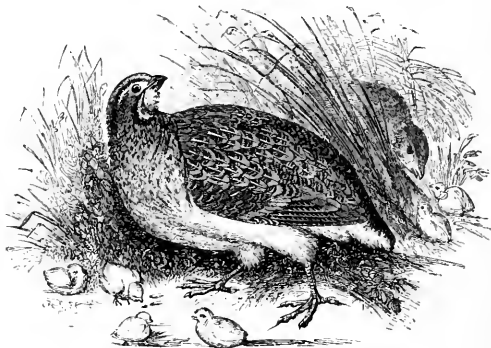
it has been a matter of surprise how a bird so formed can travel over the broad water upon the wing. This is also the case with the quail, which Nature, ever bountiful, has, in the like manner, supplied with all needful qualities. The landrail, taking up its abode amongst the long grass, the growing corn, or the blooming clover, is difficult to be raised, unless stratagem be resorted to, or a staunch old pointer, or well-trained springer, is used. When on the wing, they are easily shot,—their flight being heavy and of short continuance. The “crik—crik” deceives the strolling pedestrian; for he approaches the point from which he conceives the sound proceeds, finds that it is gone, and hears it immediately in another direction. He again advances, and is again deceived. Sometimes, when closely pursued by the dog, the landrail will lie prostrate till he has passed, when it then effects its escape in another direction. During the process of incubation, especially in the night-time, its call is continual, and may be heard at a considerable distance. In cases of danger, this cry is raised for the purpose of drawing away the stranger from the locality of the nest, which generally contains twelve or fourteen eggs. Like the quail, the young birds can take to the leg almost immediately after being hatched.

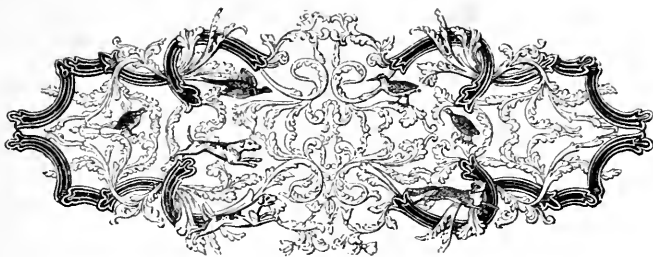
A clover field is the best spot to force the landrail upon the wing. But the gunner often experiences much difficulty in getting a shot. He approaches them by the sound of their call. He is often puzzled, and ready to exclaim,—“confound the bird—where has it gone to!”—at the same time, the “crik—crik” is a hundred yards off, to the no small mortification of the bearer of the double-barrel. There are, however, other means of raising the landrail besides using the dog. The birds may be called close to a person who secretes himself behind a hedge, by using a strong comb, and drawing the teeth across a piece of wood, or by notching a piece of bone, and using it in the same manner. By the adoption of these means, a sound is produced which so closely imitates the call of the birds, that they can be drawn close to the place of concealment, and then flushed.

The quail is far less numerous in this country than the landrail. Both make an excellent dish for the table. The former is particularly fat; and, although it is not so difficult to get upon the wing as the latter, there is some skill required in obtaining a good shot. Both descriptions breed here. They are extremely quarrelsome, and fight with each other desperately,—a propensity which induced the Greeks and the Romans

to pit them against each other, in the same way as some benevolent gentlemen, in the present day, match game-cocks. Like the landrail, the quail can be called, by using what is termed a quail-pipe, which so closely imitates their cry, that they will approach near the person who uses it. The quail is an extremely scarce bird here, and it is rare that a brace can be killed in the course of a whole day's exertion.

The call of the landrail, and the mellow note of the quail are indicative of the prevalence of the most joyous season of the year,—a season of youth, of beauty, and of gladness.





THE FLY-FISHER.



HONOUR to thy name, O Izaak Walton!—
the pure in soul, and the good in heart
—the kind, the gentle, the patient—the
ardent admirer of Nature, and all her
handiworks—the devotee of the art—the great master,
the generous preceptor of the gentle craft—the patriarch
of the brotherhood of the angle! As the mighty war-
rior, who has led his armies from victory to victory;
as the statesman—the painter—the poet—the historian
and the dramatist—who, by their mighty genius, have
enshrined themselves and their country in a halo of im-
mortal fame,—the bright examples for all succeeding

ages,—awakening in others an imitative spirit of glory, —so thy matchless volume, O honest Izaak, has drawn after thee as countless a host of imitators and admirers, and has more than multiplied the disciples of the gentle craft from generation to generation. Falstaff, it is said, not only abounded in wit himself, but was the cause of wit in others. So wert thou; not only the perfect master of the gentle craft, and the bearer of the meek and quiet spirit, but the leader of others who tread in the same delightful path!

Although the scientific fly-fisher may not, perhaps, be able to pay a visit to the wide-spread magnificent lakes and melodious streams of Scotland or Ireland—those inlaid silver ornaments of both lands,—or to wander through the beautiful valleys of North Wales,—where the rivers, augmented by a thousand ever bright and ever tuneful streams, flashing in the sunny ray, and careering merrily to the broad expanse of water, increase the splendour of the scene by their brightness, their freshness, and their beauty; yet, in almost every situation, wherever may be his local habitation, he can find some means at least for pursuing his favourite diversion.

Attired in his dress, which is of rather sombre hue, with his pannier slung over his shoulder; his supple

and taper rod and reel; his well-spun lines, and his book of flies,—he is seen, at early dawn, on the banks of the river.



His mind harmonises with the scene around, in all its freshness and all its beauty,—from the golden-fringed clouds above, that have caught the first glances of the resplendent eye of morning, to the dew-drop gems

below, that deck blade and branch, leaf and flower. Nor less with every object around; the wide-spread valley, with its ramparts of hills,—its green and dewy meadows, with the quiet sheep and cattle grazing,—the rocky precipice, surmounted with overhanging boughs,—the dense mass of woods, the secure home of the songsters of the feathered race,—the ancient ruin, that has withstood the storms and the shocks of ages,—the venerable village spire, that crowns the spot where “the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep,”—the ever tuneful rills, that dance merrily towards the placid bosom of the river, like a smiling child to the arms of its endearing and joyous mother,—yea, his soul is smitten with the whole scene, as well as its component parts, and with all holds high and perfectly harmonious converse. Revelling thus in all the luxuries of nature, with a heart at once kind, and gentle, and joyous, there are other associations which augment the sum of his enjoyment. There is nor river nor wood, nor ruin nor rock, nor meadow nor sunny slope, nor hall nor tower,—but has its history, remote or near, of some peculiar interest to delight his mind; scenes of high and patriotic daring, of pure and unsullied piety, and of public virtue; or of matchless women, whose beauty and goodness rang from side to side in the olden time,

and whose fame has even outlived their very monumental tombs. Thus, the fly-fisher is not only delighted with the scenes spread immediately around him, but he draws from the inexhausted well of his own memory, and animates each spot, each object and nook, with living, moving, and beautiful creations.

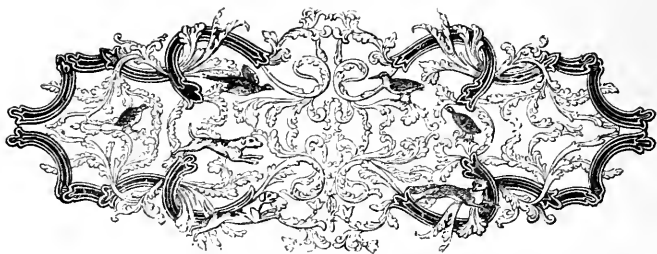
The fly-fisher possesses a keen eye, though an artless heart. It is a slander to say that he is an expert fisher of men, however numerous may be the gudgeons. He knows all the haunts and all the habits of every species of the finny tribe, and upon that knowledge he acts. He is, too, an entomologist; and, knowing every description of insect which abounds throughout the fishing season, he fashions them accordingly; observing, in their application, the invariable rule—white for darkness, red in medio, and black for lightness. He whips off no flies—like the bungler. He possesses no purely solitary habits—like the float-fisher,—whose practice drew from the prejudiced and surly Dr. Johnson, the very amiable and agreeable expression,—“A stick and a string, with a worm at one end and a fool at the other.” The truth is, that learned lexicographer was so short-sighted he could not see a float! and, therefore, was no judge of the sport. The fly-fisher rambles from place to place. If he is un-

successful in one spot, he proceeds to another, ever varying the scene of his amusement, and avoiding that tameness and tediousness which others of the craft are too liable to experience. Possessing a supple wrist, he can throw to an inch; and, shewing his flies to the fish in the most graceful manner, he is almost certain of success, especially if he can cast his line across the wind, by which it becomes for a moment suspended, and the flies then fall in so natural a manner as to deceive the most wary fish. The trout is his great favourite.

Here is a magnificent, clear, wide-spread stream,—the glory of the valley, whose ramparts seem guarded by giant sentinels,—the oak—the beach—the elm—the hornbeam—the chestnut—and, here and there, the wild cherry, in its robe of unsullied whiteness,—rushing onwards, over its clear and pebbled bed, like the stream of truth over the minds of the masses,—polishing the ore of genius, and releasing meaner minds from the bonds of error and corruption. On the opposite bank is a goodly array of willows and alders, bending, as it were, over a mirror to admire their own drooping beauty. Behind the fly-fisher all is clear. He knows that the fish are feeding upon the insects which drop from the boughs. “Whisk” goes his line. It is for a

moment suspended. Admirable artist! How gracefully falls the tail-fly! A rise at the first throw? He's hooked! By Jove, a two-pounder at least! He rushes with tremendous impetuosity to make his escape. The fisher lets him go,—he turns him gently,—another and another effort is made to free himself from the hook. The bearer of the rod, perfectly calm, cool, and collected, plays him with a neat and delicate hand; and, though the victim resorts to all schemes, and displays great rapidity and resolution, the experienced fly-fisher knows that he is his own. Each succeeding struggle becomes weaker and weaker; and, with a gentle, but unerring hand, he is now in the landing-net. Two pounds and a half—by the shade of honest Izaak! Proceeding thus, rise succeeds rise, and fish after fish, of the proper weight, are hooked and killed, until his pannier is well filled.





TROUT FISHING.



HE trout is the most beautiful of all the fresh-water fish. It affords, next to the salmon, the most pleasant diversion to the thrower of the fly-line. In trout fishing, there is nothing "flat, stale, or unprofitable." The very character of the streams and lakes, where the trout abounds, precludes these uninteresting associations. The home of the trout is in the merry mountain streams, the tributaries to the kingly rivers, or in the lakes fed by a thousand rills. Dull and stagnant waters, the receptacle of the toad, the newt, and the tadpole, are wholly unknown to the species; and, as magnificent

scenery produces upon the mind a powerful and exhilarating effect, so, the very motions of the trout itself resemble the character of its own native element,—bright, rapid, impetuous.

Many of the greatest men of modern times, who have contributed to enrich the stores of art, science, and literature, and shed a glory on their times and country, have been fly-fishers. In proof of this, without alluding to the olden times, it is only necessary to mention Archdeacon Paley and Sir Humphry Davy. Nor has the healthy and peaceful diversion escaped the notice of the most powerful pens. Christopher North himself, in the pages of "Blackwood," has, by the correctness and vividness of his descriptions, thrown a charm around the most favourite haunts of Scotland,—the land of the stream and of the flood,—which will live with the language, and prove as enduring as the beautiful spots which they celebrate. The innumerable streams and the wide-spread lakes of Scotland, indeed, present to the trout-fisher the greatest attractions; and the beautiful districts and valleys of North Wales offer the most inviting temptations. Nor will he be disposed to disregard the attractions of the sister kingdom: for, truly, these countries surpass England in the favoured haunts of the trout; although Derbyshire, and other

parts of England, afford abundance of diversion; but, from the circumstance of these waters being continually fished and whipped by a host of piscators, the fish are of smaller size than in the rapid streams of the north and of the west.

To attain complete perfection in throwing a fly, requires much practice, skill, and perseverance; but when once acquired, the art is never forgotten. It is essentially requisite that the tackle should be of the very best description. The rod, especially, should be extremely accurate in its formation. Perfectly taper and supple in all its parts, it should be neither top-heavy nor too stiff. In one case it will tire the arm,—in either, the fly will not fall as it ought to do. Its elasticity should be equal throughout, in proportion to the thickness of each part; its length full twelve feet, or rather more. The line should be of considerable length,—twenty yards at least, or even more; and so spun as to be formed thicker in the part which is first wound on the reel, gradually tapering until it reaches the loop to which the gut is attached. The length of the gut, including the tail-fly, should be twelve feet. The gut should also be made to taper, like the line, by placing the thickest section first, and gradually diminishing it to the end. By adopting this plan, the whole

falls more lightly upon the water, and is calculated to entice the heaviest fish. The reel should be tied on the stock, about a foot from the bottom. Some secure



it higher up, taking hold of the rod below the spot where it is fastened, and throwing the line without putting down the stop, that, in case of accidentally catching a weed or branch, the line and top of the

rod may not be broken by the sudden jerk. To throw the line in a perfectly graceful manner, so that the gut, with the tail-fly and the bob, shall fall first upon the water, like the natural insect, is a very important point. The unskilful fly-fisher generally manages to whip off with a crack the tail-fly at the counterpoise; but the master of the art always avoids this. He raises his arm well up, and, by a sudden spring of the wrist, sends the line well behind him, but returns it *just at the moment* when it has attained its farthest reach backwards,—a tact by which he is enabled to have full command over the line. The first graceful fall of the fly is everything. The trout-fisher avoids, as much as possible, being seen by the fish; and, following the advice of honest Izaak Walton, fishes “fine and far off.” Nor does he let the line lie too long on the water, or draw it too near the point where he stands; as, in the first plan, no good fish will rise at the flies, and, in the second, he loses his power for the next throw; for the line can then be got into play again only by sweeping it round in several circles, which loses his time, tires his arm, or renders him nervous and unsteady for the remainder of the day. Everything should be done quietly, neatly, gracefully, and in perfect order.

The inexperienced trout fisher generally encumbers himself with a large book containing a whole host of flies, for the dressing of which he has resorted to the fur of every animal under the sun, and the feathers of every bird that cleaves the air! He has materials without end,—flies without number, with as many names as would puzzle and confound the most skilful entomologist. This is all useless! The genuine trout fisher, on the contrary, takes with him very few flies, and kills as many fish as he pleases. But he is by no means an inattentive observer of everything around him,—every indication of weather,—every change in the state of the atmosphere,—every ripple that marks the whereabouts of the fish. The yellow dun for the tail-fly, and the red palmer for the bob, are generally sufficient for most streams,—with a white moth for the approaching darkness. A few flies of this description, and an extra line or gut-length wound around the hat for readiness and the saving of time, are far better than a heavy and useless book of flies. On some occasions, however, it is necessary to be provided with a few materials more closely resembling the flies upon which the fish may be feeding.

In the successful diversion of trout fishing, much depends upon the state of the weather. A cloudy and

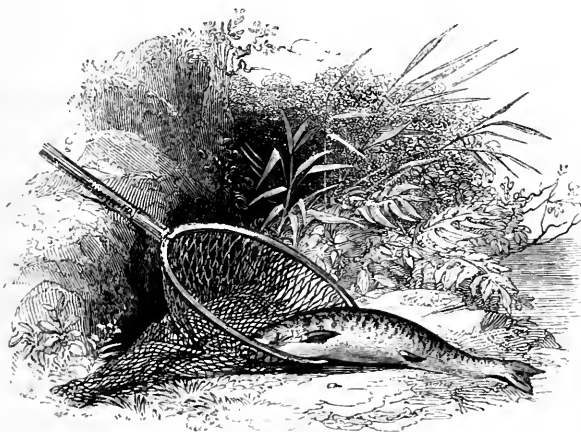
warm day, with a gentle breeze to curl the smooth water, is the happiest period. The scientific and practised fly-fisher, from accurate and close observation, knows well all the circumstances which are favourable or unfavourable to his favourite diversion. He knows that before the coming on of rain, the trout will not rise,—a circumstance which can be satisfactorily accounted for from natural causes. Before the approach of rain, a chilliness in the atmosphere generally takes place, which, besides having some effect upon the fish themselves—for they are also subject to atmospheric influences—forces the insects to seek for protection beneath the leaves of the branches which overhang the stream. After, however, the shower or storm has passed away, all is again life and activity. The insects again come forth, and sport around. The fish are also upon the alert; and so, too, is the fly-fisher. He knows full well, that it is of no more use to commence throwing after the fish have been satisfied with a glut of flies, or after the water has been whipped by a host of pretenders, than it would be to throw his line on a turnpike road. Yet, where others fail, his skill and observation crown him with success. He lets his flies drop gracefully in the places where he knows the fish resort,—beneath overhanging banks, under the shade of

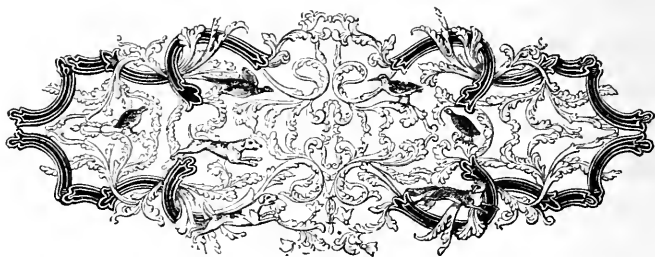
branches, near the eddies, or in the rapids formed by some impeding obstacles, behind which the best fish place themselves for the purpose of securing their food as it is brought down by the current. He avoids having a useless throw; and preserves the elasticity of his rod by changing his manner of using it,—sometimes having the reel uppermost, and sometimes underneath,—sometimes using the left hand, as well as the right; as, in applying the former, advantage can be taken not only of the situation where he wants the fly to fall, but of the current of the wind which may be unfavourable to the latter. When a good fish rises, he is immediately struck,—then eased for a moment,—afterwards checked in his progress by a shortened line, and with the rod well bent, keeping his head up with a light and delicate hand,—avoiding the weeds which may, perchance, abound, following him down the stream until he is exhausted, and the landing-net can be safely and neatly applied. If the fish, when struck, displays remarkable activity and resolution, it is an indication that he is in perfect season, which is further confirmed if he displays a very silvery brightness,—a circumstance highly calculated to reanimate the bearer of the rod.

There are other methods of catching trout besides using the fly-line. Among these may be mentioned

more particularly trolling, or spinning a minnow. This method, however, is condemned by the thorough fly-fisher, as is also the practice of using the lob-worm. In his estimation, these methods are only one remove from poaching; and are, consequently, deemed as vile as the practice adopted by the family of cormorant pot-hunters, with whom all is fish that comes to the net. In the wide streams, or rather rivers, the poacher adopts another plan, which is the most destructive of all. He procures a long and very strong line, and places on its whole length, at about fifteen inches apart, a minnow, and then a large worm, which are attached to the line, in the same manner as the bob in fly fishing. To one end of this line a large stone is attached, which is thrown across the river, and thus the line crosses the stream. The other end is secured to a strong branch, or to a tree, and the whole is suffered to remain there during the night. It generally happens that the very finest trout, wary and cautious during the glare of day, or unless pressed by hunger, leave their places of security and feed during the night. By this method, they are almost sure to be caught; and such a haul is presented in the morning of the very best fish, as would defy the skill of the fly-fisher; for it almost invariably happens that each fish thus taken

is of extraordinary weight. To these practices, however, the generous fly-fisher is wholly opposed; despising all such means, he relies for success upon the exercise of his own skill; and, if the season and the weather be favourable, he seldom fails in killing as many fish, and of the best description, too, as he deems sufficient for one day's diversion, reserving the stores of the stream for others as well as for himself, until some future occasion.





TROLLING.



HE pike is the unmerciful and unrelenting tyrant of the fresh waters which it inhabits. Voracious, bold, and resolute in the extreme, he occasions considerable destruction amongst his more feeble congeners in the bright and clear streams, and has been well described as the fresh-water shark. For the purpose of securing his prey, he is provided by Nature with formidable weapons of attack, and qualities of the greatest daring and the most determined courage and resolution, — possessing also such a conformation of body as accelerates his speed through the water. His jaws are furnished with rows

of large and extremely sharp teeth—literally pikes—by which the voracious creature secures its prey, and, in many instances, completely lacerates its victims, which, being rendered helpless, have no means of escape. The pike which inhabit the preserved ponds, pools, or small lakes, are generally more voracious than those whose home is in the large rivers. This arises from the circumstance, that food is often less abundant in the former than in the latter. In the more confined haunts, the pike will seize frogs, rats, ducklings, and drowned kittens. In the wide and deep rivers, however, where the means of subsistence are plentiful, they seldom, if ever, resort to these, but feed upon almost every description of fish except the perch, which they will not touch unless forced by extreme hunger; for the formidable dorsal fin of the perch proves a very dangerous obstacle. But when the pike is pressed with hunger, he makes no distinction; and rushes on his course even, in the end, to his own destruction. It is, however, asserted—and the assertion is more fanciful and pleasing than probable—that the pike will not touch a tench; because, the latter, being the “fishes’ physician,” is possessed of power to cure all wounded or diseased fish, if they will only rub themselves against any part of his body. The pike, it is added, is instinctively aware of

this wonderful power ; and, as the tench is thus the preserver of its prey, the pike spares the doctor out of a pure and kind fraternity of feeling, unless driven by severe hunger to seek the gratification of his appetite. The pike, notwithstanding his voracious qualities, is the longest lived of any fresh-water fish.

The pike is sought after by the clever and experienced troller with the greatest eagerness and delight ; and although, in the course of one excursion, he may not be enabled to kill several fine fish, and at other times may meet with total disappointment, yet it generally happens, if he is successful, the prize is worth all the labour. The practice of trolling is far more interesting than the common mode of angling with ground-baits. As in fly fishing, so in trolling, there is nothing wearisome and uninteresting. The bearer of the rod can move from place to place, ever varying the scene of his amusement, besides enjoying the advantage of exercise, along the beautiful margin of the rivers.

There are two methods of trolling for pike, namely, one with the dead bait and snap hooks, called fishing with the snap,—the other with a live bait, called fishing with the gorge. The first plan only is adopted by the scientific brother of the gentle craft ; for the gorge is not only a cruel, but an unsportsmanlike implement ;

and he who uses it is himself a *jack*, and held in little estimation by the scientific troller.



The experienced troller with the snap, availing himself of every advantage which he possesses, is almost certain of raising and hooking the finest fish. But it

is requisite that his tackle should be of the best description, and used in the most scientific manner. The rod should be well made, not too long, and sufficiently stiff for the purpose of striking the fish effectually. The reel should be of the largest description, capable of holding at least five-and-twenty yards of well-spun strong line. Between the end of the line and the gymp, or between the sections of gymp, a good swivel should be placed, for the purpose of preventing the line from being twisted, by the efforts of the fish to make its escape. The hooks should be carefully adjusted, by passing the gymp through the bait, out at the mouth, which should be sewed fast, one of the snap hooks descending from the lower part of the bait, and the other two placed on each side. These should also be securely fastened, to prevent the bait from being torn, or placed out of its proper shape. The best bait for river-trolling is the dace, and it should be of considerable size, for a good pike, in a well-stored river, will not look at a small bait. The bait, with the hooks thus properly fixed, and with a bullet, secured about ten or twelve inches up the gymp, for the purpose of making the bait sink, and of so playing with it as to deceive the fish, should be thrown *under-hand* in those situations to which the pike re-

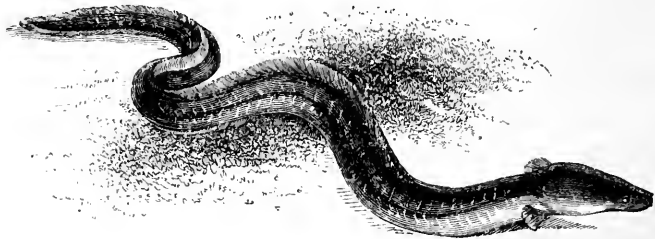
sorts. The pike generally lies in ambush, beneath over-hanging branches, under the banks, and broad leaved aquatic plants, unless severely pressed by hunger, when he prowls about from side to side, frequently making the small fry leap out of the water. In throwing the bait, which may be done to a considerable distance, the line should be checked slightly before it reaches the water, in order that it may fall as lightly as possible. It should not be suffered to remain still a moment, but be made to move continually, in semi-circles, now here, then there,—now drawn across stream, then up stream,—in short, to imitate the action of the lively dace in the water. When a pike rises,—which may be easily known by the ripple on the water,—the bait should not be stopped, but moved onwards, otherwise the pike would not take it. Sometimes the pike will follow the bait for a considerable distance. When he seizes the bait, which is generally with very great ferocity, the troller should strike the contrary way instantly, and with great force, for the purpose of fixing some one or two of the snap hooks securely in some part of the resolute tyrant. When hooked, the pike will display the most determined resolution. The troller should hold him with a tight hand; and if he is rushing towards a dangerous place, he should be instantly

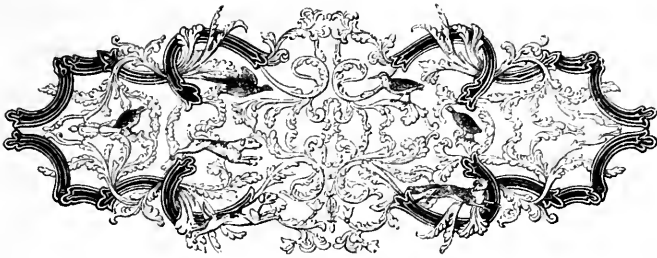
checked, shortening the line by degrees, which may be more effectually done by pulling it through the rings with the left hand. Sometimes a large pike, when first hooked, will fly out of the water to a great height, and resort to various schemes to effect his escape. A tight hand, without using any unnecessary violence, will check him. The troller, who is delighted with his success, and feels desirous of having a nearer view of his prize, is induced, provided the tackle is good, to pull him to the surface of the water. The pike, displaying the utmost degree of courage to the last, will then shake his head, like a bull-dog worrying a cat, and attempt to get down. Check him again, and hold him tight, until, getting completely exhausted, he may be towed to a safe place and secured with the landing-net, which should be of a large size. No attempt should be made to lift him out of the water by the line, as it is impossible to tell how he has been hooked; but, if the situation is such that a net cannot be used, take hold of the line with the left hand, with his head up stream, and lift him out by placing the thumb of the right hand in one eye, and a finger in the other. The strong cartilage which encircles the eyes affords the means of a tight and secure grasp, unless the fish be of extraordinary weight. In that case,

get into the water, if it be rather shallow, and the landing-net not available; and, holding the line in one hand, place the other gently underneath the fish, and throw him out upon the bank, as far as possible; but avoid touching him near his jaws or gills, else your hand will be severely lacerated,—and a wound from a pike is not very easily healed.

There are other ways of catching pike besides that of trolling, by using what are termed trimmers. These are applied in various ways. In large ponds, pools, or small lakes, a live bait is impaled, in the same way as in fishing with the gorge. The line is wound round two pieces of cork, of a circular shape, as large as a common tea-saucer, placed together. The live bait is suffered to swim about a yard below the surface. These trimmers are set afloat on the water, and are blown about by the wind in various directions. When the pike seizes the bait, the line is set at liberty; and the fact of his having done so is ascertained by the agitation in the water, which may easily be seen at a considerable distance. The track of the cork is then followed in a boat, and the pike secured. Large eels may also be caught by adopting this plan. In rivers, the trimmers are managed in a similar manner, excepting that the cork is secured near the bank by a short

rod, or a stout piece of stick, and the line is pulled up, after it has been run off the cross stick around which it had been wound, and the pike has gorged the bait. These are often suffered to stop the whole of the night. But the use of the trimmer is only one remove from poaching, and is despised by the scientific troller; who, from his peculiar method of playing the dead bait, can deceive and capture the largest fish. All is accomplished by skill and perseverance,—qualities which will surmount every obstacle, and secure the great object in view, namely, a pannier well filled.



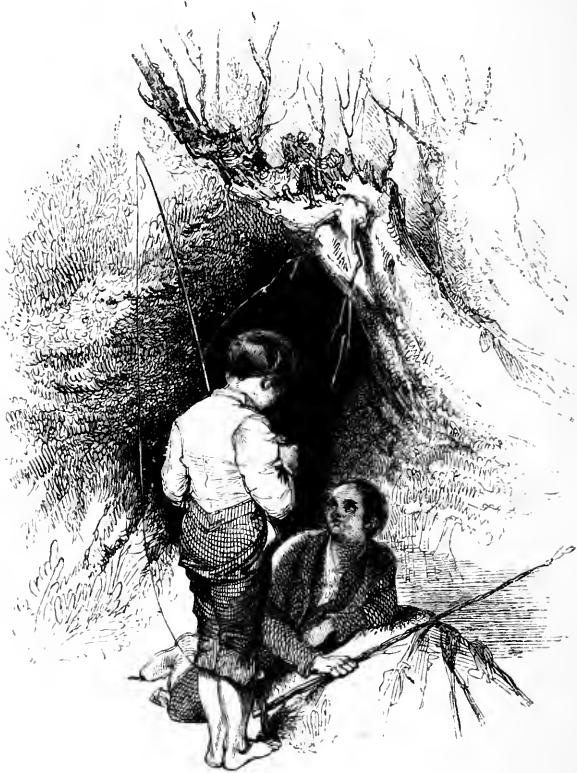


FLOAT FISHING.



THE recreations and enjoyments presented in the wide circle of rural sports are so numerous and of so varied and interesting a character, that whatever may be our disposition or habit, some one or other of them is calculated to be embraced with no small degree of eagerness. Among these, float fishing, requiring a less degree of skill, and less expense in tackle than either fly fishing or trolling, comes within the reach of all. A taste for angling, acquired in our boyish days, when—free from those cares which inevitably accompany after-life—we roam from stream to stream, is never forgotten.

This tranquil art is, indeed, enjoyed by some of every class and of every age. On the river side may be ob-



served the truant boy, just escaped from school, eagerly watching his trembling float; and, not less interested in

the sport, the humble artisan, provided with his tackle and his baits, leaves, for a time, the busy scene of his labours, and, desirous of pursuing his favourite diversion in peace and quietness, as well as to enjoy the fresh air, to the benefits of which he is, perhaps, a stranger, trudges over the fields or through the green lanes,

“As the morning steals upon the night,
Melting the darkness,”

to some well-known haunt, where he knows that he has the best chance of having his exertions rewarded. Nor do those who move in a higher sphere, and possess similar tastes and feelings, despise the tranquil pursuit of float fishing.

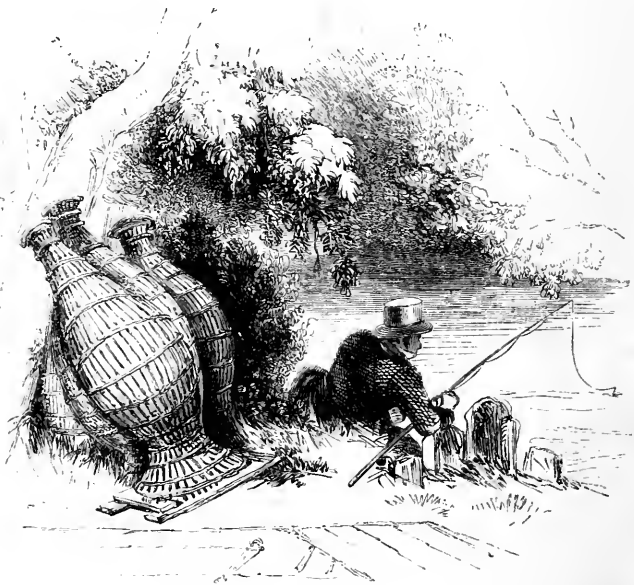
The float-fisher is generally the bearer of more rods than one; and while the heavier of the two is baited with a large dew-worm, and placed upon the bank, he angles with the other, casting an eye on both floats. The objects of his pursuit are numerous:—the perch, the chub, the barbel, the bream, the roach, and the dace. In order to secure these, he uses various descriptions of baits,—worms, gentles, creed-malt, wasp-grubs, white bread, &c. The old hand despises all scented paste, and such matters; he generally prefers well-scoured brandling-worms, which will be taken by

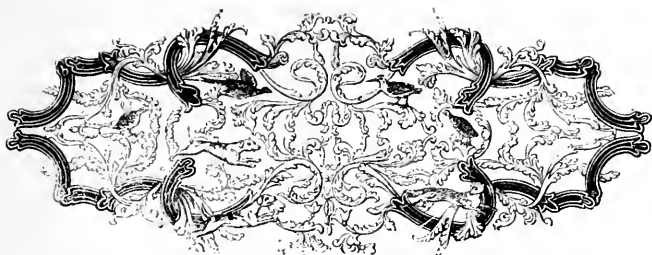
most descriptions of fish that are worth the wear and tear of tackle. This worm is a great favourite with one of the best and most nutritious classes of the finny tribe, namely, the perch; and if the angler meet with a shoal of these, he will succeed in taking as many as he chooses, until they move off in another direction. The trout, bream, chub, and barbel, will also take this worm. Roach and dace afford pleasant, and not difficult angling. For killing these, the angler uses creed-malt; taking care, also, on the previous evening, to bait the place, by throwing a portion of grains into the stream, which has the effect of drawing them to the spot, for the purpose of feeding. Steadily watching the light float, he must strike upon the finest run, precisely in time, otherwise he loses his prize. The chub is taken, at the proper season, with, amongst other matters, the wasp-grub, which is a conspicuous bait. But it would be almost endless to describe the way in which the several varieties of fish may be taken by float fishing; and the practice is too well known to need remark. While, however, the angler uses the lighter description of rod in his hand, he often obtains a prize with the one on the bank, although he is often annoyed in taking, by this line, small eels, which are so greedy as to swallow the hook, which it is very

difficult to extract, unless the fish be killed instantly. Indeed, the considerate fisherman despatches every description of fish as soon as they are landed, large or small.

Many men of kind and gentle dispositions are float-fishers. The practice is suited to a peaceful and contemplative turn of mind; and thus, honest Izaak has called his work "*The Contemplative Man's Recreation.*" Pursuing his favourite amusement, he is delighted with the objects around him, in all their varied and attractive forms; and though, compared with the fly-fisher or the troller, his may be considered an inferior pursuit, yet the quietness and stillness in which he so much delights, and which are essential to his success, have charms for him which surpass all others. Seated beneath the wide-spread branches of the aged sycamore, he feels a mine of wealth in himself,—of peace, contentment, and tranquillity. The bright beams of the sun dance or repose upon the pure river stream, and the shadow of his own green canopy forms a striking contrast on the water. He sees the small finny tribe disporting in the stream; he marks the laden barge move silently and sluggishly past; he hears the cheerful song of the lark on high; he traces the merry and ceaseless note of the sedge warbler close at hand; the lowing of the herds

in the bright green pastures; the busy cry of the rooks in the neighbouring trees; the gaudy dragon-fly flickering over the stream; and the hum of the humble-bee as he goes hurrying homewards:—in short, all sounds and sights which gladden his quiet retreat. Such are the contemplative pleasures of the musing angler, who is the picture of contentment, repose, and serenity.





THE RAT-CATCHER.



HE destruction of the rat, if it may be called a sport, is certainly the lowest practised in this country. In other diversions, the killing of the object pursued is generally followed by the cooking of a good dish, or securing the fur for some useful purpose. Hence the rat-catcher comes under the denomination of "a man employed to abate a nuisance." The fox, it is true, is not cooked: but Reynard, although a very great destroyer of game and poultry, affords that healthful exercise in the chase which is, in itself, a sufficient recompense.

The rat-catcher was formerly distinguished by wearing a broad belt,—similar to a sword-belt,—which was usually painted blue, and on it were figured a num-



ber of the "*varmint*," in various attitudes. He had, also, other significant emblems of his trade about him, and generally held in his hand a wire cage, and was accompanied, on all occasions, by his dogs. This cos-

tume is not now so common as it was some years since. The genuine rat-catcher is an experienced hand in his way. He employs the best terrier dogs, from the wire-haired Scotch breed to the smooth, milk-white species: he uses poison as occasion serves; is dexterous in setting the trap; and extremely clever in the management of the ferret. Although rat-catching may be considered the lowest sport in this country, yet it is the especial and favourite diversion of the chiefs of the Tonga Islands, who reserve to themselves the privilege of killing them as pertinaciously as the game of this country is monopolised by our landed aristocracy.

The English black rat is nearly extirpated; and the species which now inflicts its ravages is the brown Norway rat, which has extended itself throughout the whole island. The destruction which they occasion, wherever they effect a lodgment, is extensive, as they are known to carry to their haunts a far greater mass of food than they can possibly consume. When driven to extremities, they have sometimes been known, with an absence of natural feeling not unknown even in the most exalted genus of animals, to devour one another, leaving behind only the skin,—an emblem of their ferocious habits. The runs — when they have once established themselves—which, by incessant labour,

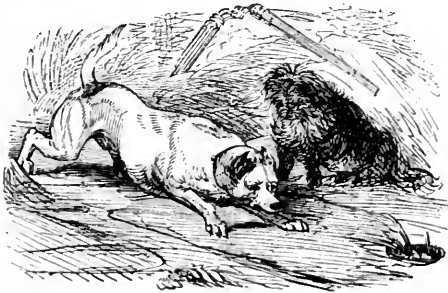
they are enabled to accomplish in any old building, are very cleverly contrived. Neither are they very nice in the choice of their food. They will carry off to their haunts, one by one, whole broods of chickens, ducks, geese, or turkeys. They can convey away articles, of the abstraction of which one would never have suspected them. They have a taste for butter and cheese, as well as all dainties in pastry: and they can skim the cream off a bowl of milk, by the use of their tail, as dexterously as the dairy-maid, —licking off the rich deposit as they proceed in their operation. The rat is a *game* animal: he fights with resolution, and is possessed of great courage. If driven to extremities, he will attack the human species. He is as tenacious as a courtier, and as ravenous as a place-hunter. He not only, as opportunities serve, accumulates plenty for himself, but, having got it, he is a most prodigal waster. He dreads the ferret, and his implacable enemy the weasel. Sometimes the rat will stray from the farm-yard into the neighbouring hedge-rows. If he there meets with his deadly foe, the contest is most decisive. The rat makes the best of his way home, with the weasel close to his tail, and squealing in the utmost distress. He reaches his haunt, —still the weasel, from its small size, can follow him

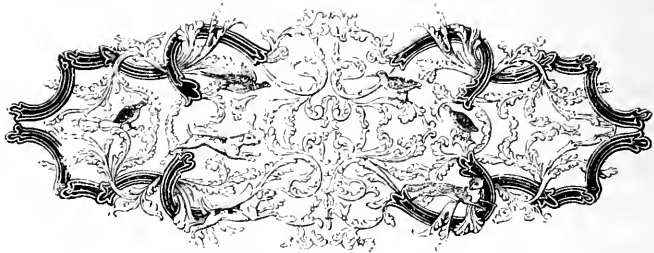
through all his runs. He soon forces him out, and kills him in the centre of the farm-yard. A colony of rats will often change their quarters, especially previous to harvest, when they leave their abodes and resort to the corn-fields; but they invariably return when the ground is cleared. It is then that exertions should be used to effect, if possible, their destruction, particularly if they have taken up their abode in the new-made corn-stacks. It is then, too, that the rat-catcher uses his ferrets with the greatest success. He puts them in the runs on one side of the stack, whilst his dogs wait the result on the other. There they stand, at the mouths of the entrances, with ears and sterns erect, and one fore-foot elevated, anticipating the exertions of the ferret, that forces out the rats in their very teeth; they generally make very short work of it, although they are often very severely bitten. On other occasions, where the ferret cannot be employed,—in old, decayed buildings, for instance,—the rat-catcher uses poison in a very dexterous manner; and then the rats, after having partaken of the bait, like a drunkard, drink themselves to death. In other instances, traps are used; but they require to be set with extreme caution in the runs; for, in many instances, such is the nose of the rat, he will leap over them, and render the labour

of the rat-catcher of no avail. The gun is also used for their destruction; for so great is the damage caused by these animals in completing their runs, that they have been known to endanger the safety of a building. It is a remarkable circumstance, that the rat is never mentioned in scripture, and it appears to have been nearly unknown to the ancients.

A good specimen of the rat-catcher was seen in the person and the habits of Dan Hallowell, whose domicile was placed in the outskirts of the good town of Doncaster. Dan was an eccentric character in his way. He stood about five feet eleven. His frame was cast in a gigantic mould. His gait was unseemly, and as lumbering as a wagon-horse. His countenance was far from prepossessing; but any deficiency in that respect was made up, he thought, by the possession of other qualities,—among the rest, a voracious appetite. He has been known to eat nine pounds of beef, with its accompaniments, at one sitting. Yet many days he never tasted food. He was strictly honest, and a *great* rat-catcher, for he would rather be engaged in catching rats than in any laborious employment; but in this respect he was only following his vocation. Prodigal when he had plenty, he was often doomed to know the want of a meal. Still, when he had not bread, the

tear of pity has fallen over his hollow cheek, when witnessing the distress of others. He was a conspicuous personage at all public rejoicings and feastings, and deemed it a merit to possess an enormous appetite. At elections, too, he was a leading character; and never deserted the colour of his belt. Notoriety may be obtained in a thousand ways. Dan obtained it by his peculiarities, and his name will be long remembered. His career, however, was short. He died, aged thirty-one, on the fifth of November, 1835, after a few days' illness, brought on by want of nourishment,—in short, he was starved to death. And, now, many to whom he was known,—many who had done good service to the rat-catcher, invariably close their remembrance of him with the expression—“Poor Dan!”





TRICKS OF KEEPERS AND POACHERS.

IT is said that there are tricks in every trade, and, assuredly, the keeper and the poacher, in pursuing each his respective calling, are not free from this imputation. There are, no doubt, *many* honest keepers, but it must be apparent, that the occupation of a keeper affords him innumerable opportunities for the commission of dishonest actions. He has the whole range of the estate; and, if he be mercenary, and has opened communications with the *conveyancers*, which he can do with perfect safety, particularly if the spot on which he resides be adjoining a turnpike road, he can carry

on a secret trade in game to an almost unlimited extent. From his connexion with these *soi-disant* legal functionaries, the gamekeeper becomes somewhat learned in the law, and understands all its technicalities. He knows particularly what a *fence* is; nor is his capacity circumscribed; for he has such an acquaintance with horticulture, that he knows what a *peach* is. But, if you believe him, in all his proceedings he is perfectly disinterested.

The practice of allowing the gamekeeper to carry a gun, is one of the means which he can most readily turn to his own advantage. It has, no doubt, a very plausible appearance: for, are there not vermin on the estate to be destroyed?—and must not his master's table be supplied with game? But, alas! it too often happens, that the gamekeeper's eyes, from some cause or other, become confused to such a degree, that he is apt to mistake a hare for a weasel, and a pheasant for a hawk. In consequence of the prevalence of this unfortunate failing, many gentlemen will not allow their keepers to carry a gun; but still, if they are so disposed, there are a thousand other means at their command for killing an unlimited quantity of game, by nets, traps, and snares. But it is not only by the unlawful use of his gun, that the gamekeeper seeks

to augment his income ; he has other means at his command, which, though perhaps not so nefarious in a moral point of view, are no less deserving of notice and reprehension. Should, for instance, a gentleman, who visits his master for the purpose of a day's shooting, be known to the keeper as rather chary of his cash, he takes him to that part of the estate where there is the least game ; or, if he has particular orders to take him to the best preserves, knowing him to be a dead shot, he contrives to give the dogs of the unsuspecting stranger a good draught or two of butter-milk before starting, which has the effect of spoiling their noses, and of making them point when there are no birds, to the great mortification of the visitor, who wonders what really can be the reason why his dogs are so much at fault ; his worthy companion, at the same time, declaring they are not worth their keep, or that the man who broke them knew nothing about his business. Besides this, there are other means to thwart the sport of the stranger, by marking wrong, or throwing the dogs off the immediate locality of the game. Of course, the conduct of the keeper is the reverse of this, when a gentleman pays well !

There are two classes of poachers,—the day and the night poacher. The day poacher is usually solitary :

night poachers, on the contrary, are gregarious. The solitary poacher, in most instances, displays more stratagem than those who go out in murderous gangs, clearing everything before them, and braving, with a bold and determined front, every danger. The solitary poacher, for instance, perceives that a long drain or a small rivulet runs in a certain direction, separating field from field. The communication by the highway is over a bridge; and the hares, during the time of feeding, can only cross from one part to the other by the means of this bridge. Therefore the poacher sets his net across the bridge, and waits in ambush. In the course of a short time, probably, a hare or two are caught in the net, when he is immediately at hand, and secures them. The same trick is resorted to at a gate which leads into a cover from an open field. The gate is thrown open, and the net fixed between the posts. A lurcher scours the whole field; the hares make for the wood immediately, and are entangled and also secured. The same plan will likewise apply to rabbits, just at night-fall, or rather later. To these tricks may be added the fact that the gun of the poacher is made to unscrew, so that he can put the breech in one pocket and secrete the barrel on the other side of his jacket. The latter part of the gun can also be used, in case

of danger, as a very formidable weapon of attack or defence. The poacher, besides, keeps two or three dogs of the lurcher breed, which answer his purpose best, as they hunt without giving mouth, possess a good nose, and are extremely sagacious animals. These dogs are kept in dark cellars, and are only taken out during the night, so that, in fact, they scarcely ever see the daylight. Nevertheless, they are as eager for the sport as their masters themselves, for whom they do good service in the destruction of game.

In day poaching, a wet afternoon, a Sunday morning, or a market-day, are selected,—when the farmers are neither at home nor in the fields. Snares and nets are then set in every direction in the very heart of the preserves. A lurcher dog, properly trained for the purpose, that never barks, is then cast off by a motion of the hand to rouse the game, which is soon caught and stowed away in sacks in some secret place, until the darkness of night prevails, when it is cautiously fetched away. If the poacher be detected in the cover, he motions his dog to leave the spot, which instantly obeys; he has nothing on him; he is not armed; and has a thousand excuses to make,—that he has lost his way,—is seeking for some stray cattle,—and is probably suffered to depart; not always, however, without a search;

for, even under the simple garb of the shepherd, the poacher endeavours to conceal his real character, *and his booty.*



Occasionally, a gang of night poachers divide themselves into two parties; one of which will proceed to the outside of woods near a high road, and there commence firing their guns or pistols, in order to draw

the attention of the watchers to that point, whilst the other is effecting as much destruction as possible in another part of the preserves. When the former perceive the advance of their opponents, in the direction where they first commenced firing, they immediately retreat, for the purpose of drawing them away from the best preserves, and afterwards make their escape, either by the turnpike road or into another liberty; thus leaving their companions to pursue their system of destruction in perfect safety, or to make good their retreat. All share equally in the plunder.

In securing a booty of pheasants, a moonlight night is fixed upon. Air-guns are often used, some of which will kill at the distance of thirty yards. The poacher is well acquainted with the spots where the pheasants roost; and, on a clear night, they can be distinctly seen perched on the boughs, and are easily shot. If, from the nature of the preserve, there should be some difficulty in getting a clear shot, a different plan is pursued. Major Bevan, in his work, "Thirty Years in India," whilst alluding to the subject of night-shooting, says:—"I tried the experiment of fastening a fire-fly on the sight of my gun, and found it of the greatest value in directing the eye along the barrel, and enabling me to cover my object distinctly." The aim of the

poacher is sometimes directed by a different light. He, perhaps, can see the pheasant, but not distinctly; and, should the moon have gone down, contrives to place himself in such a direction that he can have a bright star in the line of the bird. He bends down until he has got the star in the right position,—just over the bird, for instance,—he takes his aim by the star and kills the pheasant. Other means are also adopted, in case of danger arising from the use of fire-arms. A bunch of matches, placed at the end of a long stick, is lighted and held under the boughs on which the pheasants are perched. They become stifled, and fall to the ground senseless, when they are instantly secured and killed.

Among the many tricks resorted to by the poacher for the purpose of deceiving the keeper, a favourite one is, to place a dead hare in a snare near the house of the keeper, or in any other situation suitable for the purpose. The keeper soon discovers this, and proceeds, with an assistant, to watch the hare, secreting himself at a short distance, in expectation that the setter of the snare will come to the spot to fetch his victim. Whilst the deluded keeper is thus employed, the poachers are busily at work in another direction with their snares; and whilst he is watching the dead

hare, they are securing as many as they can conveniently carry home. Much practice enables the poacher to set his snares in an unerring manner; and, in order that the wire may be as pliant as possible, the snares,



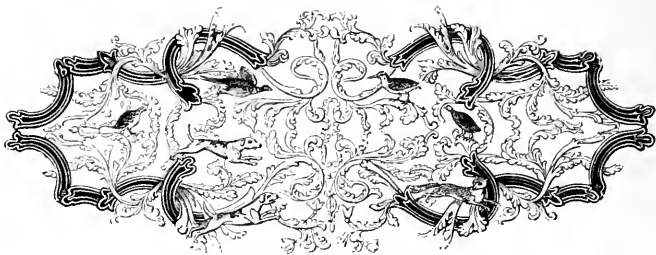
previous to being used, are placed within a bundle of hay. The hay is set on fire, and the embers are allowed to cool gradually before the snares are taken out. By this process, the wire is rendered so tough and flexible that it can be bent in any form to answer

the purpose of the poacher. The snarer, however, is liable to be thwarted in his designs, in consequence of the hares raising a loud cry of distress, which may be heard at some distance. The poacher prevents this, where the situation requires it, by bending down the branch of a large tree, a young oak, or other sapling. To these the snares are attached, and the branch or young tree is pegged down to the ground. The snares are set in the runs in the wood; and when the hare is caught, her struggles detach the peg,—up springs the tree, and poor puss is hung up aloft, and, of course, can make no noise. Great destruction is also effected by the drag partridge net; for, by its skilful application, all the coveys of an estate may be secured in the course of a few nights. This engine—if engine it may be called—is about forty yards in length and twenty-five yards in width. It is composed of silk and hair twisted together, with meshes at the proper distance. It is rather an expensive article, but is very strong, and, when folded up, can be contained in a moderate-sized pocket, which is a matter of very great convenience. Through the meshes on one side of this net, a long and stout cord is passed, considerably longer, indeed, than the net itself. On the other side, a number of weights are attached, for the purpose of

keeping it down, while it is dragged by two men, who have each hold of one end of the long cord. They know well where the coveys assemble during the night. If, after proceeding to the locality, they find that one covey is close at hand, and that others are not a long way off, they use a "call,"—a close imitation of the cry of the male bird. By exercising a little dexterity in this respect, three or four coveys can be decoyed into one field. When this necessary preliminary is accomplished, then commences the work of destruction. The net is spread out at a short distance from the adjacent hedge. Each man takes hold of his own end of the cord, and the net, weighted, is dragged across the field. The first attempt may be a failure. The next breadth is tried. It proves successful. The net is drawn over, perhaps, the whole of two coveys of birds, which immediately begin to flutter. Each man then lets the net fall to the ground, and commences to walk on the cord till the spot is reached where the partridges are caught: they are then killed and bagged. There is no noise,—no report of a gun, as in the case of killing pheasants. On the least approach of danger, the net is pocketed; and the poachers make the best of their way to the nearest high road, or take a route so circuitous as to elude all detection, and arrive at home

before daybreak. For the sake of avoiding apprehension, the poacher resorts to these and many other stratagems, which do not, however, always screen him from the arm of justice.





HOW A POACHER IS SOMETIMES EMPLOYED.



THE notice of the tricks of keepers and poachers may be appropriately followed by the narrative of an adventure which occurred in the county of —, and which may serve to illustrate the habits of the fraternity and the desperate expedients to which they occasionally have recourse. On an extensive estate, on which there was, at the time of his commencing his duties, but little game, a keeper was employed, who knew his business well. He secured the confidence of his master by his assiduous conduct, and was praised for his perfect skill. Game of every kind increased, particularly the phe-

sants. From a variety of suspicious circumstances, however, he fell into disfavour, and was finally dismissed. This worthy guardian of the preserves, supposing that he was about to be supplanted by a man employed on the estate, who would obtain his situation by what he considered unfair means, became desperate, and determined that his successor should have the mortification of entering on deserted covers, considering that he would thus be revenged on his master at the same time.

Keepers are usually aware of the habits of poachers in their own neighbourhood. An old poacher, on whom the keeper could depend, was accordingly invited to help in the work of destruction, and to share the plunder. A spot on the outskirts of a wood, which could not be approached without difficulty, was the appointed rendezvous; the time—midnight. The keeper was armed with his double-barrel, and supplied with abundance of ammunition, purloined from the store of his master. At that solemn hour of night, an awful gloom pervades the dark mazes of the wood, which impresses minds unaccustomed to such scenes with an indescribable feeling of dread. Each passing sound, at that still hour, reaches the ear with a double acuteness. The imagination converts the mossy trunks and crooked branches of the ancient oaks into a thousand fantastic

and unnatural forms ; and the awakened conscience, if not seared by a long course of habitual crime, burdens the spirits with the memory of any wrongs done or injuries inflicted. Not so the hardened poacher. He is callous to the gentle and benevolent feelings of our nature. Whether there be thick darkness, or a faint glimmer from the moon, "like a silver bow new bent in the heaven," or a subdued radiance from the host of innumerable stars, fretting the wide expanse with golden fire, he proceeds unmoved. The keeper and the poacher have no fears. The former is acquainted with all the intricate paths in the woods, and knows all the roosting-places of the pheasants. The keeper marks his birds ; bang, bang, goes the double-barrel ; down tumble the victims, and the poacher picks them up.

Adventures of this sort are not always unattended by serious consequences. On one occasion, the faithful keeper and his friend the poacher were proceeding through a narrow part of the wood which contained a large number of pheasants. The night was stormy ; the rain fell heavily. The birds sat very close, and were easily killed. It was a night after the poacher's own heart. Proceeding onwards, they heard the report of gun after gun. There was evidently a large body of poachers approaching them, and it seemed probable

that they should meet face to face. When the larger party fired, the wood seemed on a blaze. Their number amounted to nine, and they carried five guns. They could all be distinctly seen. "Be firm," said the keeper to his ally, "I don't know them, nor they us,—they are all strangers." They approached nearer and nearer. They passed each other. *Not a word was spoken* on either side; and the silence was only broken by a few random shots. Each party knew well enough that one was as bad as the other; and that one dare not inform against the other; and it was evident that the strangers knew not the faithful guardian of the preserves. A dreadful slaughter was effected that night.

Pursuing this murderous warfare, the best covers were soon nearly cleared. But the vindictive feeling of the keeper not being yet fully satisfied, he was induced to try the preserves nearer home,—and particularly one situated in the immediate vicinity of a highly respectable residence. This was an extremely dangerous attempt, especially as news had been spread around that poachers were abroad every night; for, although the keeper was always out, he happened to be unable to come up with them. Suspicion being thus awakened, every one about the spot was nightly on the alert. The lion and his jackal again met, and com-

menced operations so near the residence as to be distinctly heard by its inmates, who had strengthened themselves by an additional force, and had applied to the huntsman to have his couple of bloodhounds ready in case it was found necessary to lay them on after the poachers. This precaution was unknown to the keeper; and the whole posse sallied forth in the direction where the flashes from the gun were visible. So sudden and unexpected was this attack, that the keeper was in the greatest danger. He threw away his gun amongst the underwood,—calling to his companion, “Run—the Philistines are upon us!” The keeper immediately rushed out of the plantation. His companion at the moment was feeling about for a pheasant which had just fallen, and laid his hand accidentally upon the gun. He seized it, and rushed also into the adjoining stubble-field. He laid himself down in the middle of the inclosure upon his face. He was pursued; but, from the colour of his old fustian jacket, his enemies passed within a few yards without discovering him, and afterwards retreated. Agreeably to previous arrangement, the keeper and his friend were to meet, in case of being surprised or separated, in a field adjoining a wood which contained the most intricate paths, well known to the keeper. They did so. Previously, however, the crafty

poacher, had contrived to stow away the gun and the well-filled bag. They both arrived at this point breathless; and while they were endeavouring, with heads inclined, to mark the progress of their pursuers, the deep and well-known cry of the blood-hounds smote the ears of the keeper. "By heaven," he exclaimed, "the hounds are after us! Come along instantly!" They immediately plunged into the depths of the wood, threaded all its intricacies, and reached the other side in safety. At a short distance from this point, there was a large fish-pond, all the parts of which were quite familiar to the keeper, who, to his other talents, added that of a skilful fisherman. They had no sooner reached its margin, than, pausing to take breath, they heard the awfully deep note of the hounds that were making their way through the wood which they had just left. Not a moment was to be lost. Their situation was dreadful. The sweat burst from the brow of each in large and fearful drops,—their knees were inclined to refuse their office,—their breath was thick and quick,—and their hearts beat with terror. But, although the occasion was trying, each one held off despair at full arm's length. The cry of the hounds was deeper and nearer. "They are coming,—follow me!" said the wily and desperate keeper. He walked cautiously into the

water at a known point, closely followed by the poacher, who, amid all his numerous adventures, had never en-



countered anything like this. The keeper waded until the water reached his neck; and there he stood as mute as a fish. His companion, being of shorter stature,

could not advance so far, and therefore was obliged to keep nearer the bank. The ripple that found its way to the shore was never curled with a more fearful import. Either would have sacrificed the other to have saved himself.

The hounds, faithful to the scent, came up to the very spot where the worthies had entered the water. Both dogs tracked the whole margin of the pond several times, and invariably stopped at the point which they had at first reached. But the scent was completely lost, and the hounds were finally called off,—doubtless to the great delight of the half-drowned keeper and poacher. Making assurance doubly sure, the keeper refused, for a time, to leave his post, although his companion was extremely anxious to stand upon rather higher and drier ground. At length, after having waited for a considerable time, not a sound was heard. The faint streaks of morning were interlacing the east, and

“Jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops,”

ready to spring and take his welcome flight over the waking world. The call of the partridge was heard on the fallows,—that of the pheasant in the adjacent woods,—the hare was returning to her form, from her

feeding-ground,—and the rooks were winging their noiseless flight from their nightly aerie to the lower grounds,—when the two waders, who had hitherto stood as patient as the fisher-heron watching eels, reached the bank. Few words passed between them; for the courage of both was cooled, and their silence was eloquence enough. The keeper, shortly afterwards, left that part of the country, and eventually came to an untimely end. The poacher never poached afterwards, but took to the more quiet and peaceable paths of honesty, sobriety, and industry.

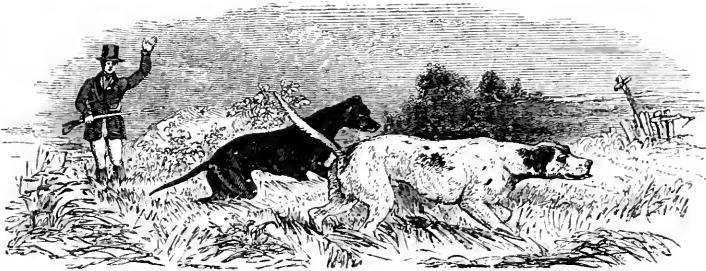




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